PMWorld 360

PMWORLD360 RESEARCH / 2026

THE AI-INFLUENCED B2B SOFTWARE BUYER 2026

How AI Is Changing Software Discovery, Comparison, Validation & Vendor Shortlisting

Research for B2B software buyers—and the vendors and marketers trying to understand how they research, compare and decide.



DISCOVER → UNDERSTAND → COMPARE → VALIDATE → CONSIDER → DECIDE

CENTRAL FINDING

AI can accelerate discovery, comparison and shortlisting. Stronger decisions come from visibility, understanding and validation.

Vendors that are visible, accurately understood and supported by credible evidence are more likely to enter serious consideration.

AI visibility is the entry point.
Independent evidence and buyer validation increase its value.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AI is becoming part of the buying infrastructure

AI is changing both how software buyers research and which vendors enter consideration. A buyer can now ask an AI system to explain a category, compare products, surface tradeoffs and propose a shortlist before visiting a vendor website or speaking with sales. That does not eliminate traditional search, independent reviews, comparison guides, vendor content or human conversations. It creates a faster, more connected research environment in which several sources can shape the decision earlier.

That shift creates opportunity for buyers and vendors at the same time. Buyers can move through category education, option discovery and early comparison more efficiently. Vendors gain another discovery surface at a point when the consideration set may still be forming. The quality of that visibility matters: buyers still need enough context to understand fit, compare alternatives and validate what they find before moving forward.

Current research points to both sides of this tension. G2's 2026 study of more than 1,000 B2B software buyers reports that 51% start software research with AI more often than Google, 71% use AI chatbots somewhere in software research, and 54% say AI chatbots influence which vendors make the shortlist. Gartner's research, from a different B2B buyer population, found that buyers use an average of seven information sources and that 69% prefer to validate AI-generated insights with sales representatives. These findings should not be merged into one market estimate, but together they illustrate the central dynamic of AI-influenced buying: discovery can accelerate while validation remains essential. [1][3]

For PMWorld360, the useful question is therefore not whether AI is replacing search. It is how qualified AI and search visibility contributes to informed consideration—and how buyers can combine faster research with independent context, primary evidence and human judgment to make a well-supported decision.

THE CORE FINDING

AI visibility creates the opportunity to enter buyer consideration. Accurate understanding, relevant comparison context and credible validation—including independent software reviews, comparison guides and buyer resources—help that visibility progress into serious evaluation and informed decision-making.

What this report argues

This white paper develops a two-sided framework for AI-influenced software buying. For buyers, it shows how AI can accelerate discovery and comparison while independent editorial sources, primary vendor information, peers and experts strengthen understanding and validation. For vendors and marketers, it explains why qualified visibility matters earlier in the journey—and why accurate positioning, relevant comparison context, credible evidence and appropriate buyer progression increase the value of that visibility.

RESEARCH METHOD

A research synthesis—not a PMWorld360 primary survey

This report synthesizes current first-party research from organizations studying B2B software and business buying. It does not present PMWorld360 survey data. Percentages remain attached to their original populations, samples and time periods, and unlike studies are not averaged into a single market-wide estimate.

That distinction matters because the underlying research asks different questions of different populations. A percentage from a software-buyer study is not automatically representative of all business buying. A self-reported survey finding is not the same thing as observed behavior. A 2025 measurement should not be presented as a permanent baseline in a market changing as quickly as AI-assisted research.

How evidence is handled

We prioritize official or first-party research pages, favor recent evidence for fast-changing AI behavior, retain sample and population context where material, and separate source findings from PMWorld360 interpretation. Cross-study patterns can inform a framework, but correlation is not presented as causation.

The research is used to answer one practical question: as AI accelerates software discovery and comparison, how can buyers use that speed well—and how can vendors become visible, understood and credibly represented while consideration is forming?

EDITORIAL BOUNDARY

This report is designed to help buyers make better decisions and help vendors understand how consideration is forming. It does not promise search rankings, AI citations, shortlist inclusion or sales outcomes.

PART I — THE SHIFT

AI is becoming a software discovery and shortlist layer

The most consequential change is not that buyers have found a new search box. It is that AI can compress several early research tasks into one interaction. Category education, terminology, vendor discovery, basic comparison and initial shortlisting can now happen in a continuous conversation. That makes AI an increasingly important research layer alongside search, independent reviews, comparison guides, vendor documentation, peers and direct conversations.

G2's 2026 software-buyer research provides one of the clearest signals of this shift. In its study of more than 1,000 B2B software buyers and decision-makers, 51% said they start software research with AI more often than Google, 71% use AI chatbots somewhere in software research, and 54% said AI chatbots influence which vendors make the shortlist. [1] These figures do not establish that Google has become irrelevant. They suggest that software discovery is increasingly multi-surface—and that AI-assisted synthesis can participate earlier in consideration formation.

That distinction is important for vendors. Traditional search visibility and AI visibility can now work together across the research journey. A company may be discovered in one surface and understood or validated through another. The strongest position is not simply to appear, but to be accurately represented across the sources buyers use to discover, compare and verify software options.

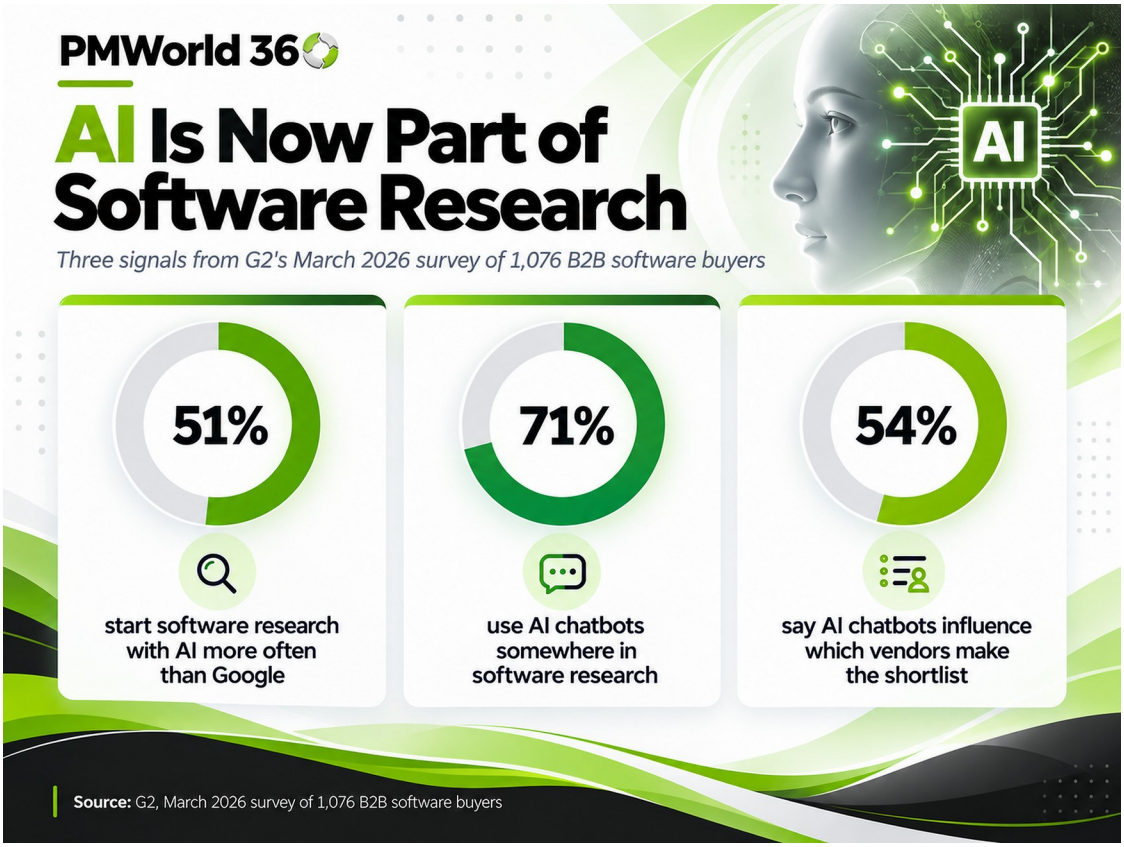


Figure 1. AI is becoming a core software research layer while buyers continue to draw on independent and primary sources.

What this changes for buyers

AI can make early research feel more complete because it can organize many options quickly. Buyers get more value when they use that speed to broaden the market map, then strengthen the shortlist with current source context, independent reviews, comparison guides, vendor documentation and direct evidence.

What this changes for vendors

The visibility question becomes broader than 'Do we rank?' Vendors need to understand whether they are present for relevant buyer questions, whether their fit is described accurately, whether they are compared against the right alternatives, and whether credible independent and primary evidence supports continued consideration. That is where AI visibility begins to contribute to decision value.

From AI visibility to buyer consideration

PMWorld360's working model separates five stages that are often collapsed into the single phrase 'AI visibility.' The stages are best understood as a progression: visibility creates the opportunity to enter consideration, while understanding, comparison and validation help qualified vendors remain useful and credible as the buyer moves forward.



Figure 2. PMWorld360's buyer-journey lens: AI can accelerate discovery while independent context and validation strengthen the path to a confident decision.

1. Visible

The vendor is present for relevant category, problem, use-case and competitor questions. This is the entry condition for consideration, not evidence that the buyer understands the product or prefers it.

2. Understood

The buyer can tell what the product does, who it is designed for, which workflows or constraints it fits, and where it may not be the right choice. Accurate understanding requires more than a feature list; it requires context.

3. Compared

Meaningful differences are represented against the right alternatives and criteria. A comparison is weak when it focuses on generic feature parity while ignoring implementation, governance, pricing structure, integration requirements or the use case that actually drives the purchase.

4. Validated

Decision-critical claims can be checked against current, credible evidence. That evidence may include independent software reviews and comparison guides, primary vendor documentation, customer experience, buyer resources, review platforms, peers, experts and direct sales or solution-engineering conversations. Independent editorial visibility can therefore contribute to validation as well as discovery.

5. Considered

The vendor remains a serious option as the buying group moves toward a decision. Consideration is therefore an outcome of multiple preceding conditions, not a synonym for visibility.

THE DISTINCTION

Search visibility, AI visibility and buyer consideration are different but connected parts of the research journey. Qualified visibility creates the opportunity; useful context and credible validation help that opportunity progress.

The five-stage model above describes successful progression. Later in the report, the AI Visibility-to-Consideration Gap uses the same logic diagnostically: it shows where a vendor can lose clarity, relevance, evidence or momentum before the buying group reaches serious consideration.

Faster discovery makes validation more valuable

AI reduces research friction while giving buyers more ways to explore a market quickly. Software purchases still affect budgets, workflows, data, security, integrations, governance, adoption and sometimes the operating model of the business. The opportunity is to use AI for speed while giving decision-critical claims enough independent and primary evidence to support a confident choice.

Gartner's research of 645 B2B buyers found that buyers used an average of seven information sources in a recent purchase, 45% used generative AI in that process, and 69% preferred to validate AI-generated insights with sales representatives. [3] Forrester's 2026 research similarly describes broad AI use alongside complex buying groups and continued reliance on trusted internal and external networks. [4] The populations and methodologies differ, but both reinforce a practical point: AI can participate in the decision without becoming the sole authority for it.



Figure 3. Faster AI-assisted research works best when buyers can validate what they find across multiple trusted sources.

Why independent validation becomes more valuable

AI systems are useful precisely because they can synthesize large amounts of information. That synthesis becomes more actionable when buyers can see the context behind important claims. Independent software reviews, comparison guides, buyer resources, vendor documentation and other sources help buyers corroborate, qualify and interpret what AI surfaces.

Validation is also where organizational context re-enters the process. A recommendation that looks strong in the abstract may fail because of migration complexity, data residency, security controls, user administration, reporting requirements, implementation capacity, procurement constraints or the economics of scale. Those are not edge cases. They are often the reasons a theoretically attractive tool becomes a poor operational fit.

Independent reviews and buyer guides can validate as well as discover

Independent software reviews, comparison guides and buyer resources can play two roles at once. They help buyers discover relevant vendors and they provide third-party context the buyer can use to test fit, differentiation, pricing assumptions and other decision-critical claims.

This matters in an AI-influenced journey because validation does not begin only after a shortlist is complete. A buyer may encounter an independent comparison before, during or after an AI interaction, and that source can shape both what is considered and how confidently the recommendation is interpreted.

DECISION PRINCIPLE

Use AI to accelerate discovery and comparison. Use independent context, current primary evidence and human judgment to strengthen confidence in the decision.

How to strengthen an AI-generated software shortlist

A strong shortlist should become more useful as it is tested. The goal is not to distrust AI by default. It is to improve the consideration set by adding source context, current evidence, credible alternatives and the organization's actual requirements.

Provenance and recency

Start by asking what sources support the recommendation and when the relevant information was last updated. Pricing, packaging, product names, integrations, security certifications and feature availability can change quickly. A correct recommendation based on stale assumptions can still lead to a poor decision.

Coverage and omission

Ask which credible alternatives may be missing and why. Shortlists are powerful because they reduce complexity, but that same compression can exclude viable options before they receive a fair evaluation. Buyers should actively challenge the boundaries of the consideration set.

Independence and incentives

Distinguish vendor-controlled information from independent editorial analysis, software reviews, comparison guides, sponsored content, peer input and customer references. Each source can be useful, but they answer different questions and carry different incentives. A strong decision uses them deliberately rather than treating them as equivalent.

Requirement fit and contradictory evidence

Test the shortlist against the organization's actual requirements, then ask for the strongest case against the leading recommendation. A useful evaluation should expose tradeoffs, not merely confirm the direction the buyer already prefers.

Implementation reality and decision defensibility

The final test is operational. What changes in migration, administration, adoption, support and ongoing ownership? Could the buying group explain why the winner won, what evidence supported the choice, which risks remain and why the rejected alternatives were rejected?



Figure 4. Five practical habits help buyers get more value from AI-assisted software research.

USEFUL PROMPT

What credible alternatives might be missing, what evidence is uncertain or outdated, what would change this recommendation, and which claims should we verify before moving forward?

The shortlist is becoming an earlier point of influence

Shortlists have always mattered, but AI-assisted discovery can make them form earlier. That increases the value of being visible and accurately represented while the consideration set is still taking shape—and increases the value of independent sources that help buyers broaden, compare and validate that set.

6sense's 2025 buyer research found that the winning vendor was already on the Day One shortlist in 95% of purchases studied and that roughly four in five deals were won by the pre-contact favorite. [5] G2's 2026 software-buyer research adds an AI-era mechanism: 54% of respondents said AI chatbots influence which vendors make the shortlist. [1] These are different studies with different populations and should not be combined numerically. Read together, however, they support a strategic observation: early consideration can have downstream consequences.

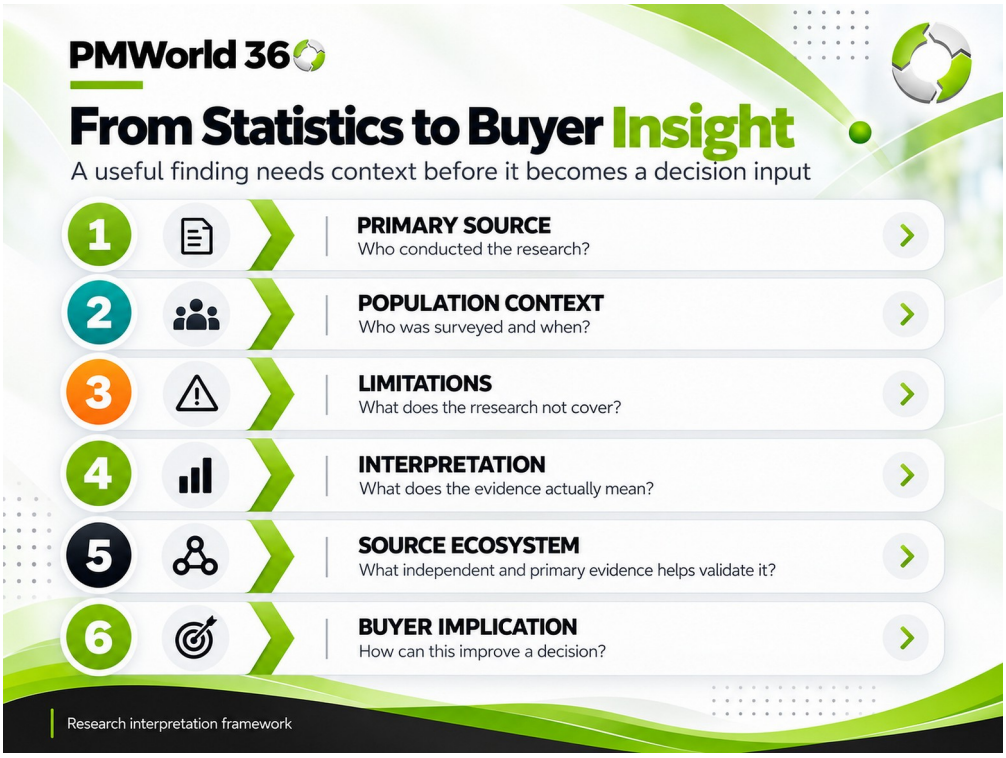


Figure 5. Different studies illuminate different parts of the same buying problem; they should inform interpretation without being blended.

For buyers: strengthen the first consideration set

A shortlist should reduce complexity after the market has been understood. Buyers can strengthen it by checking whether the list reflects their requirements, whether credible alternatives are missing, and whether independent reviews, comparison guides and other evidence support the distinctions being made.

For vendors: earn continued consideration

Being present early is valuable. The stronger objective is to remain relevant as the buyer's questions become more specific. Accurate category context, clear differentiation, credible independent and primary evidence and useful buyer resources all help qualified visibility progress into deeper evaluation.

The AI Visibility-to-Consideration Path — and where it can break down

AI visibility can create an earlier opportunity to enter the buyer's consideration set. PMWorld360 uses the AI Visibility-to-Consideration Path to show how that opportunity becomes more valuable as the vendor is accurately understood, compared in the right context and validated through credible independent and primary evidence. The same model also helps diagnose where progression can break down.



Figure 6. The AI Visibility-to-Consideration Path shows how qualified visibility can progress through understanding, comparison and validation into serious consideration.

Absent

The vendor is not surfaced for relevant buyer questions. This is the clearest discoverability gap: the buyer may never have the opportunity to evaluate the option.

Visible, but unclear

The vendor appears, but the buyer cannot yet determine fit, differentiation or the circumstances in which the product should be considered. Better context can turn initial visibility into useful understanding.

Understood, but miscompared

The product is described accurately but positioned against alternatives or criteria that do not reflect the buyer's real decision. This can happen when category labels are broad, markets converge or a product serves multiple use cases.

Compared, weakly validated

The vendor reaches the shortlist, but important claims still need enough credible evidence to support deeper evaluation. Independent reviews, comparison guides, customer evidence, primary documentation and direct validation can all strengthen confidence here.

Validated, commercially disconnected

The buyer has credible interest, but the next step is unclear or unhelpful. Better buyer enablement, relevant pricing context and an appropriate progression path can help convert validated interest into qualified action.

Considered

The vendor is visible, understood, appropriately compared and supported by enough evidence to remain a serious option. This is where AI visibility has progressed into informed consideration.

What software vendors and marketers should understand

AI visibility is increasingly valuable because it can influence discovery, comparison and shortlist formation before direct vendor contact. Its commercial value grows when the right buyer can understand the product, see it in the right comparison context, validate important claims and take an appropriate next step.

Discoverability

Are you present for real category, problem, competitor and use-case questions? Qualified visibility should be evaluated against buyer intent: the opportunity is to appear where relevant research and consideration are actually forming.

Understanding

Can an independent reader determine what the product does, who it fits and where it does not fit? Clear, accurate positioning helps AI systems, independent publishers and buyers represent the product more usefully.

Comparison

A useful way to think about this progression is discoverability → understanding → validation: can the vendor be found for the right buyer question, can the buyer understand its fit, and can that understanding be corroborated through credible independent and primary evidence?

Is there current evidence explaining meaningful differences in the right context? Independent comparisons and buyer guides can help buyers understand tradeoffs while giving AI-assisted research clearer third-party context.

Validation

Can buyers verify important claims through credible independent software reviews, comparison guides, customer evidence and primary sources? Validation is not separate from visibility: independent editorial visibility can give buyers the third-party context they use to confirm fit, differentiation and decision-critical claims.

Progression and measurement

Once a qualified buyer is interested, is the next step useful and appropriate? And can the organization distinguish visibility, referral traffic, engagement, progression, inquiries, pipeline and revenue? Measurement should move downstream from mentions whenever the data allows.

THE COMMERCIAL STANDARD
Qualified AI visibility creates the opportunity. Buyer understanding, decision value, appropriate progression, qualified action and measurable outcomes show whether that opportunity is creating commercial value.

AI is moving deeper into comparison and evaluation

The role of AI does not stop at category discovery. IDC's 2026 buyer/GTM analysis reports that 68% of buyers always or often use AI to compare products and features, while 46% use tools such as ChatGPT and Gemini to evaluate vendors. [2] Those findings point to a more demanding visibility environment: products are not merely being found; they are being summarized, contrasted and interpreted.



Figure 7. AI-assisted comparison is becoming more important, while independent comparison context helps buyers interpret the tradeoffs.

This raises the importance of comparison quality. Buyers need to know whether the criteria used by an AI system actually map to the decision they are making. Vendors need to know whether the available information makes their strengths, limitations and intended use cases understandable without reducing the product to generic feature parity.

A comparison is most useful when it explains consequential differences: implementation burden, workflow fit, administrative complexity, integration depth, governance, pricing structure, scalability, support model, data requirements and the conditions under which one option is a better fit than another. Those are the details that help a buying group move from 'these products look similar' to 'we understand the tradeoff.'

For PMWorld360, this is where AI visibility becomes especially useful. When an AI system compresses a category into a few sentences, specific use cases, explicit tradeoffs, current pricing

and implementation context, independent reviews and verifiable evidence give buyers more substance to work with—and give relevant vendors a stronger chance to remain in consideration.

PART IV — A SHARED READINESS TEST

Is AI-assisted research creating better-informed progression?

Buyers and vendors approach the market from different sides, but the quality of the decision depends on a shared information environment. Buyers benefit from clear requirements, AI-assisted discovery, independent context, verified claims and documented tradeoffs. Vendors benefit when they are visible, accurately understood, credibly validated and connected to a useful next step.

Buyer readiness

A buyer is better prepared when requirements are defined before vendor demos shape the decision, omissions and uncertainty are actively challenged, decision-critical claims are verified, stakeholders are involved before approval, tradeoffs and unresolved risks are documented, and the rationale for the final choice is preserved.

Vendor / marketer readiness

A vendor is better prepared when it is visible for relevant buyer questions, accurately understood, compared in the right context, supported by independent and primary evidence, connected to an appropriate next step and measured beyond mentions or citations.

SIMPLE STRESS TEST

If an AI-assisted shortlist were created today, would the right options be present, represented fairly and supported by enough evidence for a buying group to defend the decision?

A practical decision process for AI-influenced software buying

The most useful response to AI-assisted buying is not to add more steps. It is to let AI accelerate discovery and comparison while using independent reviews, buyer guides, primary evidence, demos and consistent evaluation criteria to strengthen the stages where confidence is built.

1. Define requirements before the market defines them for you

Clarify must-haves, constraints, stakeholders, workflows, governance, integrations, security requirements and budget assumptions before vendor demonstrations or AI recommendations begin to anchor the discussion. Requirements create the lens through which recommendations should be judged.

2. Use AI, search and independent sources to map the market

Use AI to explain categories, surface alternatives and identify questions you may not have considered. Use search, independent software reviews, comparison guides, buyer resources, review platforms, vendor documentation and peer input to broaden and validate the market map.

3. Build and pressure-test the shortlist

Reduce the market to a manageable set only after credible alternatives have been considered. Ask what was excluded, why it was excluded and what new evidence would justify changing the list.

4. Compare against consistent criteria

Normalize the evaluation so each vendor is assessed against the same decision-critical requirements. Avoid letting each vendor's strongest demo narrative redefine the criteria.

5. Model pricing and total cost

Compare licensing structure, implementation, migration, training, administration, integrations and ongoing operating costs. Headline subscription pricing is rarely the full economic picture.

6. Use demos to validate—not discover—requirements

A demo should test the workflows and risks already identified. Use consistent scenarios and questions so the buying group can compare evidence rather than presentation quality.

7. Score finalists and document the rationale

Use weighted criteria where appropriate, record unresolved risks, and preserve the reasoning behind the final decision. A defensible decision is one the organization can explain after the excitement of selection has passed.

PMWorld360 buyer decision toolkit

PMWorld360's software-selection resources are designed to support the stages above. They help buyers move from AI-assisted discovery into a repeatable evaluation process while adding structured comparison, pricing, demo and decision support.



Figure 8. When to use each PMWorld360 buying tool—and how it supports the software decision.

Use these PMWorld360 tools as working decision artifacts. Each opens a practical resource that supports a specific stage of the software-selection process.

PM Software Requirements Assessment — Define must-haves, constraints and decision criteria before products or demos begin shaping the requirements.

PM Software Selection Tool — Turn team size, workflows, governance and budget needs into a buying profile that can guide market research.

PM Software Shortlist Builder — Build a focused vendor set, then pressure-test which credible alternatives may still be missing.

Project Management Software Comparison Guide — Compare shortlisted options against consistent buyer criteria so meaningful tradeoffs stay visible.

PM Software Pricing Comparison — Normalize vendor pricing and plan-level costs before budget assumptions harden.

PM Software Cost Calculator — Estimate first-year software spend using team size, plan and licensing assumptions.

PM Software TCO Calculator — Model three-year ownership cost across licensing, implementation and ongoing operating expense.

PM Software Demo Checklist — Use consistent scenarios and questions to test requirements, implementation realities and identified risks.

PM Software Evaluation Scorecard — Score finalists against weighted, evidence-based criteria and preserve unresolved risks and decision rationale.

Decision principle: use the tools to turn faster research into a better-supported, more defensible decision.

How to use the toolkit

1. Start with requirements, not products. Use the assessment and selection tools before demos or familiar vendor names anchor the decision.

2. Compare only after the shortlist is credible. Use the comparison, pricing and TCO tools to expose tradeoffs under consistent assumptions.

3. Preserve the evidence behind the choice. Use the demo checklist and evaluation scorecard to document risks, proof points and decision rationale.

The sequence matters more than using every tool. Choose the artifacts that reduce uncertainty at the stage your buying group is actually in.

PART VI — WHAT CHANGES NEXT

Five implications for B2B software buying

1. Discovery becomes faster; context becomes more valuable

As option-finding compresses, buyers can spend less time locating products and more time understanding fit, economics, implementation reality and risk. The value of information shifts from merely naming options to helping buyers interpret and validate the tradeoffs.

2. The first shortlist carries more influence

If early consideration increasingly forms through AI-assisted research, relevant vendors can enter or miss the initial set before a buyer reaches a vendor site or sales conversation. That makes qualified AI visibility—and accurate, independent context around it—more strategically important.

3. Independent visibility supports discovery and validation

Independent software reviews, comparison guides, buyer resources, peers, customer evidence and primary sources help buyers both discover relevant vendors and validate what they learn. No single source should carry the full decision; the value comes from triangulation.

4. Marketing and buyer enablement converge

Useful content does more than attract attention. It helps a buying group understand a category, compare options, verify claims and make progress. That creates a higher standard for vendor content and a clearer role for independent decision-support resources.

5. Measurement should move downstream from visibility

Visibility matters because it creates opportunity. Where measurement is possible, vendors should distinguish qualified visibility from referral traffic, engagement, buyer progression, inquiries, pipeline and revenue so they can see whether that opportunity is creating commercial value.

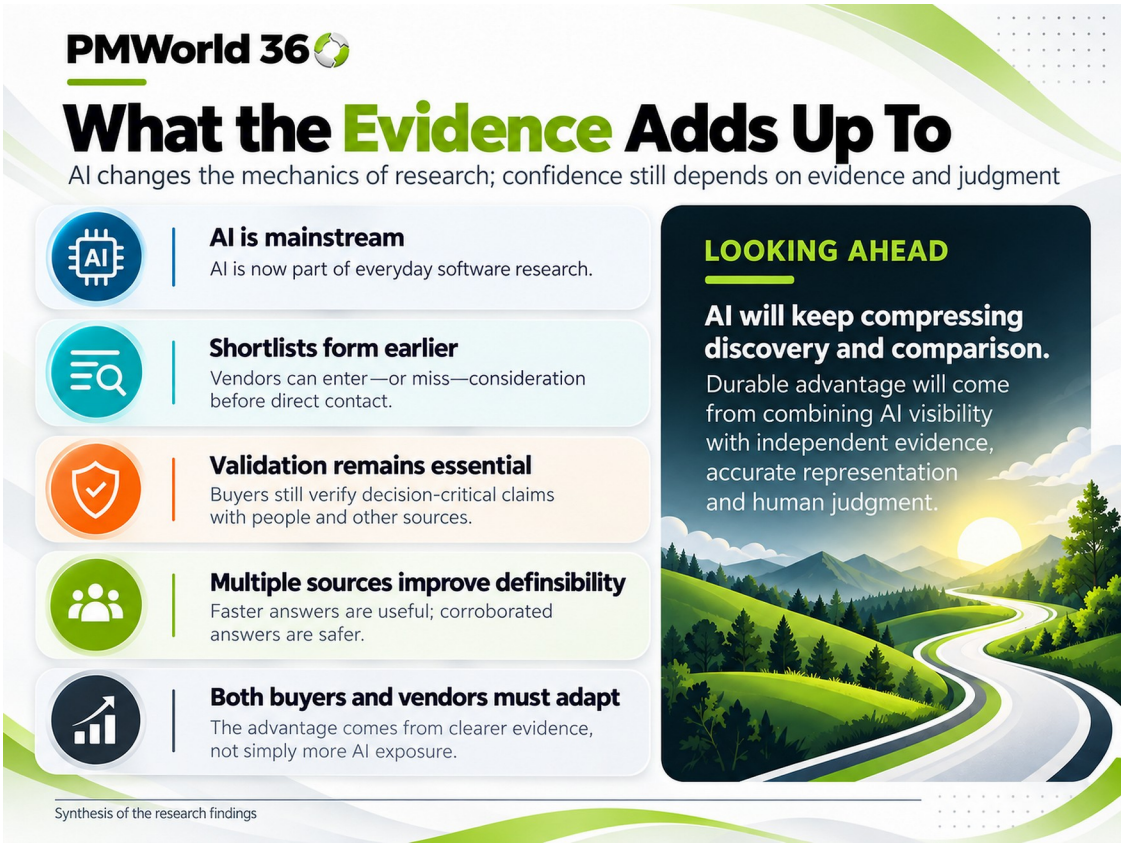


Figure 9. The research points toward a market where AI-assisted discovery, independent context and validation work together to support better-informed consideration.

CONCLUSION

AI visibility creates an earlier opportunity for consideration

AI is already changing how buyers discover and compare B2B software. The commercial significance is that meaningful parts of discovery, comparison and shortlist formation can now happen before a buyer reaches a vendor-controlled environment—and independent software reviews, comparison guides and buyer resources can help validate what buyers encounter along the way.

For buyers, that creates an opportunity to combine speed with confidence. AI can accelerate category education, surface alternatives and organize information; independent editorial sources, primary vendor evidence, peers and experts can add the context needed to validate fit, tradeoffs and decision-critical claims.

For vendors, the implication is equally specific. Visibility matters because a product cannot be evaluated if it is absent from the relevant consideration set. The stronger objective is qualified visibility that helps buyers accurately understand the product, compare it in the right context, validate important claims and progress toward an appropriate next step.

For independent software research publishers, the opportunity is to strengthen the information environment itself: clearer buyer questions, useful comparison context, transparent sourcing, practical evaluation tools and independent editorial evidence that can support both discovery and validation.

For buyers, the goal is faster research and a better-supported decision. For vendors, it is qualified visibility that progresses into informed consideration. PMWorld360's editorial role sits where those needs meet: helping buyers discover, understand, compare and validate software options while giving relevant vendors an opportunity to be accurately and credibly represented.

THE BOOKEND

AI visibility creates the opportunity for consideration. Clear understanding, independent context, credible validation, appropriate progression and measurable outcomes show how that opportunity becomes decision and commercial value.

The durable advantage—for buyers and vendors—will come from combining AI's speed with independent evidence, current primary information and accountable human judgment at the point of decision.

FOR B2B SOFTWARE VENDORS AND MARKETERS

Turn the research into a buyer-visibility brief

Before investing in more content or more AI exposure, test whether buyers can actually discover, understand, compare and validate your software in the contexts that shape a shortlist.

Six questions to answer first

- Buyer question — Which category, use case, problem or comparison should your ideal buyer find you in?
- Representation — Can a neutral reader tell what you do, who you fit and where you may not fit?
- Competitive context — Are you compared with the alternatives buyers genuinely evaluate?
- Evidence — Can important claims be corroborated through current primary and credible third-party sources?
- Progression — Once interest is earned, is there a useful next step for a qualified buyer?
- Measurement — Can you separate visibility from engagement, buyer progression, inquiries, pipeline and revenue?

Where PMWorld360 fits: B2B Software Buyer & AEO Visibility Editorial creates independent buyer-focused resources around legitimate categories, comparisons, alternatives, use cases and decision questions. Sponsored relationships are disclosed and PMWorld360 retains editorial control.

A strong buyer-visibility brief should give PMWorld360 enough context to evaluate: your target buyer, the decision they are making, the category or use case, the competitors they genuinely compare, the evidence available to support claims, and the buyer questions that matter most.

Use this test before outreach: if you cannot name the buyer question and the evidence needed to answer it credibly, the opportunity is probably not specific enough yet.

Explore B2B Software Buyer & AEO Visibility Editorial →

PRIMARY SOURCES

References

[1] G2 — The Answer Economy: How AI Search Is Rewiring B2B Software Buying
2026; 1,000+ B2B software buyers and decision-makers.

[2] IDC — Your Buyer Has Moved. Has Your GTM?
2026 buyer/GTM analysis.

[3] Gartner — 69% of B2B Buyers Validate AI-Generated Insights
May 20, 2026; 645 B2B buyers surveyed Aug-Sep 2025.

[4] Forrester — The State Of Business Buying, 2026
Based on nearly 18,000 global business buyers.

[5] 6sense — B2B Buyer Experience Report 2025
Global B2B buyer research.

[6] G2 — 2026 Buyer Behavior research
2026 software-buyer research.

[7] LinkedIn & Bain — Principles of Buyability
2026.

[8] Edelman & LinkedIn — 2025 B2B Thought Leadership Impact Report
2025; global professionals.

[9] Google Search Central — AI features and your website
Official guidance for AI Overviews and AI Mode.

Methodology appendix

B2B buying research is easy to flatten into unsupported market-wide claims. This report deliberately preserves source boundaries. A G2 software-buyer percentage is not treated as interchangeable with a Forrester business-buyer percentage, and a self-reported survey finding is not presented as observed behavioral data.

- Prioritized first-party research pages and official reports.
- Favored 2025–2026 evidence for fast-changing AI-assisted buying behavior.
- Retained sample and population context where material.
- Used cross-study patterns without averaging incompatible studies.
- Separated buyer guidance from vendor/marketer implications.
- Kept the report educational and evidence-led rather than turning it into a service brochure.

Research cutoff: September 2026. AI-assisted buying behavior is changing quickly; individual percentages should be read as dated measurements, not permanent baselines.