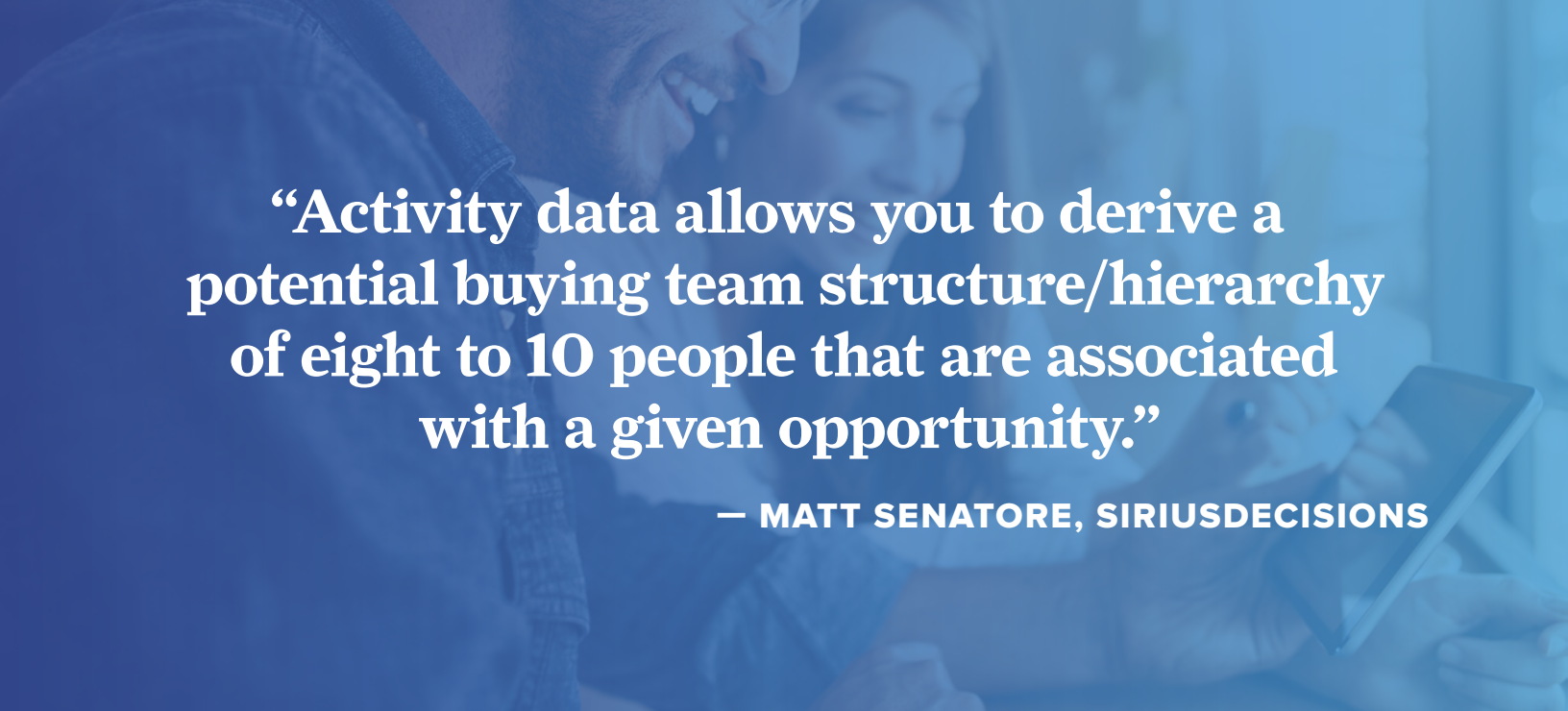# The Practitioner's Guide To Signal & Intent Data

Segmentation, Personalization Efforts Fueled With Signal Insights & Buyer Intent Boost Account & Ad Targeting, Engagement

DEMAND GEN REPORT

SPECIAL REPORT

> ## "Activity data allows you to derive a potential buying team structure/hierarchy of eight to 10 people that are associated with a given opportunity."
>
> ### — MATT SENATORE, SIRIUSDECISIONS

## Introduction

In order to get the right message in front of target accounts when they are actively looking for answers, B2B companies are increasingly adding other data sources to their first-party insights.

Progressive companies, such as **Pramata**, **Masergy** and **Extreme Networks**, are beginning to incorporate more signal data — merger/acquisition, relocation, funding, new hires and other information — along with intent data into their daily activities to better segment their database, specify their messaging to target accounts and better target anonymous visitors through hyper-personalized display advertising.

"Activity data allows you to derive a potential buying team structure/hierarchy of eight to 10 people that are associated with a given opportunity," said Matt Senatore, Service Director for the Account-Based Marketing practice at **SiriusDecisions**. "In our demand unit world, we care about opportunities. Those opportunities have multiple stakeholders. Activity data can now begin to determine that these people — with these titles, in these locations, with interest in this topic — are associated with one opportunity."

With the right signal and intent data, specialists are alerted of key milestones that can show when they should target prospects and accounts more in marketing and sales campaigns, as well as reassess messaging and reposition offers based on that insight. Ultimately, signal data can help B2B organizations segment, improve marketing and sales alignment and increase the relevancy of messaging to key accounts and prospective customers.

# "If there is a signal of intent — new funding or a new blog post, for example — it allows marketers to think differently."

## — MARK OGNE, ABM CONSORTIUM

"Signal data is outside-looking-in to target accounts; it brings opportunities to break the 'campaign mentality' and trigger in-sync interactions based on the needs of others," said Mark Ogne, Founder and CEO at the **ABM Consortium**. "If there is a signal of intent — new funding or a new blog post, for example — it allows marketers to think differently."

This report will provide an in-depth guide to incorporating signal data into your current marketing and sales initiatives, along with insights from industry practitioners detailing how to put this type of intelligence into practice within their organizations. Specifically, the report focuses on:

- How to appropriately leverage signal data to inform segmentation strategies for top-tier accounts;

- What signal data can do to help identify opportunities to retarget prospective customers with display advertising;

- How signal data pairs with intent and predictive insights to provide an even deeper, holistic view of account needs; and

- Where signal data can be obtained, as well as the questions that should be asked of signal data providers.

# Signal & Intent Data By The Numbers

**24%**

OF B2B COMPANIES ARE ALREADY USING INTENT DATA TO ENHANCE THEIR NURTURE PROGRAMS, WHILE CLOSE TO HALF ARE DOING RETARGETING (49%) AND/OR ACCOUNT-BASED NURTURES (48%).

*Source: 2018 Lead Nurturing & Acceleration Benchmark Survey*

**84%**

OF BUSINESSES SAY "OPPORTUNITY" DATA — I.E. SIGNAL DATA — IS VERY EFFECTIVE AT PREDICTING A SALE, BUT ONLY 29% OF COMPANIES USE IT.

*Source: DiscoverOrg*

**53%**

OF B2B COMPANIES SAID INTENT DATA IS THEIR TOP PRIORITY FOR INTELLIGENCE THEY WANT TO COLLECT ABOUT THEIR TARGET AUDIENCE.

*Source: 2019 Database Strategies & Contact Acquisition Survey*

**34%**

SAID THEY PLAN TO TEST/DEPLOY SIGNAL AND INTENT DATA IN 2019.

*Source: 2019 Demand Generation Benchmark Survey*

# "If I'm practicing ABM at a one-to-one level, understanding [signal/intent] data at the individual level allows me to get more granular with messaging and targeting towards that individual."

— MATT SENATORE, SIRIUSDECISIONS

## Moving Beyond Account Intent To Stakeholder Intent

While account-level intent signals have their place in fueling go-to-market initiatives, experts agreed that this type of insight should ultimately help companies understand the intent of individual stakeholders to create granular, meaningful discussions on their specific needs. Senatore advises to look at data in different levels of granularity — everything from the segment and account levels to the buying group and individual levels. This positions practitioners to make the most of the signal and intent data it has on target accounts.

"If I'm practicing ABM at a one-to-one level, understanding [signal/intent] data at the individual level allows me to get more granular with messaging and targeting towards that individual," said Senatore. "Doing it at a buying group level allows us to scale, providing insight to fine-tune messaging towards specific buying groups."

Masergy, a hybrid networking and unified communications company, wanted to build out its direct business model. Initially focusing on traditional inbound, the company soon realized it was driving a lot of volume but not a lot of revenue. The company turned to an account-based strategy fueled with intent and signal data from companies such as **TechTarget** and **Lattice Engines** to understand its target accounts and better fuel its sales development teams to engage effectively with key stakeholders at top-tier accounts.

# "We know that the data is accurate; our TAM is accurate from bookings and our intent is accurate because these stakeholders want to have genuine conversations with us."

— MALACHI THREADGILL, MASERGY

"We found out that the 80/20 rule really applies to us — 80% of our revenue was coming from 20% of our client base," said Malachi Threadgill, Director of Demand Generation and Global Sales Development at Masergy. "We needed to derive what intent looked like and understand how we would collect it and make it actionable."

"Intent was the magic bullet; TechTarget and Lattice helped moved the needle for our BDR outreach that resulted in good opportunities for the business and potential revenue," he added.

Sales and marketing leadership prioritize the accounts by identifying intent based on the three products Masergy offers. Once accounts show intent towards a product, those accounts are assigned to their respective BDRs.

"The BDR's responsibility is to look at all the data available to them and identify the key stakeholders based on the account's intent signals," said Threadgill. "It requires looking at data aggregators to understand who the contacts are in the buying unit. From there, we have a very regimented cadence for those individual contacts."

Masergy has seen its **monthly recurring revenue increase by 17%** by focusing specifically on leveraging signal and intent data to penetrate the segment most likely to contribute 80% of the revenue for the business.

"A bottoms-up view of success looks like this: Closed/won revenue, opportunities created and how many meetings we keep versus how many we set," said Threadgill. "Our set-to-keep ratio is currently 75%, and we see a 50% opportunity rate from there. We know that the data is accurate; our TAM is accurate from bookings and our intent is accurate because these stakeholders want to have genuine conversations with us."

# A successful channel for signal & intent data is targeted advertising.

## Finding The 'Swim Lanes' For Intent-Driven Display Advertising

Experts noted that a successful channel for signal and intent data is targeted advertising. While messaging and segmentation is possible, signal and intent data can also help prioritize ad spend towards accounts that are currently in market.

"If I've got a $10,000 budget for 5,000 accounts, I can use intent data to subset that budget towards those 500 accounts that are more likely to be in market," said Senatore. "Using the key terms that they are searching, I can put them in a 'swim lane' for what they need in terms of messaging and offerings."

For example, global talent acquisition and management company **Randstad Sourceright** targets larger, enterprise-level customers and monitors between 2,000 to 3,000 target accounts on a weekly basis.

"We use **Demandbase** and AI to understand our buyer intent and make recommendations," said Joost Heins, Head of Global Business Insights at Randstad Sourceright. "Our SEO efforts match what we see in that data. We also do targeted advertising, ultimately looking to target the right companies with the right messaging. We segment accounts based on buyer intent data and a keyword strategy. For example, we serve different ads based on where a company is in the buyer journey."

From there, the company also incorporates signal and intent data into sales reps' daily activities.

"The goal is to share that as much as possible with our sales team," said Heins. "That way, they have the right direction with those clients based on that intent. The second step is personalization. Now that we have a lot of industry content, we can look to understand what the market trends are and the early signals we should see and need to incorporate into our marketing mix."

The Sourceright team rolled this initiative out in September 2018 and it has been well received by the sales team. The company expects to see notable results within its 12- to 18-month sales cycle.

# TechTarget CMO Shares Successful Tactics, Predictions For Purchase Intent In B2B Business

## JOHN STEINERT
### CMO, TECHTARGET

Opportunities are endless when it comes to leveraging purchase intent insights within marketing and sales efforts. However, finding the use cases and tactics for intent data that best benefit a business requires the entire organization to embrace the necessary change required to maximize the use of these insights.

In an interview with John Steinert, CMO of TechTarget, he shared his thoughts on the current state of intent data in the B2B marketplace. Steinert also shared some tactics that are benefiting greatly from purchase intent data and discussed his thoughts on the future of B2B marketing fueled by intent signals.

**Demand Gen Report: What, in your opinion, is the current state of intent data in the B2B marketplace?**

**John Steinert:** Any innovative category takes a while to settle down. Purchase intent is no different. I think this guide takes an important step towards clarifying some key distinctions. For example, while a lot of signal data can be useful as background to better sales conversations, it's important not to equate it with real purchase intent — the rich data that empowers teams to make really important prioritization decisions about where to be more aggressive right now.

**DGR: How have you seen clients produce better content with intent insights? What are some of the short- and long-term benefits of leveraging these types of signals in content creation?**

**Steinert:** Real purchase intent data can serve teams at multiple levels. We see this play out in client organizations that really embrace it. When the data can show that a client's positioning and messaging is misaligned with where prospects' heads are

on a topic, we see strategists adjusting their positioning. Of course, marketers use it in related fashion to diagnose under-performance in advertising, email, web content and the like. Because with real intent, they can tell what interests active buyers at a granular level. We see them applying it successfully to event agendas, and enabled salespeople can use intent to better shape outreach as well as content for subsequent meetings.

**DGR: What are some of the most successful tactics you've seen clients use to better nurture their top prospects with intent signals?**

**Steinert:** The events and inside sales rep (ISR) use cases are the introductory ones I like to highlight most, because intent's impact can be so quick and obvious. Most B2B field marketers manage significant investments in physical events, so getting better ROI on those really benefits them. When you can tell who's in market in a city and what their hot buttons are, you can shape your event to meet their needs. We've seen huge improvements in attendance and conversion. On the ISR side, reps need lots of help breaking through with email and in the first five seconds of their calls. Real purchase intent feeds sales enablement the information it needs to prep these folks more effectively.

**DGR: What does the future have in store for intent data in B2B marketing and sales?**

**Steinert:** In the past few years, on the sales side, many organizations have really bulked up their high-velocity outreach capabilities. A great deal of emphasis has been placed on activity volume. As these tactical capabilities mature, we're seeing two refinements come to the fore, supported by real purchase intent data. First is a better focusing of volume activity on the right accounts and the right people within them. With better insights, teams process fewer accounts but do a better job of breaking into the ones that matter. The second change is in how sales enablement teams are stepping up to better prepare reps. To maximize a seller's selling time, sales enablement is using real purchase intent to build much more effective content for sales' use.

For marketers, what's most exciting right now is we're seeing clients really get a handle on augmenting their own first-party signals with third-party details. In this way they're finally able to gain much greater contribution from their website traffic for example. They're able to use third-party intent assets to quickly discover and engage the buying units and the actual solution specifiers within the companies that they can see visiting their websites.

> **"Intent data is extremely helpful in finding opportunistic accounts outside our target market."**
>
> — JEREMY MIDDLETON, PRAMATA

## Pramata Sees 4X Increase In Conversions By Fueling Account-Based Strategy With Intent Signals

Pramata, a revenue maximization solutions provider, initially had a go-to-market strategy that focused heavily on a high quantity of leads. However, the California-based company ended up having low conversion rates, high cost-per-win and very low efficiency within its internal teams.

The company has adopted an account-based model over the past 18 months, with 330 accounts meeting their criteria. Jeremy Middleton, Senior Director of Digital Marketing, noted that Pramata breaks this account list down into three tiers for initial segmentation — the top tier holds 30 accounts, the second tier holds 70 and the third tier holds the remaining 230 accounts.

"For our top tier, our sales team is actively involved and the accounts receive the full brunt of our marketing force," said Middleton. "The next two tiers are fully marketing-led. Our BDR/SDR teams actively call our second-tier accounts. The third tier gets our full digital, email and LinkedIn outreach, and as they engage, they move into the higher tiers."

In terms of signal and intent data, Middleton said that the company actively monitors first-party web visits, ad clicks and other forms of engagement to share with the team.

"Eighty-five percent of all current pipeline did engage in some way before setting up a meeting," said Middleton. "Our company isn't extremely well known; that brand awareness work helps alleviate that. It's important to help us prioritize key stakeholders."

External intent data, aggregated using Bombora, is also leveraged to further understand account needs. Focusing on key topics relevant to Pramata, Middleton noted that things start to click when first- and third-party signals and intent signals mirror one another.

"Intent data is extremely helpful in finding opportunistic accounts outside our target market," said Middleton. "If we had a market size of 5k, it'd be much more difficult to manage. Correlating Terminus and Bombora data to see when it happens at similar times or if something is very spikey."

Since adopting an account-based strategy and leveraging this type of insight, **conversions from leads to sales accepted increased 4X. Cost per sales-accepted leads have also decreased 63%,** signaling that resources are being used efficiently to engage in-market accounts.

"Talking to the right people at the right time with their intent to buy certainly helps," said Middleton. "Without that information, the model won't work."

## PRAMATA'S TECH STACK

Pramata also saw the development of its account-based strategy as an opportunity to consolidate its tech stack from 22 solutions to seven core tools. This further simplified the flow of data through Pramata's organization. Those tools include:

- **Bombora** for intent data to understand engagement of target market and identify opportunistic accounts;

- **Terminus** for digital ads, LinkedIn ad management and ABM reporting;

- **Marketo** for email nurture;

- **DealSignal** for contact identification and enrichment;

- **LinkedIn Sales Navigator** for contact research and deeper personalization;

- **SalesLoft** for BDR cadence management; and

- **Salesforce** for pipeline and campaign management — ultimately the overall system of record.

> ## "If you see the same signals in your first-party intent data and third-party intent data, that's where the magic happens."
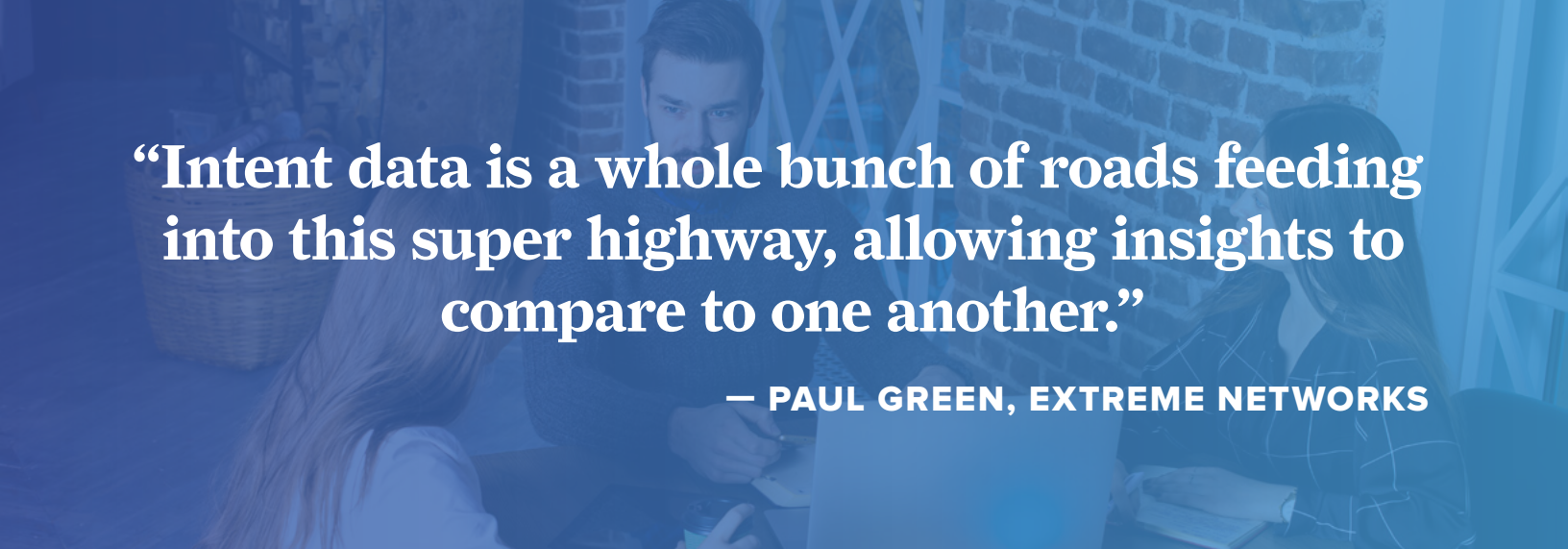>
> ### — MARK OGNE, ABM CONSORTIUM

## Formulating Plays Aligned To Overlapping First- & Third-Party Intent Signals

Senatore noted that it is important to have multiple playbooks ready to leverage around a brand's products, events, specific buyer needs, etc. This better positions teams to act upon insights gained from intent data to coordinate outreach and CTAs detailed to the specific needs of the account.

"Intent data is useless unless you have a plan to activate it," said Senatore. "Activation is for multiple things, such as prioritization, messaging, targeting, even allocating digital media spend. Bottom line, we're taking that signal data, understanding what it means and associating it to relevant messaging via display, BDR outreach and more."

Experts and practitioners added that a common challenge with signal and intent data is avoiding misleading opportunities. However, practitioners suggest overlapping first- and third-party intent and signal data to identify the common themes and verify that the signals being collected are accurate and relevant to the organization.

"Third-party data is only a signal; if you have more signals that align, they become more validated," said Ogne. "If you see the same signals in your first-party intent data and third-party intent data, that's where the magic happens. The goal is to put this data in a new, relational structure based on the amount of engagement from multiple stakeholders at an account over a certain time period. Then, identify the right content to send them at that time."

> # "Intent data is a whole bunch of roads feeding into this super highway, allowing insights to compare to one another."
>
> ## — PAUL GREEN, EXTREME NETWORKS

From there, progressive organizations align intent signals to specific campaigns and playbooks to further refine messaging for accounts. For example, the enterprise networking solutions company Extreme Networks leverages signal and intent data from first- and third-party sources in multiple pilots across its marketing, channel and inside sales teams. Using solutions such as **Loominance**, **Leadspace**, **Bombora**, **Integrate** and **DiscoverOrg**, the company overlaps this signal and intent data to uncover accounts with the highest propensity to buy, and uses that insight to match the account to one of the three appropriate go-to-market campaigns they run.

"We have scripts, email templates and directional guides that align to this deep data," said Paul Green, Director of Marketing Technologies at Extreme Networks. "Sales and our partners can then make a judgement of the fit of the account, along with the intent."

With nurture campaigns being fueled with these insights, Extreme Networks is better positioned to meet specific stakeholder and account needs while also ensuring time is being spent on high-propensity accounts.

"Intent data is a whole bunch of roads feeding into this super highway, allowing insights to compare to one another," said Green. "It's no longer about the tools and nuggets we get; it's about integration and how sales reps are going to use the data/insights."

# Conclusion

While signal and intent data is still an emerging data set within B2B businesses, there are already multiple use cases detailing how this type of information can help companies further refine their targeting, prioritize high-value accounts and provide relevant and contextual messaging. While many may not know where to start, experts noted that starting small and testing with manual processes can position your company with initial proof that intent signals can benefit the business.

"When you start to organize your data a bit better, which is very easy within a MAP/CRM, you can pull reports from stakeholders at target accounts that are starting to engage more on a first-party basis," said Ogne. "If you can find the value in doing that, you can easily explain to your management team about investing in a solution that automates and scales that process."

Solutions and third-party data are also mutually suggested by progressive practitioners to help provide that holistic view of a target audience. According to SiriusDecisions, it's important to assess intent data providers on multiple criteria, including:

- The sources and depth of their data;

- The ability of their solutions to meet business goals and requirements;

- Their approach to collaboration (e.g., product development and communication/training);

- Pricing models;

- Output of their deliverables; and

- Integrations with existing marketing and sales systems.

Experts added that many vendors specialize in particular industries, so understand what your total addressable market looks like prior to engaging third-party signal and intent vendors to limit confusion.

"We went through a number of vendors that we thought were right, then we undid a few things due to bad things happening," said Threadgill. "Once you have your TAM, you can really understand how vendors can work in that framework. You can understand where their strengths and weaknesses are and know where their data resides by running a sample set and setting a baseline and measuring them against that baseline."

# Interested in learning more?

TechTarget(Nasdaq: TTGT) is the global leader in purchase intent-driven marketing and sales services that deliver business impact for enterprise technology companies. By creating abundant, high-quality editorial content across more than 140 highly targeted technology-specific websites, TechTarget attracts and nurtures communities of technology buyers researching their companies' information technology needs. By understanding these buyers' content consumption behaviors, TechTarget creates the purchase intent insights that fuel efficient and effective marketing and sales activities for clients around the world.

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# Additional Resources



2018 State Of B2B
Intent Data



The 2018 State Of
Account-Based Marketing



The 2018 State Of
Database Quality



*Demand Gen Report* is a targeted online publication that uncovers the strategies and solutions that help companies better align their sales and marketing organizations, and ultimately, drive growth. A key component of the publication's editorial coverage focuses on the sales and marketing automation tools that enable companies to better measure and manage their multi-channel demand generation efforts.

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