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TECHNOLOGY MATURITY IN B2B PUBLISHING
**BENCHMARKS, BARRIERS, AND THE
PATH FORWARD**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The B2B publishing sector is undergoing a transformative shift, driven by the acceleration of digital technologies, the rise of AI, and the increasing demand for real-time, personalised content experiences.

Our research reveals a paradox: while technology is universally acknowledged as essential to growth, its application across the industry remains inconsistent, immature, and often unstrategic.

AI adoption is high, yet confidence in its return on investment (ROI) is low. Data is abundant but trapped in silos. Delivery methods remain outdated, lagging behind user expectations shaped by consumer-grade digital experiences.

We recommend three strategic moves for B2B publishers to secure their future competitive advantage:

Move from publishing to signal: Redefine the value proposition from broadcasting information to delivering timely, contextual, and actionable signals. This requires a product strategy focused on real-time data delivery, personalisation at scale, and workflow integration to ensure content is indispensable to the user's daily work.

Treat AI as technology transformation: AI must not be treated as a mere add-on but as a fundamental part of a broader technological shift. This agenda must include scalable data infrastructure, cross-functional adoption strategies, and clear metrics for success. The focus should be on invention - creating new offerings like smart alerts and predictive content - rather than just efficiency

Connect the Dots: The future of competitive advantage lies in connecting disparate data sources. Publishers should invest in platforms and governance to enable data flow, prioritizing unified data models, metadata management, and interoperability across systems. This connectivity is the essential foundation for personalization, strategic insights, and AI, providing a unique advantage that generic Large Language Models (LLMs) cannot replicate.

INTRODUCTION

Technology is no longer optional in B2B publishing. It is the foundation upon which competitiveness, innovation, and growth are built.

“Tech is table stakes now.” - David Foster, Chair, BVR/CCC

Yet, many organisations continue to operate with legacy infrastructure, disconnected data systems, and outdated workflows. This paper explores the current state of technology maturity in B2B publishing, drawing from industry research, survey responses, and our experience advising leading publishers.

Our aim is to present not only a snapshot of where the industry stands but also our recommendations for how to evolve. As technology consultants specialising in product development for B2B information providers, we believe the next wave of value creation will come not from incremental improvements, but from structural transformation.

KEY FINDINGS

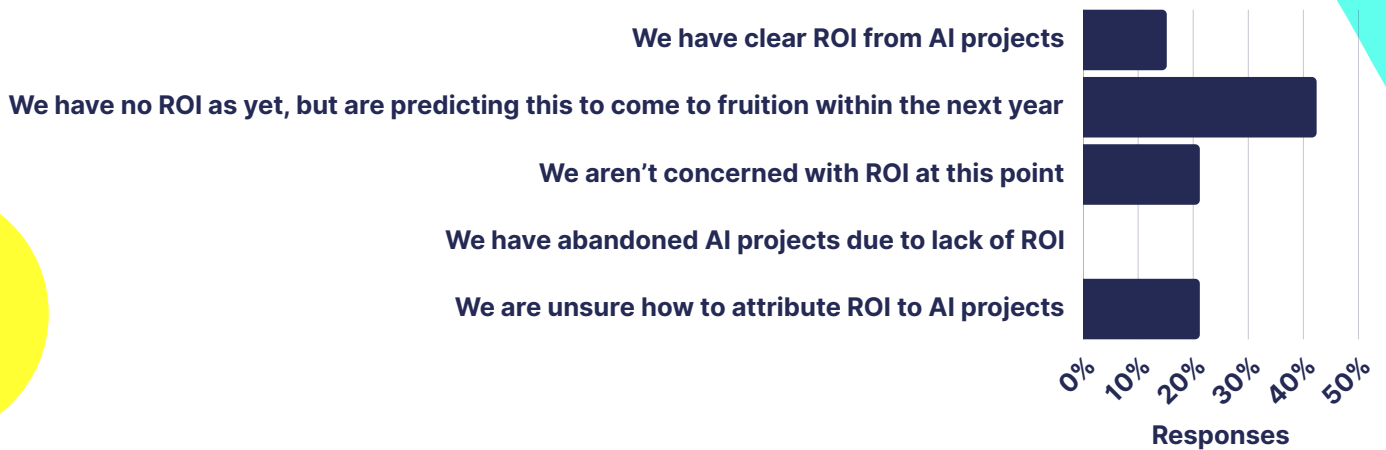
1. AI is everywhere, ROI is elusive

AI has been widely adopted across the publishing industry, with most organisations reporting some level of experimentation. However, only 14% of those surveyed said AI is fully embedded in their products and workflows. Instead, the majority are using AI in isolated, operational use cases, such as content generation and repackaging, internal efficiencies, and simple automation.

“(AI has) made basic daily processes less time-consuming. We can shape our content in better ways and also reshape content in less time” - Marketing leader for multimedia publisher

In some ways, this is a cause for positivity, especially for firms that feel like everyone else has it solved already. Our data shows that the race is far from run.

Also, despite plenty of activity, 92% of respondents rated their AI confidence at a company level at 5 or below on a 10-point scale. ROI remains equally elusive: only 15% report clear value return from AI investments.



The lack of ROI from AI is not a failure of the technology, but of its application. Without a clear strategic framework, AI remains a set of disconnected experiments. To deliver real value, AI needs to be embedded within workflows, linked to business objectives, and supported by change management.

“(AI has) made everyone think more carefully about where we add value and what activities we shouldn't be doing. We've delivered a new product with AI (and have) lots of small use cases underway. Anticipate some big wins to come.” - Chief Executive of a large media group

We also uncovered a tendency for leaders to sit on either side of the 'Is AI an opportunity or a threat' debate. For a few, AI is still perceived as a threat, raising concerns about IP protection, content authenticity, and organisational readiness. Others are more optimistic, viewing AI as a tool to drive product innovation, improve user experience, and create new value streams.

“It's accelerated content creation, and provided a quantum improvement in user value. The results are vastly superior to traditional search.” David Foster, Chair, BVR/CCC

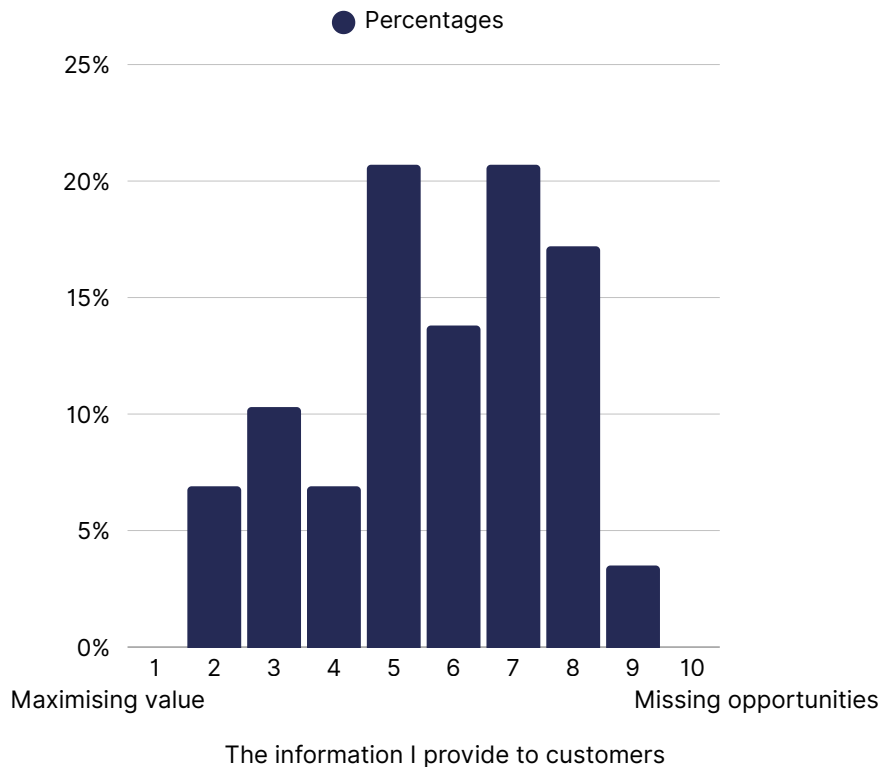
The reality is that companies should be careful to consider both sides of the argument in their AI strategies. We recommend that companies embrace all proactive use cases that could benefit their bottom line, as well as imagine and defend against how AI could reduce their competitive advantage or enable others to eat into established models and markets.

2. Data structure is the biggest opportunity

Over half of respondents describe their data as "locked and inflexible." An additional 22% are only moderately flexible. The opportunity cost of this rigidity is high: delayed product development, under-leveraged insights, and diminished customer experience.

Data architecture is similarly limited. Most organisations report that their data is siloed rather than connected, restricting their ability to generate cross-functional insights or power advanced use cases like personalisation or predictive analytics. While 46% said their architecture is flexible and scalable, 31% still described their systems as rigid and unscalable.

Crucially, 55% of surveyed organisations acknowledged they are missing opportunities to create value from their data.



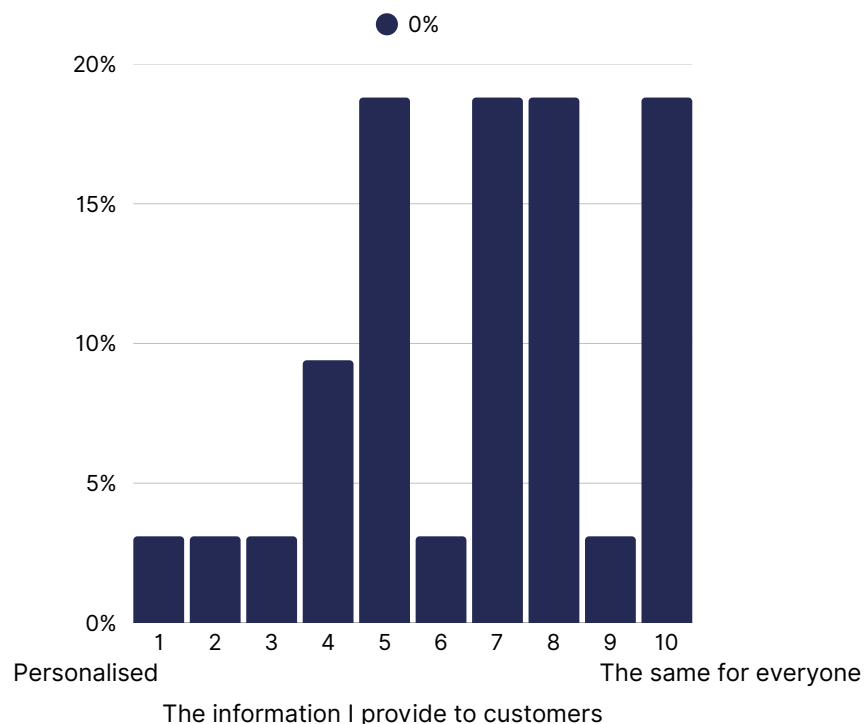
The upshot of all of this is that customers are having to do the hard work of gathering multiple insights and datapoints from a variety of products in order to get what they need. There is much industry chatter about the goal of embeddability in customer workflows, and, if that is the case for this industry, then the connectedness of data and content is a key area that needs to be addressed. Data strategy must become a board-level priority.

3. Delivery is static, experience is lagging

Customer-facing experiences have not kept pace with technological potential. The overwhelming majority of respondents deliver content in scheduled "drops," with limited interactivity or personalisation. Less than 10% reported delivering content that is interactive or adaptive.

This disconnect between capability and reality is creating a gap in user value. Most organisations admit their current delivery systems merely provide information, not insights. In other words, they are not telling users what to do with the content they receive, a missed opportunity to provide context, relevance, and actionability that would make them indispensable to their users. From what we've seen, the predictive nature of AI is being hugely underutilised - after all, on a very simplistic level, AI enables you to make predictions quickly and at scale, potentially realising the value promised by 'Big Data' back in the early 2000s. This again provides an opportunity for a real point of difference to the market.

Personalisation is also underutilised. Despite the tools being readily available, most publishers continue to deliver one-size-fits-all content, diminishing their ability to build deep, engaged relationships with users.



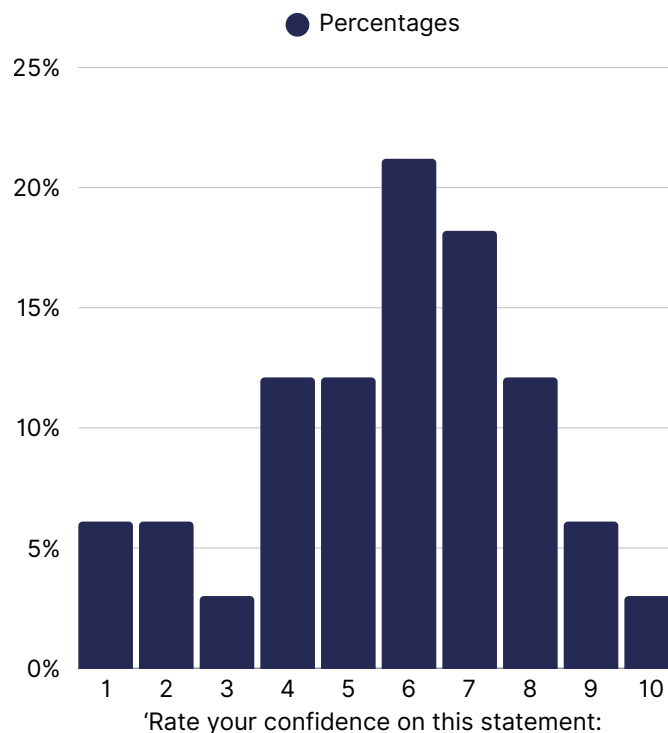
Considering all the talk of disruption that technology has brought, this mix of impersonal scheduled drops shows that the print-first mindset is still evident. Scheduled content drops, generic newsletters, and static reports must give way to dynamic, interactive, and user-led experiences. The opportunity is not just to inform users, but to guide them.

4. Technology is both critical and constraining

Leaders universally agreed that technology is central to business success. Respondents remarked that it was ‘the most influential thing’ and ‘totally critical’, that technology is ‘absolutely essential...to business growth (and) survival’. The vast majority agreed that their technology architecture was central to their business, as opposed to merely a service function.

“(Technology) is the most influential thing - success for us means pivoting to focus as much investment as possible in tech” - Chief Content Officer from a legal intelligence information company

Yet confidence in current technology stacks is not as strong. Many respondents ranked their confidence at 6 or below when asked if their stack is fit for the future.



My company tech stack is fit for future purposes, 1 being least confident, 10 being most confident'

Some organisations are investing in technology as a core pillar of strategy. Others are simply trying to keep up. This disparity in ambition and execution is leading to a two-speed industry, where a small number of innovators are pulling ahead while the rest risk falling behind. Our advice is to ensure that technology investment is aligned with strategic initiatives, as opposed to being handled in isolation from the rest of the business.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Move from publishing to signal

B2B publishers must redefine their value proposition. The future lies not in broadcasting information, but in delivering signals - timely, contextual, and actionable insights that guide decision-making. This requires rethinking product strategy to prioritise:

- Real-time data delivery
- Interactivity and user input
- Personalization at scale
- Workflow integration

Expose data through APIs. Build features that go beyond dashboards to offer recommendations, alerts, and next-best-actions. Make content a catalyst for action, not just comprehension.

The only way to survive the coming wave of information overload is to make what you offer indispensable to the way people do their work. Whether you are in events, data or B2B journalism, you have to find a way into the workflow.

2. Treat AI as technology transformation

Too many organisations treat AI as an add-on. This limits its potential. AI must be part of a broader technology transformation agenda that includes:

- Scalable data infrastructure
- Cross-functional adoption strategies
- Clear metrics for success

Use AI not only to automate existing processes but to create entirely new offerings: smart alerts, predictive content, automated insights, and more. Think beyond efficiency; think invention. Build with change in mind. Your technology should empower experimentation, not inhibit it.

That's not to say you shouldn't experiment. But think deeper and beyond quick wins in content productivity and find things that were not previously possible.

And make sure that whatever you are creating is flexible and scalable, otherwise you'll outgrow it.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS CONT...

3. Connect the dots

The ability to connect disparate data sources will be the next frontier of competitive advantage. Invest in platforms and governance that enable data to flow freely across the organisation. Prioritise:

- Unified data models
- Metadata management
- Interoperability across systems

Connected data is the foundation for personalization, AI, and strategic insight. Without it, progress will stall.

The next big opportunities will be enabled by the quality and connectivity of your proprietary data and your ability to make unique connections that generate actionable insights for your customers. That's the part that generic LLMs won't be able to touch.

CONCLUSION

We are at a point in time where the pace of change is unprecedented. And technology is at the heart of that change. As well as the incredibly disruptive entry of AI into the public consciousness, the bottom line of what makes an acceptable user experience is constantly being lifted, thanks to consumer experiences elsewhere. However, despite what many LinkedIn posts may have you believe, there is still plenty of gaps between what companies believe their technology can do and what it is actually doing. While the pressure to stay ahead of the pack mounts, the tools for transformation are readily available. But success will not come from technology alone. It requires vision, leadership, and a willingness to reimagine what publishing can be.

The winners in this new era will not be those who simply digitise old models, but those who create new ones, powered by AI, driven by data, and designed around users. The challenge is significant. But the opportunity is greater still.

Now is the time to act. The barriers are known. The path forward is open. Will you take it?

ABOUT 67 BRICKS

67 Bricks are a technology consultancy who specialise in product development for B2B information companies. They have worked some of the biggest names in publishing; including The Economist Intelligence Unit, Infopro, Informa, Enhesa, and The British Medical Journal.

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