

New Ponemon–NOLA Marketing Study Reveals What Influences Enterprise Cybersecurity Buyers

BURLINGAME, CA, UNITED STATES, March 16, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A new independent research report from Ponemon Institute and NOLA Marketing finds that enterprise cybersecurity buyers are raising the bar for technical depth, proof, and measurable ROI, while peer validation and research-backed content now outweigh traditional vendor marketing and analyst influence.

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In security procurement, partial confidence limits influence. Security leaders require validation that solutions perform under real-world conditions and align to measurable business and risk outcomes.”

*Dr. Larry Ponemon, chairman
and founder of Ponemon
Institute*

The joint study, *The State of Cybersecurity Marketing Influence on Buyers 2026*, is based on a survey of 320 enterprise cybersecurity decision-makers across mid- to large-enterprise organizations. The findings provide data-driven insight into how cybersecurity marketing influences purchasing decisions, vendor selection, and renewal behavior in today’s AI-augmented buying environment.

“Enterprise buyers are not rejecting marketing,” said Emily Matthews, founder of NOLA Marketing and co-author of the report. “They’re demanding more of it—more technical depth, more measurable outcomes, and more evidence-backed claims. Credibility gaps remain the primary barrier to influence.”

Key Findings from the 2026 Study

- Credibility gaps persist. While 58% of respondents say marketing supports decision-making, 52% cite insufficient technical depth, and 49% report weak ROI justification.
- Peer-driven discovery leads. Peer recommendations rank highest at 55%, followed by staff recommendations at 48% and peer review sites at 44%.
- Research-backed assets drive selection. Research and survey reports show the strongest direct purchasing influence at 46%, outperforming all other content types.
- Analyst influence is declining. 56% report that the importance of industry analysts has decreased over the past two years.
- AI is embedded in vendor evaluation. 35% of security teams now use AI tools in the product selection process, including AI chatbots, AI overviews, and AI-assisted RFP drafting.

The research reveals that enterprise cybersecurity buyers evaluate vendors through a distributed-influence ecosystem that includes peer-review sites, consultants, resellers, technical workshops, research reports, website content, and AI-generated summaries. No single authority dominates the buyer journey.

Technical Depth and ROI Evidence Drive Enterprise Approval

The study shows that website content (45%) and solution briefs (41%) are the most requested digital evaluation assets, indicating that core web and product content should serve as structured evaluation tools rather than high-level brand overviews.

Buyers consistently report friction when marketing materials lack:

- Evidence-backed claims
- Clear articulation of real-world performance
- Transparent discussion of tradeoffs
- ROI and cost justification
- Integration guidance within existing security stacks

“In enterprise cybersecurity procurement, partial confidence limits influence,” said Dr. Larry Ponemon, chairman and founder of Ponemon Institute. “Security leaders require validation that solutions perform under real-world conditions and align to measurable business and risk outcomes.”

Events and Practitioner-Oriented Formats Matter

Security leaders favor technically substantive formats over promotional events. Webinars (44%) and technical workshops (43%) rank as the most valued event formats.

The findings underscore the weight of practitioner credibility in cybersecurity purchasing decisions. Peer review platforms and practitioner-led validation serve as prominent trust signals in an increasingly AI-shaped digital discovery landscape.

AI Is Reshaping the Buyer Journey

The study also highlights the growing role of AI in vendor evaluation. Among AI users:

- 51% use AI chatbots for product research
- 48% rely on AI-generated overviews
- 42% use AI for product comparisons
- 39% incorporate AI into drafting RFPs

While trust in AI-generated outputs remains mixed, visibility within AI-generated responses is emerging as a competitive requirement for cybersecurity vendors.

Implications for Cybersecurity Marketers

The report outlines ten strategic actions to operationalize the findings, including elevating original research, embedding quantified proof points, strengthening peer-driven validation

channels, aligning content to specific risk profiles, and optimizing for AI-assisted discovery (Answer Engine Optimization).

Where to Get the Report

The full report, The State of Cybersecurity Marketing Influence on Buyers 2026, is available for free download on NOLA Marketing's website. Go to nolamarketing.com and click Reports.

About NOLA Marketing

NOLA Marketing is a strategic marketing firm specializing in cybersecurity and complex technology markets. The firm helps organizations strengthen positioning, differentiate in technical environments, and build evidence-based marketing programs that influence enterprise buyer evaluation and renewal decisions. More information at nolamarketing.com

About Ponemon Institute

Ponemon Institute is a globally recognized research organization dedicated to advancing responsible information and privacy management practices in business and government. Founded in 2002, the Institute conducts independent research on cybersecurity, data protection, and emerging technology trends. More information at ponemon.org.

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