



WHAT'S WORKING IN INTENT-BASED STRATEGIES

Orgs Focusing On Lead Scoring; 3rd-Party Integrations

INTRODUCTION

Intent data is marketers' crystal ball into granular insights about customer and prospect behaviors – but the data is only as strong as its collection methods. Unfortunately, more than **one-third of marketers** indicated that buyer intent insights accounted for the biggest gaps in the contact information they collect. Despite those troubles, marketers are still going all-in on intent: **65% of B2B companies** are looking to invest more in buyer intent data throughout 2023.

As organizations are tasked with keeping up with changing buyer behaviors and identifying new opportunities, marketers need to standardize their collection processes. To successfully leverage intent, they must take a more tactical approach to analytics to determine what the strongest intent signals are and where they're best applied.

"There's been a shift from emphasizing the account to emphasizing the people behind the account," said Paul Green, Director of Marketing Technologies for **Extreme Networks**, a provider of end-to-end, cloud-driven networking solutions. "But person-based intent data is becoming more difficult to gather as new privacy regulations are introduced. Over the years, we've seen a dramatic decrease in our abilities to track people's cookies, so the game now is trying to understand the individual, which is becoming much more challenging."

This special report will discuss how modern practitioners are approaching their intent-based strategies through a focus on topics such as:

- How successful marketers are infusing first- and third-party data to create a comprehensive view of buyer intent, plus how they're leveraging it throughout the buyer's journey;
- The steps marketers are taking to ensure intent monitoring and collection aligns with privacy regulations;
- The top methods used to collect intent data, as well as how/where marketers are storing it to promote maximum efficiency across the organization; and
- The tools and technologies practitioners are utilizing to fuel their intent collection and implementation.



CENTRALIZING LARGE POOLS OF DATA, SUPPLEMENTING WITH 3RD-PARTY INSIGHTS

By the end of 2022, the average B2B practitioner leveraged **18 data sources**, tasking marketers with sifting through an abundance of signals to determine what insights are actionable. And according to **Gartner**, they're struggling: Although 71% of B2B organizations are collecting buyer signals, more than half are unable to operationalize the data.

"Most organizations are in a place where their communication styles, processes and workflows are pretty regimented," said Sarah Sehgal, Director of Demand Generation for digital experience provider **FullStory**, in her **B2B Marketing Exchange** session. "But as marketers realize they need to use more data and technology, they're treating intent with 'shiny new object syndrome.' They want to throw intent into everything they're doing, but they need to slow down. The first step is getting all the information into a centralized location, whether it's a homegrown system or a third-party tool."

On the homegrown side, Green explained that Extreme Networks' marketing team created and owns a "data mart," which is a centralized location where all the company's data resides.

“The data comes into our mart through different means, and it’s very orchestrated,” said Green. “We rely on our marketing automation platform and customer relationship platform to provide data files that can be used for different activities. We also use an intent data provider on our website to track IPs and leverage a whole host of demand gen platforms.”

With a centralized data hub in place, the experts added that marketers should rely on third-party data providers to shine a spotlight on missing information, such as contact-level information gaps. Green explained that key questions practitioners should ask a potential data vendor include:

- Where the provider gets their intent data from and the regulations that surround collection;
- How they manage their data and align to privacy standards; and
- What sort of AI and machine learning they utilize to organize the data.

Proof Point

MarketSpark, a provider of analog replacement solutions for the enterprise, helps companies escape the pitfalls of legacy telecom infrastructure by replacing static copper telephone lines with a 5G-ready managed wireless solution. But the company quickly realized that thousands of large enterprises still rely on outdated copper lines even though the technology will be obsolete in the next five years, a company spokesperson explained.

MarketSpark wanted to identify enterprises quickly and accurately to present the issue and solution in an intelligent way. The company partnered with an intent data provider that offered a “data brick,” which is a large volume of data created and supplied to each customer’s specifications. MarketSpark merged the data brick with its existing systems to:

- Identify 30,000 companies that were high value prospects;
- Increase MQLs and SQLs by 5X; and
- Generate 5X more revenue opportunities.



RANKING LEADS BASED ON PROPENSITY TO ACT

With intent data policing buyers' likelihood of action, practitioners are trying to fold that information into their overall strategies to determine buying propensity, requiring a unified intent data strategy. However, while marketers acknowledge that leveraging intent data is critical to digital marketing success, **less than 50%** can successfully execute on intent data due to:

- Difficulty identifying target audiences and accounts; and
- Struggles with establishing/identifying messaging for specific accounts.

"A good strategy is to score leads based on their intent and expose a score that communicates directionality versus certainty," said **Kyall Mai**, C-level CRM and Specialist at **Esquire Financial Holdings**. "You can also combine intent with scores your organization may already be using to provide a time-based indicator to your existing scoring models."

Based on these scores, sales reps can more easily determine who has a high likelihood of action or who just downloaded a research report to familiarize themselves with an industry benchmark. But the caveat is that the industry is changing rapidly; the volatile job market and widespread budget constraints require marketers to ensure their lead scoring models are performing efficiently and accounting for market changes in real-time.

“You have to continually test and iterate your lead scoring models,” said Sehgal. “Intent data is always going to change, so you can’t ‘set it and forget.’ Whether it’s monthly or quarterly, you have to make sure you’re validating your results because your lead scoring process can go wrong quickly.”

Proof Point

Talkdesk’s marketing team was under more pressure than ever to find the right prospects, expand and enhance its database and fuel more effective nurture strategies. Meanwhile, the cloud contact center’s sales department needed a better process and source of insight to prioritize the right opportunities and close more deals.

Once the company turned to a provider of B2B technology purchase intent data and services, it was able to keep its database fresh to enable marketing to build more targeted segments and confidently serve content to in-market prospects. Once the sales team was able to prospect more effectively, Talkdesk sourced \$1 million in pipeline and added more than 10,000 high-quality, in-market prospects to its database.



ATTENTION MARKETERS: YOU'RE NOW ENTERING THE ERA OF INTENT

With John Steinert, TechTarget

It's been about six years since intent really started taking off in B2B, and according to John Steinert, CMO of TechTarget, the industry is in the middle of "generation 2.0" intent. Though intent usage has been around for more than half a decade, Steinert believes that a lot of go-to-market (GTM) teams are just getting started with it — and that's not even accounting for the next iteration, intent 3.0. To dive deeper into the future of intent sources, the Demand Gen Report team sat down with Steinert to learn more.

Demand Gen Report: What's the difference between intent 1.0 and 2.0? Can you walk marketers through the differences?

John Steinert: Intent 1.0 was all about early adopters in marketing and a wide range of vendor offerings. The primary use cases were marketing-focused, specifically 1:many ad targeting and demand generation. In this space, it was uncovered that there are real benefits from third-party, account-level-only intent sources, because even a little improvement can go a long way.

Intent 2.0 has brought in the sales organization and differentiated intent strategies. The difference between intent sources became clear to improve what venture capitalists call "sales efficiency" — and I like to call "sales productivity." Salespeople are the real "personalizers" in go-to-market (GTM); it's their outreach that creates quality meetings and more opportunities. But salespeople won't activate if the data isn't precise, and it's why third-party account-level intent data isn't working for intent 2.0. Sales needs the actual people who are showing intent and, at this point in the intent revolution, the difference between sources is becoming abundantly clear.



DGR: With that in mind, what role does intent 2.0 play in marketers' GTM strategies?

Steinert: Every GTM team needs to get comfortable balancing their need to know with their need to act. We say activity matters because without actions, there can't be any improvement in outcomes. It's especially important to remember this in times of economic headwinds. The challenge is all about increasing productive actions and decreasing unproductive ones — and insights are a major driver of your ability to accomplish this.

The first point is that you need to avoid cutting your insight capabilities to save budget in the near term. Better insights (combined with insight-fueled action) are a great way to gain an advantage, especially in down times. The second point is that since markets and target accounts within an ICP are changing rapidly, a GTM team needs to find ways to speed up insight access so that it can become more agile and responsive.

A sales team needs near real-time access to changes within their assigned accounts. Marketers need to be aware of changing dynamics relevant to targeting, messaging and positioning. And because the product and product marketing organizations drive so much of the downstream direction, it's critical that these members of the GTM team gain access to the latest, most accurate information available. So, each of these three groups need intent data access to dynamically tune their strategies as they go — and this is what we're now calling intent 3.0.

DGR: Can you elaborate on the concept of intent 3.0 and how it benefits marketers?

Steinert: I think of marketing as a type of action — a pre-sales stimulus or information gathering activity — more so than a concept that's the sole domain of someone with marketing in their title. My definition of marketing includes those who personally touch prospects and customers either individually or in segmented aggregations. Intent 3.0 is all about improving the speed at which "marketers" gain insights that can potentially impact their outputs. Since the departments within the GTM team line up in a value chain, slow or incomplete insights at any point will negatively impact the performance input of any team downstream from that gap.



DGR: *Research has found that 33% of marketers indicated that buyer intent insights account for the biggest gaps in the contact information they collect — how do you recommend they remedy those gaps?*

Steinert: Intent data is essential to pipeline health, acceleration and substantive sales productivity improvement when it can be used to clarify what's truly going on at an account from a buyer's journey perspective. First-party leads are full of false positives and they're typically not abundant enough to tell an SDR whether to really work the account or not. Thus, we continue to see a lot of lead abandonment by high-velocity teams.

Because most intent data is account-based, it can't solve this challenge. Second-party leads-based intent also suffers from a lack of volume challenge. To discriminate between false positives, false negatives and real buyer's journeys, a GTM team needs to augment its first-party leads with as many second-party signals as it can. This includes both lead signals of various types and opt-in person-level signals on the same topic, at the same account and from members of the same buying team.

DGR: *How can companies determine the best intent data source for their campaigns?*

Steinert: Calling out campaigns alone is not the best way to think about it — that's the kind of thinking that got many marketers into an intent 1.0 implementation. My perspective on the best intent sources comes from my experience of how impactful certain sources can be beyond campaigns. To get the most leverage possible out of an intent source, a company should think of all potential use cases across all the parts of the GTM. If you plan to commit to an intent-driven strategy, look for sources that can provide good insight into a critical portion of your TAM, and then be sure to look beyond campaigns or marketing team use cases to evaluate how it can serve the needs of revenue, product and strategic teams alike.





CURATING CONTENT THAT PROACTIVELY ADDRESSES BUYER NEEDS

With high intent leads in-hand, the next step is for marketers to engage them. When implementing data across campaigns, the experts explained that marketers are using the insights to not only personalize and target assets to buyers, but also keep track of cyclical purchasing activity.

“What you’re ultimately trying to predict is buying cycles,” said Green. “We all know that there are ebbs and flows to research, so you need to put the science behind the pure data to tell the best story – it’s all about how you stitch it together.”

When stitching buyers' intent together, a major component to account for is self-service buying journeys, which are preferred by **two-thirds of prospects**. As buyers conduct their research anonymously, marketers must proactively identify these leads and anticipate the asset they'll need next — a challenging feat, even with robust intent data.

"There is often a significant amount of self-research and 'soft influencing' involved in B2B sales, so proactively peppering prospects with useful content when they need it translates to better brand engagement and affinity — as well as a higher closing percentage — 100% of the time," said Mai. "Having intent data available through multiple data vendors empowers the marketing team to reach the right customer at the right time, with the right content."

Mai continued that practitioners must ask themselves how they can give prospects the next best asset that's aligned to their problem, as "you need to know what stage of the customer lifecycle they're at and the content they're consuming so that you can help them solve their problem with higher value content," he explained.

Proof Point

Tango Card, a gift card and rewards services platform, had successful content assets on-hand, including topical white papers for top-of-funnel activity and a buyer's guide for mid-funnel, but it was struggling to get the resources in front of the current audiences. After turning to an agency partner that offered proprietary intent data, which provides insights into contact-level buyer personas. Using keyword tagging, the agency helped Tango leverage its existing content to share with individuals who were shopping for solutions or already were considering Tango. Through the partnership, Tango saw:

- 102% leads delivered;
- 100% data accuracy; and
- Converted two-thirds of the opportunities generated.



CONCLUSION

If intent data is the star of the show, then the supporting acts encompass collection methods, partnerships, activation and integration of systems. In other words, intent data is an integral part of modern marketing campaigns — but it's not successful if it doesn't have a solid structure surrounding it.

"Intent if used properly can be your golden goose — it should be at the forefront of many marketing strategies," said Mai. "Once you have it and implement good strategies to percolate this data in meaningful ways across the organization, you'll find yourself using it forever."



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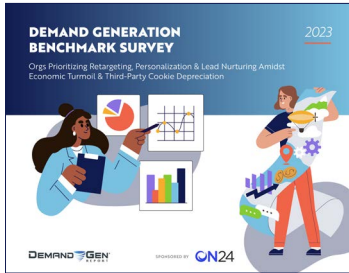
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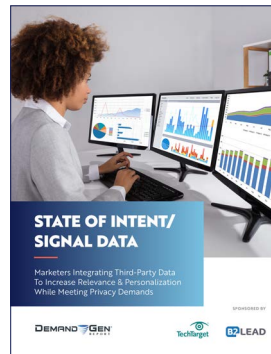
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Demand Gen Report is a targeted online publication that uncovers the strategies and solutions that help companies better align their sales and marketing organizations, and ultimately, drive growth. A key component of the publication's editorial coverage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

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