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STATE OF INTENT/ SIGNAL DATA

The Infusion Of AI &
Internal Collaboration



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.

On average, **87% of buyers** want to self-service part, if not all, of their buying journey, meaning that marketers need to ensure their intent data is up-to-snuff. With concerns about data quality, cost, actionability and privacy, it's becoming even more important that they regulate their databases to ensure they're delivering highly relevant outreach to their target audience.

Factor in the impending privacy regulations that are set to change the way organizations can collect and leverage intent/signal data, and it's clear practitioners must refine their data collection and usage processes. Throughout this special report, we'll examine the current state of intent and signal data with a focus on:

- How intent data can help marketers accomplish more with less;
- Tips for developing an effective intent data strategy and getting buy-in from sales teams;
- The value that intent signals can deliver beyond marketing and sales functions;
- The key intent data tools, solutions and platforms B2B marketers rely on most; and
- How impending privacy regulations will affect the way B2B organizations gather and use intent data.



ENHANCING ACCURACY, EFFICIENCY, CONVERSION & REVENUES

B2B marketers are encountering growing challenges as budget cuts and layoffs create a more complex sales environment. In a recent [TrustRadius survey](#), 27% of B2B buyers said they are involving more decision-makers and collaborating more on purchasing decisions compared to last year.

The trend toward self-service continues to accelerate, too. The same survey found that nearly 100% of B2B buyers preferred self-service during all or part of the buying journey. In fact, most buyers don't engage with or respond to vendors until they are near the end of the purchasing process, *Demand Gen Report's "2023 B2B Buyer's Survey"* found.

"Money is not free anymore," said Nirosha Methananda, Chief Marketing Maven at B2B marketing consultancy [Sati Marketing](#). "Marketers are under the gun to show results, and any tool that can help them to be more accurate and efficient is powerful."

In the current tumultuous marketing environment, intent data can be a game changer. Intent signals enable organizations to laser-focus on their ideal customer profile (ICP), named accounts, the personas within those accounts and where they are in their buying journey, explained Evelyn Swaim, Fractional Chief Marketing Officer and Adviser with go-to-market agency [SecureCo](#). Marketers can use intent data to prioritize actions, reduce investment, time and effort and increase conversion velocity.

Additionally, intent data can help marketing and sales teams deal with obstacles such as budget reductions or staffing cuts. For example, salespeople whose key champions at target accounts have been laid off don't have to start from scratch: "If you're using intent properly, you can give them three or four other people within your ICP who have a high engagement rate and are showing intent," said Swaim.

Rather than taking a "spray-and-pray" approach that consumes precious time and budget, content marketers can operate lean by using intent data to create content tailored to buyers' needs at each stage of the journey.

"If the budget for your full-scale, multi-stage ABM play gets slashed, intent data can help you double down on the accounts showing the highest engagement and intent, instead of slashing them all," added Sarah Sehgal, Director of Demand Generation at digital experience intelligence platform [FullStory](#).

Many B2B marketers initially implement intent data as a tool for ABM and customer acquisition, but use cases are expanding to customer retention, customer experience and product development.

"Consider how your first-party data can be layered with third-party data to identify which customers are interested in competitors, which customers have low engagement rates and what they're showing interest in that you could capitalize on for customer success or sales," suggested Sehgal. "More advanced marketers are looking into areas that are not traditionally marketing, like product analytics and digital experience data."

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SARAH SEHGAL, FULLSTORY



ENHANCE OUTCOMES WITH EDUCATION & TECHNOLOGY

Sales reps are beginning to see intent signals' worth, but there's still too often a disconnect in how information flows between marketing and sales. While ensuring intent data solutions integrate with tech stacks can help smooth this out, there's also a human factor. Sales professionals are busy and facing increasing pressure to make quotas. Streamlining workflows and educating SDRs and BDRs is crucial to ensuring they act on intent data so it doesn't go to waste.

"The burden is on marketers to enable, evangelize and train SDRs," said Swaim. She suggested that marketers provide a few common use case scenarios and explain what will happen (such as automated trigger alerts), what actions the reps should take in response and what results they can expect.

While the use of AI to maximize intent data's value is still in its infancy, marketers are starting to explore AI tools to some degree. For example, Sehgal uses ChatGPT to quickly analyze data on channel performance trends that would normally take hours to parse, because it helps the company make faster decisions to pivot.

And as customer data platforms (CDPs) cement their role in modern tech stacks, B2B thought leader **Nick Bhutani** expects predictive modeling to become more accessible to marketing teams without data scientists.

"Overlaying AI to help identify and resolve gaps within data models will become a major benefit for marketers," he explained, adding that he currently sees some companies investing in robotic process automation solutions to collect their own, very specific data. "This comes at a resource cost but tends to be very effective when compared to third-party providers."



GRAPPLING WITH PRIVACY CONCERNS & A COOKIE-LESS FUTURE

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Increasing privacy regulations and the planned extinction of third-party cookies in 2024 are changing how marketers approach intent data, as marketers will be forced to rely less on buying massive amounts of data in bulk and pivot to being selective on the data available through strategic partners and how it's going to be used, according to Bhutani. In preparation for the changes, [Salesforce](#) reported that B2B marketers are:

- Incentivizing customers to share information (56%);
- Developing a first-party data strategy (54%); and
- Creating second-party data-sharing agreements (52%).

Zero-party data — data that users explicitly and voluntarily share with a brand — is becoming increasingly valuable, said Ellie Cary, Global Head of RevOps at global B2B marketing agency [Unreal Digital Group](#), as it indicates a high degree of trust.

"To stay ahead of the game, shift your marketing efforts to be more collaborative," she advised. "Invite your customers to provide zero-party data using quizzes, surveys or interactive digital experiences."

When marketers focus on zero- and first-party intent data as the source of truth, they'll be able to capitalize on the customer data they already own. More data and privacy regulations mean a need for more technology solutions and data centers, such as CDPs, data lakes and data management platforms, to house the growing amount of data within an organization, Cary continued.

While second- or third-party data will still have its uses, it's important to know where it comes from. Sati Marketing's Methananda suggested that organizations have their privacy officer look at their data collection and use policy to ensure that marketers' contracts clearly outline that the vendor is compliant with privacy regulations and takes accountability if it is not.



CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF INTENT DATA

The increasing focus on zero- and first-party data, expansion of intent data into functions beyond marketing and sales and use of AI to decipher intent signals will accelerate in the coming years. While marketers dazzled by the plethora of intent data solutions may hope for consolidation in the marketplace, one thing is certain: It's time for marketers to level up.

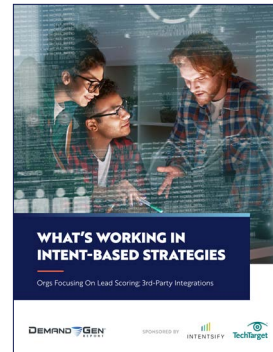
"You can't throw spaghetti at the wall and hope it's going to stick anymore," said Cary. "If you aren't set up to start using AI and intent data within the next year, you risk falling behind as other businesses leverage it to work smarter, not harder, at scale."



What's Working In
Database Strategies



State Of B2B
Martech In 2023



What's Working In
Intent-Based Strategies



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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