

STATE OF INTENT/ SIGNAL DATA

Marketers Integrating Third-Party Data
To Increase Relevance & Personalization
While Meeting Privacy Demands

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INTRODUCTION

Intent and signal data are nearly synonymous with B2B marketing, serving as the fuel to power hyper-personalized, highly targeted campaigns. These data sources are crucial in de-anonymizing stealth buyers, who prefer to research solutions and platforms independently before reaching out to a sales rep.

"You have to know your buyers, so you need a strong intent data strategy," explained John Arnold, Principal Analyst at [Forrester](#), in his [B2B Sales & Marketing Exchange](#) keynote. "Intent helps generate insights about your buyers and helps you learn their preferences so that you can target them in ways that make them happy."

To that end, almost [a third of marketers](#) plan to invest in intent data throughout the year and an additional 40% hope to collect data on prospective buyer behavior to boost engagement and messaging. But with the [growth of buying committees](#), prospects prioritizing new channels and high rates of employee turnover, it's becoming even *more* challenging for marketers to effectively use intent data to ensure they're meeting targets where they are with the information they want.

This special report examines the current state of intent and signal data with a focus on:

- The role intent signals play in guiding content and ABM strategies and identifying which assets/messaging would resonate best with each buyer/account;
- The growing adoption of intent monitoring tools to identify buying or churn signals, as well as the tools practitioners are leveraging to uncover information about anonymous buyers; and
- The top tools, solutions and platforms practitioners are utilizing to streamline intent data collection and implementation.

LEVERAGING INTENT TO SHAPE ABM & DEMAND GEN

B2B buying groups spend 27% of their time conducting independent, often anonymous, online research through third-party websites, [Gartner reported](#). This has made intent data more valuable than ever to marketers: According to *Demand Gen Report's "2022 B2B Buyer Behavior Survey Report,"* 47% are using intent data to better assess prospects actively researching a buying decision.

"Layering intent data on top of what you're already sourcing allows you to surface people that are actively looking for your products and services and prioritize those for contact," said Laura Ashley, VP of Marketing at [B2Lead](#), a content marketing company for B2B lead generation.

Specifically, she explained that marketers are using intent data to:

- Build ABM lists and target contacts;
- Score leads;
- Prioritize accounts;
- Develop more relevant content;
- Personalize sales outreach; and
- Enhance customer retention.

"Buyers want more privacy, but they want it on their terms — and they want relevance," said Arnold. "It's a careful balance to achieve, but intent data helps us give them these personalized experiences. However, we have our work cut out for us, because only 12% of people agree it's OK for companies to track their online activities."

To help meet buyers' demands for personalization with privacy in mind, Ashley added that multiple intent sources are essential to create a picture that's worth actioning. She explained that marketers first need to "nail" first-party intent data internally by using hard and soft bounces from marketing emails to remove contacts from their database and replace them with contacts from target accounts surfaced through buyer intent data.

"For example, if you used to have seven engaged contacts for an account, bounce data could be an indicator you should use contact-level data tools to find more people from that company and get your message in front of them," Ashley explained.



3 CONSIDERATIONS FOR ANY INTENT DATA STRATEGY

By Laura Ashley, B2Lead

At its core, buyer intent data helps marketers identify where prospects are in their purchasing journey. It does this by collecting data from various sources, such as website visits, search queries, page visits, white paper downloads, competitor comparisons, etc., to provide a comprehensive view of each customer's needs and intent.

At the same time, according to [Demand Science](#), 94% of B2B marketing leaders are overwhelmed and exhausted from trying to make intent data work — why? Here are three characteristics of using intent data that affect successful execution. Knowing them is the first step in advancing intent data initiatives within your organization.

1. First-Party Buyer Intent Comes At The End Of the Buying Cycle, Not The Beginning

So, you've successfully started using tools to identify your anonymous website visitors and tie them back to accounts on your ABM list. That's a win! However, searches of your company's website are typically done in the final stages of vendor selection rather than the early ones. Even if your company is ranking at the top of search results, you're likely catching buyers at the tail end of their buying process.

2. Now More Than Ever, Integrations Drive Vendor Identification & Selection

When analyzing buyer intent data and how to use it, especially third-party buyer intent data, you need to look at your product, service and the software that integrates or supports intent data. Behemoths like AWS, Salesforce, Microsoft and Google have whole ecosystems pushing your buyers to companies that work seamlessly with their tools and services. Thankfully, the bigger the company, the more likely that third-party intent data tools can help identify your target accounts' installed software or services that integrate and align with yours.

3. Learn To Use Intent Successfully

Successful use of intent data is like learning an instrument or a new language — tempered expectations are key. Regardless of what the sellers of intent data may tell you, there's no quick way to implement intent data. Even understanding the fundamentals of an instrument or a new language can take weeks or months. The same applies to making full use of intent data. The development and execution of an intent strategy is a skill that takes persistence and practice. It can be built upon, but not easily implemented or mastered.





MONITORING BUYER ACTIVITIES TO INCREASE PERSONALIZATION

Monitoring intent data can also help create more relevant content. “By better understanding what’s resonating in your markets overall and with each of the key roles and functions in the buying centers for your solutions, you can better connect what you talk about and how you talk about it to the way your prospects think about their needs,” explained John Steinert, CMO of [TechTarget](#), an intent data provider. “This drives higher engagement and conversion.”

Downstream in the world of SDRs, BDRs and salespeople, intent data at the individual level can personalize every outreach 1:1, proactively fulfilling prospects’ needs with relevant information to accelerate opportunities.

Sales teams can use intent data to detect and act on existing customers’ needs much earlier, Ashley noted. For example, if intent data signals that a customer is researching the competitor’s products, that might spur a salesperson to proactively reach out to that account.

Taking that a step further, existing customer intent data can reveal cross-sell opportunities, invisible or underpenetrated buying centers and more.

“Intent data should be driving your ABM campaigns, because it’s how you fuel account targeting,” said Hannah Shain, VP of Marketing for [SmartBug Media](#), an inbound marketing agency. “Rather than focusing on your best clients and lookalikes, you should leverage intent data to tell you who’s currently active and showing intent to purchase your solution or your service. And it doesn’t always have to be a 1:1 match; you could use intent to reach accounts with a complementary offering.”

HOW 8X8 ACHIEVED A 20% CONVERSION RATE

8x8 is a global provider of cloud-based unified communications solutions for businesses. Its channel marketing team helps partners drive opportunities, create demand and generate sales-qualified leads.

"We create demand and generate new opportunities to help our partners sell 8x8 products and solutions," explained Daniel Streeter, Channel Marketing Manager at 8x8. "We also support our partners with retaining their existing customer base and increasing the wallet share of those customers."

The Challenge

The channel marketing team in the U.K./Ireland branch wanted to set itself apart from other vendors by adding value to its partners' marketing efforts and helping them generate more sales-qualified leads. It also needed insights to inform its campaign-related content.

The Solution

8x8 selected **TechTarget's Priority Engine** to provide intent data to help its partners identify and engage buying teams at target accounts, discover new opportunities with current customers and increase overall sales.

First, a channel partner sends the 8x8 team a target prospect or customer list for a particular campaign. The 8x8 team uploads the list into Priority Engine to generate insights into those accounts and shares the results with the partner.

The insights show which top prospects or customers are actively researching solutions and topics related to 8x8's products — adding an extra layer of data to inform the partners' marketing campaigns.

"The data in Priority Engine is up to date, the prospects are GDPR compliant and you're getting multiple people within a buying team," said Streeter. "I've seen a lot of value in going after different contacts in the buying team, which helps us achieve higher levels of engagement."

For instance, they can create a personalized marketing campaign to engage specific accounts or prospects. They can also take targeted action to retain their current customer base or identify new upsell and cross-sell opportunities.



"Priority Engine gave us a whole new perspective on the information we could give our channel partners," explained Streeter. "They see genuine value in the solution, and that bolsters our relationship with them."

8x8 uses Priority Engine's audience segment data to help partners target prospects who are researching solutions, downloading content and visiting the company's website. The partners can tailor their outreach based on the prospects' content and topic preferences.

The 8x8 team also ensures that a partner has enablement capabilities before handing over the data. They help the partner understand the intent data, make accurate targeting decisions, follow up with prospects, determine the context mix for their campaigns and measure results.

"Priority Engine has loads of features and a nice 360-degree view of every account," added Streeter. "When our channel partners engage prospects with the right content and the right data they identified in the tool, they have more success."

The Results

Priority Engine helps 8x8 ensure its customer data is clean, build a more extensive database and identify buying team members.

Unlike other platforms that only provide account-level data, Priority Engine allows the 8x8 team and its partners to drill down to what each contact is actively researching. Since the insights refresh every week, the campaigns are "always on" to capture new prospects that meet the campaign criteria. The channel marketing team has discovered strong enterprise prospects and broken into new public sector opportunities while leveraging intent data from Priority Engine to better engage with prospects.

Working with TechTarget and using Priority Engine, 8x8:

- Generated new monthly recurring revenue opportunities totaling \$1.5M;
- Influenced more than 10% of the company's recent closed/won opportunities; and
- Achieved a 20% increase in conversions, creating more sales-qualified leads for the channel partners.

"TechTarget has brought a lot of value to our channel marketing and sales strategy," said Streeter. "It helped us build content, best practices, sell sheets, nurture streams and more to enable our channel partners. It's been great to have TechTarget's support to optimize our strategy and efforts."



MAXIMIZING INTENT USAGE BY ENSURING SMOOTH INTEGRATIONS

To guide how you add intent data to your martech stack, identify use cases where better insight could substantively improve your outcomes: “If I knew X, then I could do a better job at Y.” For example, Steinert explained that if there are issues with sales productivity, can an intent source tell you which of your “B-list” accounts deserve attention?

Additionally, the experts advised to consider how to act on that information. For example, if your product integrates with Salesforce and you get intent data on every account that has Salesforce installed, what would you do with that data?

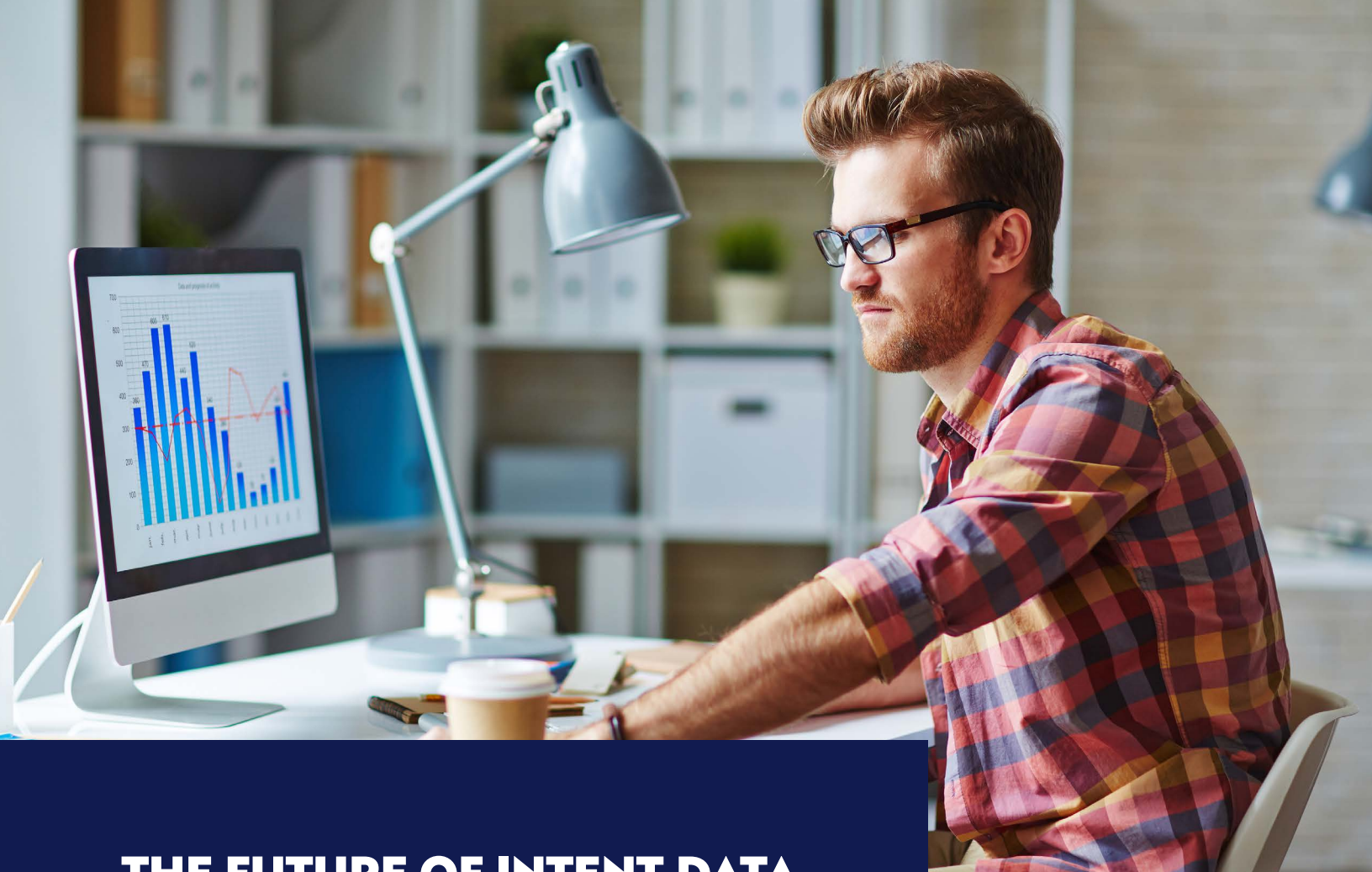
“You need to answer that question before you even consider adding third-party intent data,” said Ashley. “There’s a tendency to get excited about the conceptual stuff and start talking to vendors, but there’s a lot of homework needed to make an intent data project successful.”

Shain added that a key element of successfully wielding third-party intent data includes making sure it seamlessly fits in and communicates with your martech stack.

“Marketers are programmatically building third-party intent into their database from other data sources, such as the CRM, and deploying it out to advertising platforms to target buyers,” said Shain. “I wouldn’t call this strategy ‘hyper’-personalization, but it’s definitely personalization. This allows you to change out topics, make the headlines resonate against the topics the system is telling you and accounts have shown intent on. Integrating intent providers into your martech stack creates a steel thread through content strategies.”

When integrating third-party intent sources, Steinert added that marketers need to consider the needs of both marketing and sales.

“Because marketing is largely a 1:many type of user, while sales is 1:1, their needs are very different,” he continued. “For intent data to be productive for sales, it has to be available at the person level and it has to be accurate with respect to the presence of a buying group in a buying journey.”



THE FUTURE OF INTENT DATA

In the future, Ashley hopes to see intent data aggregators that would make it easier to integrate intent data from multiple sources in one place: "It's a long process to get that operationalized, and there must be ways to make it easier," she noted.

Given its proven power to enhance marketing efficiency and sales productivity, experts agree that intent data will increasingly be recognized as a must-have for go-to-market competitiveness, playing a critical part in successful organizations' marketing and sales strategies.



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. TechTarget has offices in Boston, London, Munich, New York, Paris, San Francisco, Singapore and Sydney. For more information, visit techtarget.com and follow us on Twitter @TechTarget.

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