



WHAT'S WORKING IN INTENT-BASED STRATEGIES?

MARKETERS LEVERAGE MULTIPLE FORMS OF INTENT
TO IGNITE SALES INTELLIGENCE, BOOST RETENTION,
FUEL CONTENT & STAY AHEAD OF THE COMPETITION



Introduction

In today's digital-first world, B2B buyers are spending more time independently researching purchase decisions before engaging with a sales representative. These prospects are well-informed and usually ready to sign on the dotted line long before sales can pick up the phone and start the conversation. For B2B organizations, this means being 10 steps ahead of the buyer... and 15 steps ahead of the competition.

Enter intent data, the hottest new data set that provides a high-level view into the accounts that are likely to convert. Intent is taking the industry by storm — according to ***Demand Gen Report's 2021 Database Strategies & Contact Acquisition Survey Report***, B2B teams are going beyond using basic demographic and firmographic data to collect deeper intelligence on prospective buyers, with 62% looking to incorporate intent insights into their processes. But, with many vendors claiming to offer some form of intent within their solutions, marketers are left scratching their heads to try and figure out how to utilize and act on intent.

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VINAY BHAGAT, TRUSTRADIUS



The truth is, while intent data can glean new and unique insights into an account, marketers need to combine multiple forms of intent with existing account intelligence to see measurable success. But, once that intelligence is identified, the opportunities for marketers and sales reps to capitalize on it are endless.

“You can’t just throw all this data together and expect to act on it the same way,” said Vinay Bhagat, Founder and CEO of **TrustRadius**, a provider of software and services reviews. “You need to take a segmented approach according to the data type because different data types mean different things. They could mean someone’s further along in their journey or early in their journey, or it could mean that they’re predisposed towards you, or they’ve not heard of you. And based upon those two dimensions, you have to take a very different strategy.”

In this report, we’ll dive into the various ways marketers are leveraging intent to fuel go-to-market strategies for all stages of the buyer’s journey and analyze the best practices for getting started with intent. Specifically, we’ll cover:

- How marketers are using multiple forms of intent to target accounts with relevant digital ads and cater chatbot messaging to website visitors’ needs;
- How to use intent for prospecting, retention and identifying buyers when researching competitors;
- How to leverage intent during content creation;
- Why marketers should look at intent with a campaign mindset; and
- The importance of enabling sales to understand how intent data can make their campaigns and conversations more successful.

Bring Precision To Your B2B Marketing Strategy With Intent Signals

By Colby Cavanaugh, VP Product Marketing, Integrate



Buyer behavior has shifted dramatically over the last year. Buyers are engaging with sellers less often and later in their buying cycle. Digital channel, interactions and touch points are more important than ever in the buying process. This increasingly digital and independent B2B buying process has made it more challenging than ever for B2B marketers to know when, where and how to connect with buyers.

In short, B2B buyers have changed, and B2B marketers must now adapt to a new process. One way to do so is by turning to a buyer-driven, omnichannel B2B marketing approach called **Precision Demand Marketing** (PDM). A core tenet of PDM is to find the right buyer at the right time, and leveraging behavioral intent data can help you connect, align and respond to buyers in a more meaningful and personal way.

Reach Out To The Right Buyer At The Right Time

At any given time, only **15% of buyers** are at the early stages of researching solutions to their problems. This means it's crucial to get in front of prospects early in their research process. One of the best times is during the awareness stage of their journey when buyers are at the early stages of researching.

Intent data can help you here. It provides insight into your prospect's interests, and it shows you which businesses are currently researching solutions to problems that your product could address. Using digital signals like intent data within PDM, marketers can tailor their messaging to specific buyer pain points, precisely target buyers as they research possible purchases and connect with relevant, timely outreach.



Two Types Of Intent Data To Consider

The first-party intent data in your marketing automation systems is still important. It's excellent at identifying prospects on your website who are raising their hands by completing forms and are well into their buyer journey. But in today's buyer-driven world, relying solely on first-party intent isn't enough. You need to complement your first-party intent data with third-party intent at the account level.

Third-party intent data allows you to understand buyer behavior in third-party websites to identify prospects earlier in their research. With third-party intent, you can connect with buyers who are earlier in their process. Third-party intent allows you to reach buyers before they've identified specific providers, ensuring your place on a shortlist of vendors they're considering.

The Right Way To Start Using Intent Data

Intent data is a powerful tool that can bring clarity, focus and precision to your B2B marketing. However, the right way to use intent data is something that's not always clear to people.

We recommend starting with intent data to prioritize your target accounts. Applying intent data to your target account lists will help you be more focused and efficient with your budget and resources in channels like content syndication. Intent data will identify hot button topics that are important to buyers at your target accounts. It will also show you the subset of your target accounts that are actively researching your solution.

Make sure you are using intent topics that are related to the problems that marketers are trying to solve — not necessarily related to your products or solutions. The idea is to catch people early in their buyer journey when they're just beginning their research phase.

Remember, marketing isn't just about optimizing your marketing or sales funnels anymore. Today, only one process matters — the buyer's process. The quality of the buying experience you create directly determines the buyer's propensity to buy from you. Using intent data helps you get started on the right foot by enabling you to engage buyers early in their research process with targeted content aligned to their current interests and pain points.



Leveraging Intent For Targeted Advertising & Chat Bot Strategies

At the most basic level, marketers are using intent for digital advertising by combining first- and third-party data and running it against a target list or ICP characteristics. The blend of these data sets identifies the ideal audience for targeted ads.

The idea is to harvest intent data to run a concentrated ad or messaging at a target audience, according to Bhagat.

“We work with a brand called **WatchGuard** that’s had very strong success taking the top-of-funnel intent data in **6sense** and ingesting the more downstream data from TrustRadius,” he explained. “They ran it against the ICP list, uploaded it and ran ads to that audience. They did a test where they spent \$200 but influenced \$1 million in pipeline and drove a 12% click-through rate against that hyper-focused audience who were in market buying.”

In addition, more advanced companies are experimenting with feeding intent data into chatbots to drive conversions. **Optimizely**, for example, took 180 days’ worth of TrustRadius intent data to target and engage key accounts via a **Drift book-a-meeting bot**. The intent data fueled into the bot notified it to engage those key accounts whenever they visited Optimizely’s homepage with specific messaging.

“A message would pop up that asked if they would like to book a demo, whereas for others browsing their site, it was a more of a softer message,” said Bhagat. “And by doing so, they were able to drive much more rapid conversions; they were actually able to book a deal within 24 hours because someone was genuinely ready to talk to sales and to act.”



Taking A Campaign Strategy Perspective With Multiple Forms Of Intent

Paul Green, Director, Marketing Technologies at **Extreme Networks**, has championed intent data for quite some time. Taking a crawl, walk, run approach, Green has found success with combining multiple forms of intent data to fuel various marketing and sales strategies.

“If anyone tells you they have all the data, they have all the intent, they’re full of it,” said Green. “We’re using **Bombora**, **TechTarget Priority Engine** and **DiscoverOrg**. You’re not going to find any TechTarget in the Bombora pool and when you see TechTarget surge intent, you’re not going to see any Bombora. And so, you put those two together and now all of a sudden, you’ve got more data, but you’ve got to be able to use it and tune it properly.

“One unique way Extreme Networks is using intent is from a content perspective. The SEO team uses it to try and understand what the market is doing,” Green added.

“Intent is not a one and done thing — you almost need to look at intent with a campaign mindset.”

PAUL GREEN, EXTREME NETWORKS



During a user conference, the Extreme Networks team identified key accounts that attended the same conference a year prior and used the topics they were interested in to design targeted demos. “When you’re getting lots of signals from a lot of companies, you can make some really good design considerations,” Green said.

While Green said his team is in the “run” portion of their intent-driven strategies, he advised those in the early stages of intent implementation to start with a small pilot and identify how to holistically infuse intent with other marketing efforts. In addition, organizations must remember that intent alone doesn’t steer the ship.

“Intent is not a one and done thing — you almost need to look at intent with a campaign mindset,” said Green. “I’m not saying necessarily that it has to be running the demand gen group. But in some cases, there’s tech, there’s data, but then you get activation. So, it’s similar to a nurture campaign. Who’s the segment? What do we want the call to action to be? How are we going to measure it? How are we going to refine it? I think sometimes people get enamored with the sexiness of it, but then they forget this is another program; you got to run it.”

Like any campaign, marketers must understand what they’re trying to achieve.

“Pick a pilot and start a small proof of concept,” said Green. “Get the win and design it. You should know what you’re going to measure, what the ultimate goals are, and then work with the reps so they understand what that means. They’ll also have an element to gain in this just as you do, and then prove the win. And once you have that win, it’s going to start to spread like wildfire.”



Staying Ahead Of The Competition With Intent

B2B marketing and sales teams are also leveraging intent data to track the activities of current customers. Second-party intent providers, such as TrustRadius, supply sales teams with the right content at the right time, including when a potential customer is researching competitors.

“If a buyer is researching your company, but they haven’t yet raised their hand or become an MQL, having early intelligence that they’re interested in you means that you can not only advertise to them, but you can also reach out to them through an SDR,” said Bhagat. “And by doing so, perhaps you get them to take a call earlier than your competition is able to. And of course, the advantage of that is you get to set the stage, tell your narrative and explain your value proposition before your competition does. This compresses the sales cycle, and allows you to win more, because you’re getting there sooner.”

“The trick is making sure that you’re not looking at solution-based topics and instead, looking at problem- or pain-based topics. You want to understand where they’re actually researching the problem, and not the solution.”

COLBY CAVANAUGH, INTEGRATE



In addition, if a buyer is only researching the competition's offerings, it gives SDRs an ability to cater their outreach with the right proposition and compare their offerings with the competitor's. Or, if a customer is looking at competitors for a product you already offer, these intent signals allow teams to direct an account manager to pursue a cross-sell opportunity.

"The trick is making sure that you're not looking at solution-based topics and instead looking at problem- or pain-based topics," said Colby Cavanaugh, VP of Product Marketing at **Integrate**. "You want to understand where they're actually researching the problem, and not the solution."

However, in terms of enablement, it's important to ensure internal teams are aligned to offer a unified brand experience for prospects. Marketing must be able to enable sales to understand intent sources and how to act on them, which, for Green and his team, has been their biggest Achilles heel.

"When you go to enable, you have to really ensure that you're talking sales' language and relate the intent to their language," said Green. "And then if you're showing it in systems or you're showing it in alerts, you really have to think about it from their point of view, not yours. And it's our biggest challenge in the industry. I can't tell you how many times people just say to me, 'Hey, you're talking hieroglyphics.' It's really hard."

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Conclusion: Taking Baby Steps With Intent

Intent data is here to stay, and just like with any other strategy or campaign, it requires a thoughtful planning process and a team to manage it. Experts agree that picking a single campaign and starting small is key.

“You’re going to make mistakes without a doubt,” said Green. “You have to make mistakes, but hopefully, those are small mistakes. And then you get better about it; then you’ll see how you can start to work it into bigger things.”

However, combining intent with other data forms is critical to success. “If you’re looking at new verticals; if you’re looking at launching a new product line; if you’re looking at expanding your business in a different way, then you may want to use different kinds of data like technographic or firmographic data to really refine your list,” said Cavanaugh. “Then you can apply intent to that list and understand which companies you really need to be engaging with.”

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Integrate is the leader in Precision Demand Marketing, an emerging category to empower B2B marketers to drive omnichannel demand strategies, convert leads to revenue, and prove marketing return on investment. Integrate works with high-growth and enterprise organizations like Salesforce, Microsoft, Akamai, and Pluralsight to power their Precision Demand Marketing strategies.

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