



# Low Trust 'Penalty' Report

Why tech businesses are  
paying the ultimate price.

In collaboration with 3Gem

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# Executive summary

by **Lorraine Emmett, Managing Director, Emmett & Churchman.**

Your technical excellence may be world-class, but if the market thinks you are a risk, you will remain the industry's 'best-kept-secret'.

2025 was a landmark year for B2B buying research.

Studies from Gartner, Edelman-LinkedIn and Coleman Parkes revealed several critical dynamics, including the emergence of the "hidden buyer", stakeholders who sit outside of the core buying committee and can veto deals without ever joining a sales call, and the seismic influence of thought leadership in shaping decisions across entire buying panels.

We were compelled to dig deeper.

Our research found that **half of senior decision-makers** rank trust as the number one factor in vendor selection, above cost, innovation and delivery. And **almost seven in ten** admit they've walked away from a deal simply because something didn't feel right.

For growth-focused tech firms, this is the new battleground: **closing the authority gap.**

To drive long-term business value, you must move from being an invisible expert to a market leader.



*Lorraine*

**Lorraine Emmett,**  
Managing Director, Emmett & Churchman.

# Methodology

- Survey conducted Dec 2025.
- **200** senior technology buyers across defence, cybersecurity, IT, manufacturing, and science & engineering.
- Roles included CIOs, CTOs, procurement leads, operations heads, and compliance managers.
- Supplemented by verbatim, qualitative responses and secondary research (Edelman–LinkedIn, Gartner, Coleman Parkes).



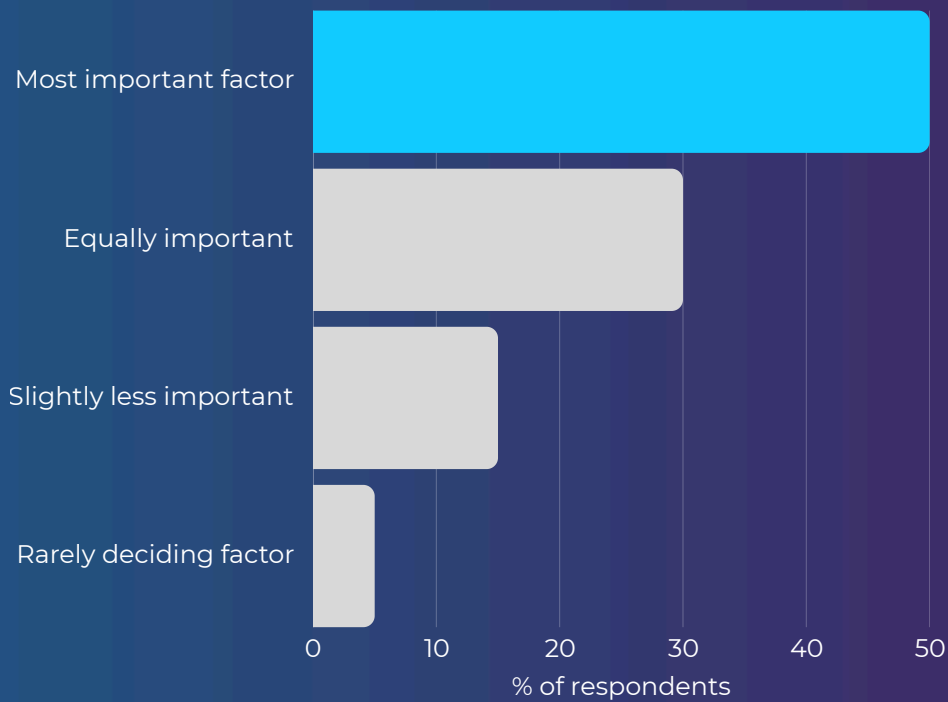
# Key findings



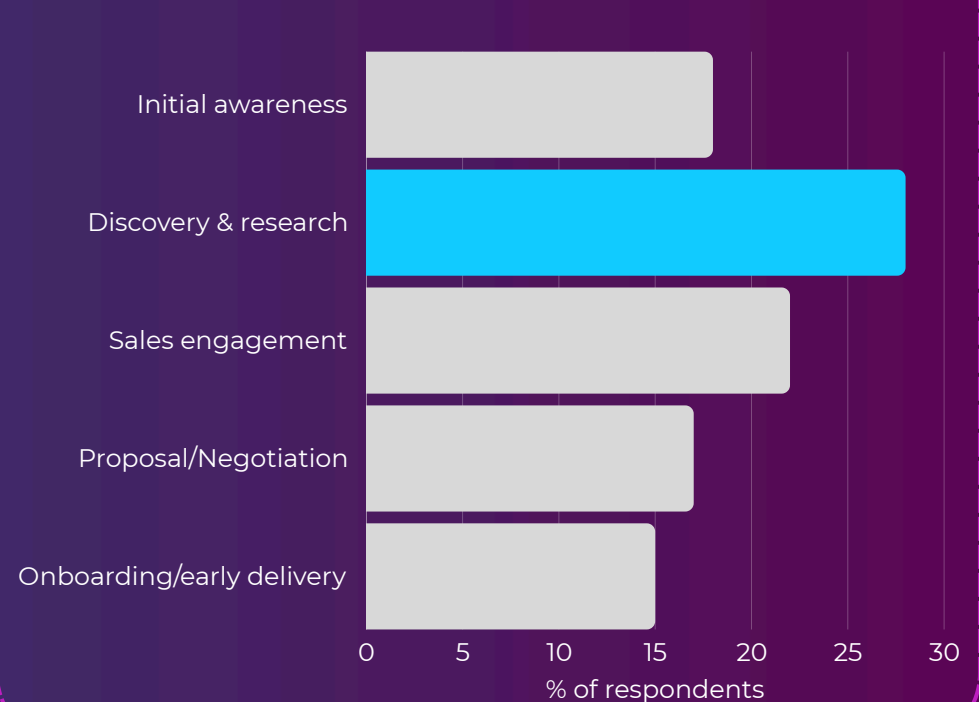
50% of buyers rank trust as the most important factor in vendor choice

Discovery and research are the hardest buying stages to build trust with buyers

How buyers rank trust vs cost, innovation and delivery

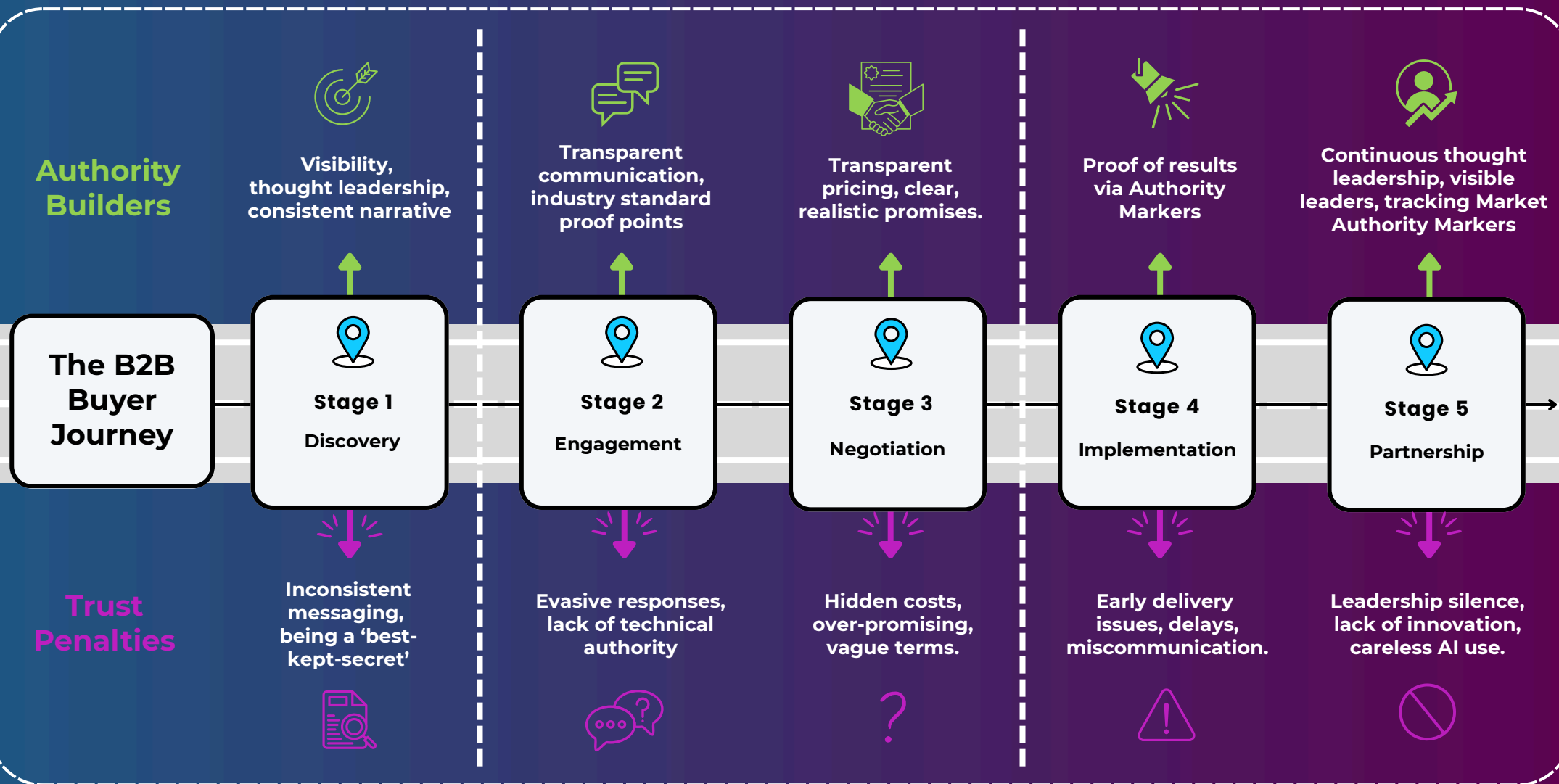


Stage where trust is hardest to build



# The low trust 'penalties'

Where businesses win or lose deals



# The data & what it tells us



## Trust outranks cost, innovation and delivery

Half of buyers placed trust above cost, innovation and delivery. This shows trust is not an intangible sentiment but the most **decisive selection factor** in technology procurement. Practically, it means that even strong products and competitive pricing will underperform if credibility signals are weak.

## Discovery stage is the hardest hurdle

**28%** of buyers said they find it most difficult to trust a vendor at the research stage.

This is the moment when websites, credentials and leadership visibility are scrutinised, often before any conversation with sales.

If content is thin, pricing opaque or leadership invisible, doubt hardens into risk avoidance and opportunities stall.

*Before I'll even entertain a conversation, I do desktop research. Who else are they working with, case studies. That's the screening before we ever speak.*



**Derek Kenneally,**  
Chief Product and Technology Officer,  
Aptitude

# The market authority gap



Where technical strength exceeds recognised authority markers.

## How you see your business

- ✓ Technical Depth
- ✓ Category Expertise
- ✓ Operational Rigour
- ✓ Innovation Pipeline
- ✓ Category Ambition
- ✓ Long-Term Investment

Vs

## How the market evaluates you

- ? Perceived Risk
- ? Credibility Signals
- ? Comparative Safety
- ? Competitive Position
- ? Proof of Leadership
- ? Default Status

When authority lags tech capability, the commercial friction **increases**.



# Four strategic implications

1

## Put credibility before capability.

Trust decides vendor selection. If you don't close the authority gap, product strength won't matter.

2

## Win discovery or lose the deal.

Buyers struggle most at the research stage, stop being penalised for a lack of market authority

3

## Treat trust as a recession-proofing strategy.

In downturns, buyers avoid 'risky' vendors. Move from invisible expert to the default market choice.

4

## Build an authority engine.

Move from noise to evidence. Use a mechanical system to turn your reputation into a managed commercial asset.

*If you don't have trust, buyers walk away.*

*It's that simple.*



**Lorraine Emmett,**  
**Managing Director,**  
**Emmett & Churchman**



Making the wrong vendor choice **sets you back** six to eight months. That risk makes trust absolutely central when money is tight.



**Craig Olivier,**  
Group CTO & Co-Founder,  
Genasys Technologies  
(Insurance Technology Provider)

I can spot **AI-generated content** a mile off, especially on LinkedIn. When vendors use influencers who clearly don't understand the technology they're promoting, it's not credible. The language and tone give it away immediately - and I keep scrolling or delete it.



**Derek Kenneally,**  
Chief Product and  
Technology Officer, Aptitude

When someone promises information and never follows through or goes quiet once the order is signed, that's **a red flag**. If they can't even help with implementation, I'd rather step away.



**Ian Hoskins,**  
Head of Video  
Technology,  
CTrack UK

# 3 key ways to build buyer trust



1

## Publish your proof stack

Case studies with **metrics** (before and after, time-to-value, risk reduction).

Compliance and security credentials, with **renewal dates** and scope.

Pricing **principles** (how you price, what changes pricing, how you govern scope).

2

## Orchestrate leadership visibility

Name accountable leaders and amplify their expertise through thought leadership; use LinkedIn, Q&As, blogs, technical articles, short explainers and issue response posts.

Establish a **response protocol** for sensitive topics (security incident, service variance, AI policy).

3

## Use our Market Authority Engine

Our repeatable process identifies risks, builds your authority and tracks your position against market competitors

*I've been that IT guy who gets handed a brochure by the CFO saying 'this is the product we're using.' My answer was simple. **No, we're not.***



**Derek Kenneally,**  
Chief Product  
and Technology  
Officer, Aptitude

