

Stan's Buying Experience – Heavy Equipment

Buyer Persona Profile

Priority Initiative

Success Factors

Perceived Barriers

Decision Criteria

Buyer's Journey



Persona name

Stan

Roles

Owner or General Manager

Education

Undergraduate Degree

Segment

Construction companies, <100 employees, US, UK, Germany, Australia

Reports to

Self or GM

MY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THIS DECISION

I'm loyal to brands that provide great service but always want to make sure we're getting the best value for our investment.

We gather feedback from our operators and mechanics to prioritize what new equipment we should buy with our available budget. The General Manager takes that input and comes up with the list of what we need and to do the research on our options. The GM and owner arrive at a consensus to make the final decision.

MY TOP PRIORITIES FOR THIS YEAR

- Expand our customer base, retain existing customers
- Keep everything liquid, as far as out-of-pocket costs
- Be in a more stable financial situation by paying down as much debt as possible without acquiring new debt
- Maximize profit margins
- Grow our business 4-5% a year

RESOURCES I TRUST

- **Peers:** People I know or find through online forums, operator blogs
- **Online Research:** YouTube, manufacturer sites
- **Salespeople:** Dealers, manufacturer's reps
- **Manufacturer Websites:** Comparative specifications, videos
- **My Team:** Operators and mechanics

Stan's Buying Experience – Heavy Equipment

Buyer Persona Profile



STAN

Owner or GM
Construction Industry

Priority Initiative

Success Factors

Perceived Barriers

Decision Criteria

Buyer's Journey

AWARENESS - peers, online blogs & forums

- We know that new equipment will help us grow, and new projects justify the purchase
- We regularly replace old equipment to avoid mechanical issues
- Our customers have needs that we can't address with the current equipment

- We'll have confidence that we can get the work done on time
- The guys in the field will be happy and won't need retraining
- Our maintenance people will be more efficient with the new machine designs
- Our customers and subcontractors will be impressed and bring us more business

RESEARCH – Google, videos, vendor websites, dealers & mfg. reps

- It's hard to compare the available models and manufacturers
- All the manufacturers are alike, there's no innovation
- We're loyal to the brand we've been using and don't want to add another

- How easy will it be for our operators to adapt to it?
- What are the specs for weight and lift capacity?
- Can you assure us that we won't have downtime for service?
- How quickly can we obtain parts for breakdown servicing?
- What terms can you offer for financing or volume purchases?
- We'll pay more to buy the brand that we, and our peers, trust

PURCHASE – Trial

- Talk with peers, read online operator blogs, participate in forum
- Search online - Google, view YouTube videos
- Hands-on experience with equipment
- Visit vendor websites in search of videos and spec sheets
- Ensure operators and mechanics like it
- Meet with dealers to compare pricing and terms
- The owner or GM and I agree to buy

We know that new equipment will help us grow, and new projects justify the purchase

“My business is transitioning more and more into the landscape side and out of the lawn care business. We're doing more landscape work and landscape installs to the point where we kind of needed it. It just comes down to, I landed five or six more shopping centers, which are seasonal contracts, [flat] contracts. I know the money is coming in—it's guaranteed.”

“We have phenomenal construction growth in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, around all of our locations. We're very, very busy. We've had real good demand for all of our equipment, so in addition to our replacements, we were adding for additional needs. That was driven by our marketplaces.”

“There were four farms that came up for sale. We discussed if we could buy those farms financially, and how we would have to change farm equipment to handle that extra land.”

We regularly replace old equipment to avoid mechanical issues

“We were beginning to get some hours on, so I do the comparison as far as hours on machine, repairs, and reliability versus warranty on a new machine. That's how we look at equipment. When we trade in depends on the machine and if we had trouble in the past versus what's the cost of the new machine, or payments on a new machine.”

“We had a four-year-old skid steer that was slightly too small and had some mechanical issues throughout its life, so we wanted to go to the next size bigger; from what the salesman is saying and our experience with other skid steer when you go slightly larger their components don't seem to be quite so breakable.”

“Roughly every three years, some part of the machine has to be replaced. With some of the machines, replacing is not that easy, or the cost of replacement is almost comparable to getting a new one. We try to procure a new one instead of just working with the old one.”

“I trade on an annual basis. Warranty is a big issue, because of the cost of repairs once a machine is out of warranty. I trade machinery often to keep from having extensive downtime and unpredictable costs.”

Our customers have needs that we can't address with the current equipment

“It was diversification, in terms of what we offer. One of our long-standing clients needed to hire equipment from us that we didn't have, and it's been requested on a number of occasions by different clients over the years. We thought it would be a worthwhile investment.”

“I'm wanting to branch out into some other areas, wanting to work in construction and maybe some concrete removal and some things. So, I was looking at, I'm already a business owner. I have an 18 Wheeler. I made some money and I needed either to buy some equipment or let the government have some more money, you know what I mean?”

“Things have slowed down our core line of work. So we started doing more small work, and needed a smaller piece of equipment. It's just more opportunities in a new area right now.”

We'll have confidence that we can get the work done on time

"We do a lot of jobs where we tear down a McDonald's and they rebuild it. They've got some of these jobs with 60 to 75 days to tear it down, rebuild it, and start serving hamburgers. If you're down a day with a ratty old piece of equipment, that's one extra day and it just doesn't look right."

"I was looking for increased efficiency. In South Dakota, we're always up against winter setting in during the harvest. Being able to cover more acres was important. For the same class and size of machine, the Lexion is able to handle more grain more efficiently, and speed up harvest."

"It's dollars and cents. We have to get out so many tons per day. We are very weather-related; it's a seasonal business. We need a machine that's going to work when we need it."

The guys in the field will be happy and won't need retraining

"You don't want to throw a wrench in everything by having to retrain them on a piece of equipment. You want them to feel comfortable running the equipment. Ease of operation."

"The guys in the field are happy because we put them on machinery they like to work on all day. It makes the job go more efficiently and faster."

"The foremost thing is user satisfaction, so we try to get user feedback whenever we buy a machine. We try to incorporate as much as possible a machine which shoots to their needs."

"My guys like it. I drove it, so I'm aware of it, but the guys that really use, really liked it."

Our maintenance people will be more efficient with the new machine designs

"I want the newer technologies. My old machine, when you changed the oil and oil filter, you had to access it through the grain tank. I was getting a little tired of that process. The newer ones have on the back as you crawl up the ladder. It's a lot more accessible. That was the major benefit."

"It takes a lot of weight off maintenance. We had some service issues, and we drastically bought new equipment. If it's older, the assumption is, "Oh, something went wrong." If it's a new piece, it's, "You're not doing something right.""

"The newer machines are always updated. They've worked on fuel efficiency, seals in the track systems. Downtime costs you big. I've got two hired men, and if my machine is broken down, they're standing around and I'm paying them."

Our customers and subcontractors will be impressed and bring us more business

"We want more repeat customers. If our equipment looks good, runs good, and we're not broken down all the time, that means a lot on the customer's part. They see that we're in and out, not having equipment sitting there broken and waiting on a mechanic to come fix it. That's helpful for us to get other work from the same customer's contractors."

"When you're at a site and it comes off the trailer, it gives people peace of mind knowing that it looks professional. It doesn't look shabby, which is important to me."

"If I use something that's five years old and it breaks down, even if it's minor, everyone calls it a piece of shit because it looks old. People come to me because I have new gear."

It's really hard to compare the available models and manufacturers

"There are too many choices of too similar equipment, and we couldn't differentiate. We found, from several manufacturers, there seemed to be four or five all doing exactly the same thing. It was maddening."

"If you don't know anything about the equipment, you don't know what you are looking at. The website is pretty decent, but you gotta click on one machine, try to figure out the specs on that, then click on the next machine and then remember the specs for the last one, or start printing all the information out, so you can look at the specs between one machine and the other."

"A lot of times, they're switching all the measurements around, capacities, and they'll low grade at a different standard. At the point of the pin, this is low graded at 24-inch center off on a tool. That kind of thing takes more time to sort through than it does to do anything else."

All the manufacturers are alike, there's no innovation

"Most of the equipment is comparable. I don't know of a machine that's "bad." It's your personal preference, where you think you can get the best service and financials for your operation."

"We haven't really shopped around in terms of thinking there'd be much difference from one model to another. Obviously, there are lots of different types of Genie scissor lifts, other operators, as well. We've been inclined to stick with what we know as opposed to try something different."

"Most of these brands are very competitive in their design, engineering, and technology. Everybody's pretty much on the same page, as far as advancement and those things."

"They all do the same thing, they all performed the same functions. I really can't say, "This brand's more superior than the other one." Now, if somebody tells me that they do something totally different, then I'm open for it. But there's been zero innovation."

We get the best service by working with locally owned companies

"Our dealers are local owned, so you get to know the mechanics and salesmen. You get a more personal touch in the service. You have one to bat for you if you have a warranty issue. We don't want to get into that conglomerate owned one."

"The disadvantage for me, of course, is my location. We're further away—an hour away—so if you haul it down there, you have to load it up and drive an hour there and back and it kills half a day."

"Our local dealership was recently bought out by a larger chain. We had a salesman we were pretty close to and they let him go, so we're not happy about that. If you lose that closeness of dealing with somebody vs. a conglomerate, that makes me want to change. If they're local people, you know them. They become like friends or family."

Brand X breaks down frequently and is costly to repair

"We had a few (Brand X) machines in our fleet, and when they did breakdown and we were in search of parts, they were usually down for three to four weeks at a time. We found they breakdown a lot more often than the (Competitor A & B) models."

"What made us shy away from (Brand X) was the maintenance. I talked to my buddy in mechanics, and he said there's a lot of guys that will bring one in for routine service and walk out with a \$30,000 bill. They have good technology, but the maintenance cost is a lot higher on them. Their equipment doesn't stand up as good as they want us to think, because I can go in their shop at any given time and there's one or two torn apart."

"(Brand X) tended to keep their product somewhat simple, but now they're making it more electronic. In some ways that makes it better, in some ways makes it worse. When something goes, it's a \$200,000 computer versus a \$3 relay. I guess they feel that's the way they've got to go."

We're loyal to the brand we've been using and don't want to add another

"People are pretty loyal to their brand. They don't change back and forth between companies very much. If we had good luck with the current line of equipment it's, "Do you want to take a chance on being unhappy with another one when you're happy with the current line?""

"The reason we don't buy Brand X is purely because of the number of brands. When we started, Brand X wasn't very good in the area. We'd already got (competitors A, B and C). I didn't want four different brands in the fleet. That's too many, so it was just uniformity."

"We standardize, so as long as there's no model changes, we're already in that model, unless it's something drastic. We try to stay with the same brand."

"We try not to have too many different brands. It just means parts aren't interchangeable, or you don't want to mix and match too many different types of equipment."

How easy will it be for our operators to adapt to it?

“Brand A has been the main machine around for years, so a lot of construction sites and construction workers have been using them for years. So really, it comes down to preference. They prefer the Brand A model, which they’ve been using for a lot longer, opposed to some of these new models where they have to get training on them.”

“We look at which one is easiest to use and the familiarity. We judge that by talking with other companies that we deal with, and we’ll ask each sales rep for each manufacturer, hear their point of view, and at the very end, it’s more like a gut feeling. This seems simple for us to understand or use.”

“It’s hard to find good hired help, and then the commonality between the rest of our equipment, so when they get in one machine, it’s the same controls as the next one.”

“We looked for load capacity, horsepower, turning radius, what style transmission it had. We wanted something that is smooth and turns well. We work in a tight space.”

What are the specs for weight and lift capacity?

“It had to lift 2,000 pounds. Anything we buy on a pallet is usually a ton. A lot of machines out there were a couple of hundred pounds shy of that. The next jump up was much more than that and way more machine than we needed.”

“If I want to get people and equipment in the air, it might take two pieces of equipment. If we could find one piece of equipment to do the job, I would buy something like that in a heartbeat. At the moment, I’m looking at a machine that has 450 kilo capacity, which is a huge sell point.”

“I was looking for how much weight the machine could haul with the thumb, how much power they put out, how much weight the machine would lift with the thumb 10 feet out.”

“How much it actually weighs to get on some buildings, where we’re not going to cave in if we have to climb on a building. How stable it would be on foundations and stuff.”

Can you assure us that we won't have downtime for service?

“I have to have somebody that will give me service and really take care of me. I called my dealer at 7:00 on a Friday night. The pump went out of that machine, and in an hour, he found me one and by midnight, that thing was running. That’s service. I won’t forget how he took care of me when I needed it bad. When you get overwhelmed with good service, you just don’t have an appetite to change.”

“Brand A has very good aftermarket support in regards to technical support and supply of parts, which can be very important maintaining a hire fleet. We can pretty much guarantee that when we order parts, we will get our parts overnight. Other manufacturers can be a bit hit and miss. That’s one of the number one things they do very well.”

“You need the support of the dealer to keep it running. You can’t afford to have it not running. The dealer we chose has 24-hour service and has been good about getting things fixed and going again, even if it takes them all night.”

“Naturally it’s no down time, the quicker you get in and out of a job, the more money you can make. Time is money on these jobs, you bid them, we’re being worked so tight it’s the only thing you can do.”

How quickly can we obtain parts for breakdown servicing?

“There's actually some gear I think is better than Brand X, but Brand X is easier to maintain. Their stock, inventory, and parts. You take Brand X equipment apart and you can get genuine Brand X. You can buy off the market Brand X, you can buy used Brand X, all from the Brand X dealer. Most of it is next-day delivery, like overnight, or you can go pick it up. Up here, the dealers are small and you've got to wait for Brand A or Brand B from the States or somewhere. It's slower to get parts. Our biggest thing is turnaround time. If you're running old gear and you've got maintenance, it's easier to get turnaround time with Brand X. That's a selling point.”

“Sourcing parts for (Brand A, B, or C) is a lot harder as opposed to (Brand X). We've got a few Brand B machines in our fleet, but the parts come from (country) where they're manufactured. Same with (Brand A). We've had a few (Brand A's) in our fleet, but they tended to breakdown a lot more than (Brand X). And in terms of breakdown servicing, (Brand X) was a lot more responsive than the other manufacturers.”

“(Brand A's) spare parts delivery is awful. We're waiting two months for spare parts for a \$400,000 machine that's sitting there, because we can't get the parts or tech assistance.”

What terms can you offer for financing or volume purchases?

“Some of these guys have lease-type programs that you can lease them for a certain amount of hours. We usually put quite a few hours on these things in a year, so we were looking at (competitor A, B, & C) about what type of programs they had.”

“Terms are huge. We decided on (Brand X) because they threw in free freight and were a few hundred bucks cheaper per unit. The free freight really sealed the deal for us. Availability of credit. Various programs to choose from. I know they buy down the financing, but it's always good to have a low interest rate going into a deal, and then say, “Hey, you know we've got a three, four, five-year deal.””

“If you run one line more, financing wise, they offer multi-unit discounts the more items you buy. That's a huge factor.”

“A lot depends on programs and incentives offered by the companies. You will get multiple unit incentives, or possibly interest-free for 10 or 11 months. That's always a big issue you can put in that equation.”

We'll pay more to buy the brand that we, and our peers, trust

“Price was a consideration, and I could have gone with China. There were things that were realistically a quarter of the price. But it seemed like they were throwaways. I wanted something that had a good name.”

“In other words, a Cadillac. Chevrolet makes vehicles that are comparable, but if the price isn't extraordinary, you'll go with Cadillac. That's how it felt with (Brand X). Even if another company was closer priced, I'm going with (Brand X).”

“It's really whether or not they have a good reputation in the industry and the guys like them. (Brand Y) is a well-known, popular brand within our sector of the market, which is mechanical and electrical engineering. In London, they're a very popular choice of brand.”

“In our eyes (Brand X) is the best. We pay a little bit more for (Brand X), and we know that, but we know it'll last longer and is more efficient. I could be wrong, but that's in my eyes. If for some reason it wasn't suiting our needs, they would adjust it and make it better or give us a different piece of equipment.”

I consult my peers through operator blogs and forums or phone calls

"I put a lot more weight on other peoples' experience with equipment than I do a salesperson telling me the pros and cons. I lean on peers within the industry that I know personally—see if they've had any experience with that product, and get feedback."

"I continuously use person-to-person information. It's a very good way of finding out what people like on the market. I use that as reference for why I purchase one brand over another. I go to blogs to find out if there are problems that other operators are having. If a lot of the same things come up, I learn this machine has a weak point. I watch that because I don't want to end up with one of them that has poor resale."

"I have lots of friends with other companies. I pick up the phone and say, "What do you see and what's hot this year? Where's this machine going? Are you having problems with this unit?" I've got equipment dealers that I'll ask, "What are you seeing this year?""

"I went on the internet and started searching the forums. I started asking questions about what companies had the best equipment, what people are using for similar type of work. I did get responses. I think it was really helpful."

I do online research to explore my options

"I tend to do most things online. I'm less inclined to look at trade magazines because they could be dated and biased as well. I already had some idea, some understanding of functionality, and a limited understanding of brands. Not so much the better or the worse brands, just what I'd come across out in the field. Google is the initial and main source."

"I watched YouTube videos, and advertisements. I'm a little old for YouTube, but it's still helpful seeing on-prem demonstrations of machinery."

"Some Googling, looking for whether there are new companies who are dealing with this product. Googling just the company name. First, I make clear that I have sufficient knowledge and information about what the company deals in, and what the company products are."

"I got on the manufacturer's site. I also got on YouTube, watched a couple of videos, dealer videos plus personal videos that people have posted."

I visit vendor websites for spec sheets and videos

"I usually go to (Brand Y's) website, and can see if they've changed any of the specs. I can see what changes they're making."

"I'll find a manufacturer website and look at different models, compare specifications, and see which is going to benefit us. It helps eliminate options that won't work for us."

"Most manufacturers' websites have video demonstrations and spec sheets on all their machines."

"I do a lot of searching on each manufacturer's website. The big thing is you can compare. It doesn't matter if you go on (Brand A or B). You can compare each other's tractors against each other, so you make sure you're getting the options you want, and what you're buying is going to fit your needs."

I meet with the dealers and manufacturers reps to learn more about specs

“Once I found the equipment I liked, I contacted the largest dealership in the area and started visiting with them. They were very professional. If they didn't know the answer, they were honest about that. There were several models. I knew the specs but didn't know how it applied to what I needed. I brought photos and videos of different terrains that I deal with on a daily basis. I gave them a brief orientation of what we do and what we need to do, the physical limitation. Then we went into different makes and models and the features of the models.”

“I went to our local dealer and started talking to him. They explained the changes to the machine over the one that we had, what the upgrades were, and how much more capacity and power it should have.”

“Their representative comes from time to time. That helps us to be in line with the new developments in machines with different companies. The representatives generally come just to see whether there are any requirements or everything is fine. In that discussion, they tell us about what new product is there. Those are really helpful.”

I go to multiple dealers to compare pricing and terms

“We know going in what brand we're going to be getting. But we ask for quotes on multiple units and brands to keep them honest.”

“The next step was sitting down with the dealers, getting pricing to see if they're close or one is going to be way cheaper, evaluating options and price level, then what each option is going to cost us.”

“I communicate with the source for the equipment. Sometimes directly from the manufacturers, and sometimes you have to go to a distributor or a manufacturer's rep to get information about pricing and things of that nature.”

“We deal with four main suppliers on a regular basis, so we get in contact with them, ask them whether they have machines available, or if they have access to those machines in the timeframe we need. Then, we get pricing and go over what that includes in regards to additional extras that are fitted to the machines.”

The hands-on demo experience is the deciding factor

“Brand X brought a demo out right away. Brand A was the same way. They actually let us run with it. Get a demo where you can actually operate the equipment. That's the biggest thing. That's what sold us when we jumped from Brand X to Brand A. We wouldn't have done it if we couldn't have demoed them.”

“The test drive was very important, because looking at a machine, sitting some place isn't quite the same as running the machine. Hands-on is definitely a better way to figure out what you like.”

“We tried each one of them. They brought one out, and I was impressed with it. One, we got to put six hours on, and they let us run the other one for a day. They sent somebody out to help when we demoed it. They seemed attentive and like they were really trying hard.”

I make sure our operators, employees, and mechanics are happy with the choice

"I take in all I can from my operators and employees, put it all together, digest it, and we all work together and put our heads together and figure stuff out."

"We tested them out. Everyone using it, taking it out in the field, so they would get their opinion—what they liked or disliked."

"We'll talk to our mechanics. We'll talk to some subcontractor mechanics that we use and see what their experiences are with all these machines. That'll tell us, from the mechanic point of view, the reliability and any common problems they have."

"I was a big part of the decision-making. But, the people who work under me, I listen to their input, as to how they felt about the machines before we made a decision."

The owner and GM work together to make the final decision

"I'm the owner, and I'll be the one that says if we spend the dollars or not. My general manager talks to our team, comes back to me and says, "This is the wish list of what we want." I'll say, "Ok, what's the must-have thing right now?" We might say, "We'll buy that stuff over the next six months. What do we want first?""

"As the owner, I reserve veto power, but don't very often go against what my GM wants to do. We usually all agree."

"I put the quotes together and offer my recommendation to our owner who usually makes the final decision. My role is gathering all the data needed to compare models, and giving my recommendation."

"It's a combination of our owner and me. He oversees, but I'm the one in charge of training people on machines, and making sure they're going to work for what we need. It's usually a consensus. If he didn't feel comfortable doing something, we wouldn't do it, and if I didn't feel comfortable, we wouldn't do it."