

## Introduction to Me2B Relationships and Me2B Deals

Version 1.0 | July 29, 2021

Author: Me2B Alliance

#Me2BRelationship #Me2BDeal

### IN A NUTSHELL

There currently isn't an adequate vocabulary to describe people's experiences in the digital world, which impedes understanding and conversations around what's actually happening, and what harms are lurking. The Me2B Alliance has developed a set of terms to help bridge this gap. Central to the vocabulary is the concept of **Me2B Relationships**, which are the relationships people (Me's) have with purveyors of products or services (B's), and the concept of **Me2B Deals**, which are exchanges of value between a person (Me's) and a business ("B").

In order to analyze and measure the behavior of connected technology, the Me2B Alliance has developed a way speak about our interactions in the digital world with specificity and nuance – a vocabulary that enables us to describe how we live and experience our lives in the digital world.

As described in Flash Guide #3, the Me2B Alliance's ethical foundation, our Rules of Engagement, are based on the characteristics of healthy relationships and interactions. In our lives we experience several kinds of interpersonal relationships: with family, acquaintances, healthcare providers, guardians, colleagues, roommates, friends, business partner, romantic partner, spouse, ex-spouse, etc. Several of these relationships, like marriage, entail legal recognition and obligations. In addition, as part of our daily lives (especially in the US), we experience multiple instances of another kind of relationship - interactions with service providers, retailers, manufacturers, and the like. But what do we call *these* relationships?

The Me2B Alliance proposes the term **Me2B Relationship** to cover all of the relationships between individuals (Me's) and businesses (B's) that are characterized by the presence of value exchange - I give you this, you give me that - also known as *quid pro quo*, Latin for "this for that." Each individual value exchange is called a **Me2B Deal**.

Me2B Relationships and Deals take place in both the physical world and in the digital world, and there are some differences in the two planes of existence. This Flash Guide introduces the elements of Me2B Relationships and Deals as they occur "offline" - in the physical world. Flash Guide #5 will discuss how Me2B Relationships and agreements look online.

Me2B Relationships in the physical world occur most often with retailers, products and/or brands. People develop attitudes towards these products, brands, and companies on the basis of their interactions with them. Like interpersonal relationships, the quality of Me2B Relationships may change over time, as a person's experience with the business, brand, or product changes. Finally, these relationships are layered – they may simultaneously involve attitudes towards a retailer, a brand that the retailer carries, and a specific product that the brand makes.

Let's take a specific example. A typical "Me", Mia, may really like shopping at Target (a "B") – she has a Me2B Relationship with Target. She likes the product selection, the prices, and the customer service. Mia has an attitude regarding Target that's formed by:

- a. Her experiences over time buying, returning, and using stuff from Target.

- b. What Mia reads or learns about Target from people in her life, or other news sources.

Me2B Relationships are often layered. Mia may purchase an OXO storage container set from Target, for instance. That transaction informs Mia's opinion about Target ("Hmm, Target never puts OXO stuff on sale"). Simultaneously, it will affect Mia's attitude toward the brand OXO ("They make really high quality, usable stuff; well worth the higher price"), and the specific storage container product ("I can really trust these containers to keep my food air-tight"). Mia now has Me2B Relationships with Target, OXO the brand, and the OXO storage containers. These are all "Me" to "B" relationships, but we refer to Mia's relationship with the storage containers as a "Me-to-Product" or **Me2P Relationship**.

Like all the relationships in our lives, Me2B Relationships change over time. Mia's ongoing use of the storage containers will inform her opinion about both OXO as a company and her opinion about the containers, themselves. Information Mia learns about OXO as a corporate citizen will also color her opinion about OXO. Mia's opinion or attitude towards Target and OXO will change relative to her personal experiences with each. She may, for example, move far away from Target, or may find that she prefers a different store, or find a container brand that she likes better.

When Mia buys the containers from Target she's performing a Me2B Deal, that is, she pays a certain amount of currency in exchange for the containers. These deals appear frequently in everyday life, and we each have our own personal "calculus" for what kind of deal is acceptable vs. unacceptable. When Mia goes to the corner deli at lunchtime, for instance, she pays \$10 for a tuna salad sandwich, and that seems about right to her. Economists call this internal, private decision-making "[behavioral economics](#)". The contextual nature of behavioral economics is at play, for instance, if Mia decides that \$45 is acceptable for a reimbursed business meal, but not an everyday lunch.

Understanding the dynamics of Me2B Relationships and Me2B Deals in the physical world gives us an essential foundation necessary for describing and evaluating what happens in our online interactions.