

# Intent Data's Expanding **Impact**

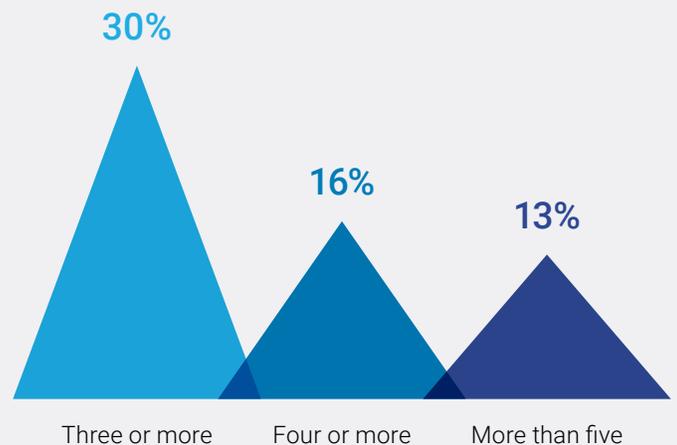
New Research Shows Companies Are Integrating Intelligence Into ABM, Content Marketing And Other Core Areas Of Their **Go-To-Market Strategies**

The category of intent data has drawn significant interest and buzz over the past five years, as both sales and marketing professionals flocked to the concept of identifying buying signals from prospects. Now, as B2B organizations move beyond the “shiny new toy” phase, their maturity and commitment have advanced to viewing intent data as an integral layer of intelligence in their revenue funnel and a critical component of their overall go-to-market strategies.

A new survey from Demand Gen Report showed nearly **80% of B2B brands are leveraging intent data**, with another 16% planning to do so within the next 12 months. The survey also found that a majority of organizations are seeing positive payoffs from their investments in intent data, with **39% saying it has been significantly beneficial** and **32% categorizing it as somewhat beneficial**.

The survey also revealed the expanding utilization of intent data, with the majority of B2B organizations now incorporating intelligence from multiple intent data sources into their sales and marketing platforms.

WHEN ASKED HOW MANY DIFFERENT SOURCES OF INTENT DATA THEY ARE CURRENTLY UTILIZING ACROSS SALES AND MARKETING:



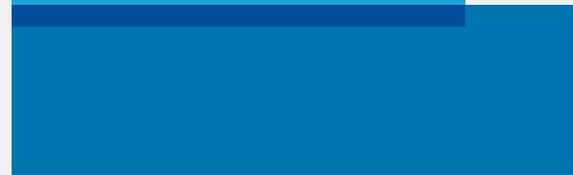
In addition to expanding the number of intent data sources, the survey found B2B organizations are incorporating different types of intent data, with first-party data (from their owned web sources) being the most commonly used (74%). In addition, 64% are incorporating third-party data, while 53% are incorporating second-party data sources (which are sourced directly, but not from owned sites).

Another proof point of the growing commitment to intent data came when looking at the amount of budget B2B brands are allocating to the category.

**WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE ANNUAL INVESTMENT TO ACQUIRE INTENT DATA:**

Spending more than \$120,000 per year

25%



31%

Spending \$61,000 or more per year

B2B brands are not only upping their investments in intent data, but they are also moving well beyond the initial use of simply identifying potential in-market buyers. B2B revenue teams are now integrating the intelligence from intent signals into their core revenue systems and go-to-market strategies.

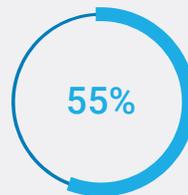
**ILLUSTRATING THIS TREND OF WIDER OPERATIONAL USE:**



Utilizing intent data within lead- and account-scoring



Doing real-time account prioritization



Setting up trigger actions based on intent signals within their CRM and marketing automation systems



Fueling inside sales conversations and actions



Arming sales execs with relevant insights



However, because intent data is still a relatively new tool and its utilization is spreading so quickly across revenue operations, it comes with some challenges, as companies look to normalize data across multiple sources and efficiently manage the handling of data across different departments.

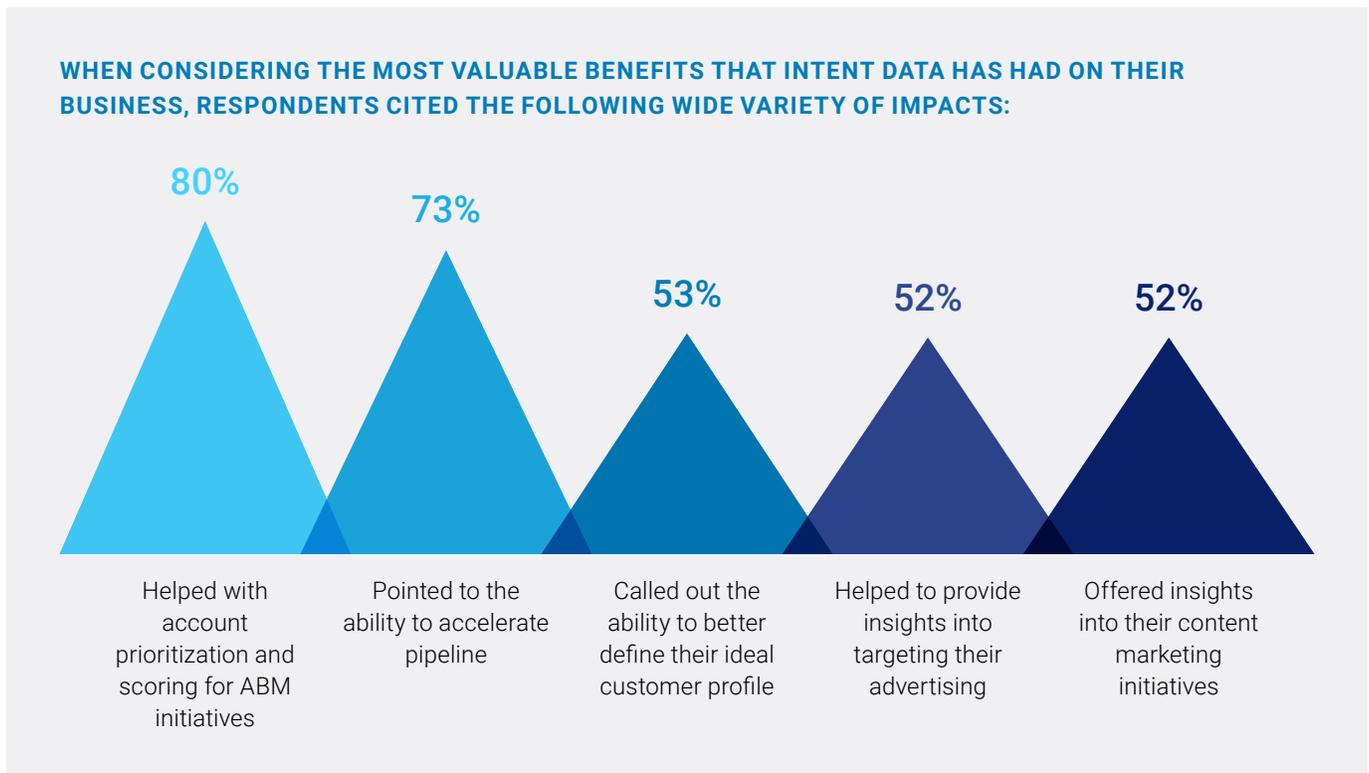
In the following report, we will further examine:

- The impact that intent data currently has on B2B revenue operations;
- The expanding business use cases for where intent data is being integrated across strategic areas;
- The challenges organizations face when managing and integrating intent data; and
- The opportunities to add efficiency and increase the impact of intent data moving forward.

## In-Market And Beyond: The Growing List Of Intent's Applications

The early applications of intent data were primarily focused on identifying and finding in-market buyers. Because of B2B's historically long sales cycles and the fact that many buyers preferred to remain anonymous for the first phases of research and consideration, there was immediate interest in the ability to spot signals without an official hand-raise from a buyer.

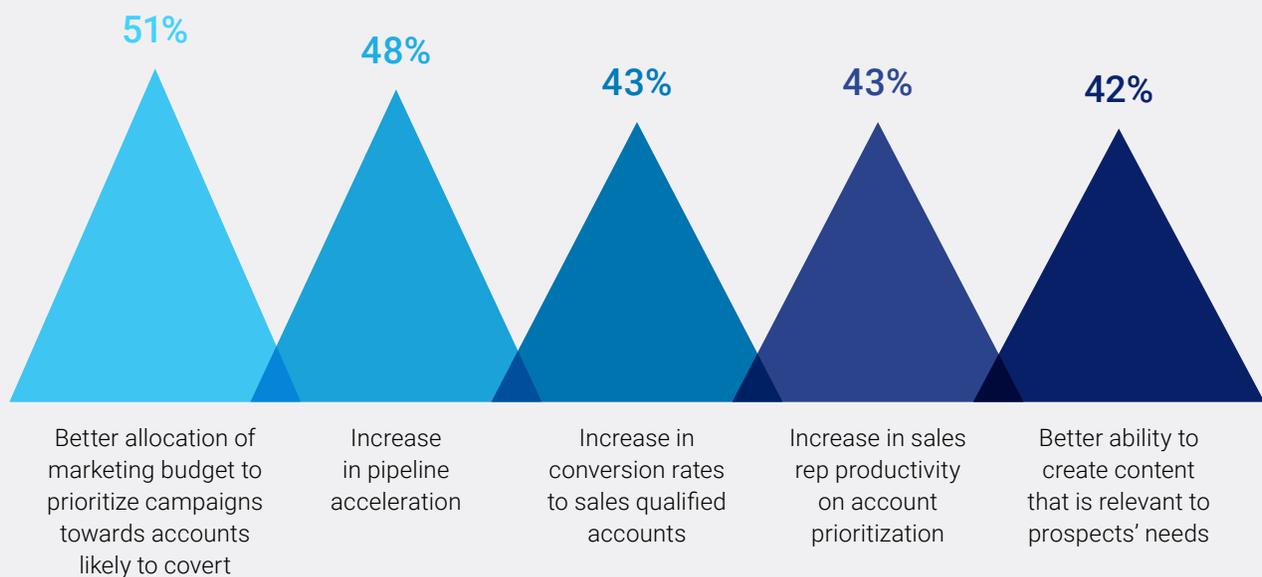
While this has proven to be a core value of intent data, many organizations have quickly realized the benefits of this intelligence, as it extends well beyond the short-term payoff of flagging companies that are searching for topics relevant to a category.





As stated earlier, more than 70% of respondents said intent data has had a positive impact on their business. In terms of the metrics companies are using to track the impact that intent is having, the responses stretched well beyond short-term pipeline returns — with many citing increases in conversions, productivity and efficiency of their revenue operations.

**WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE TOP KPIs COMPANIES ARE USING TO JUSTIFY THEIR USE OF INTENT DATA, THE TOP RESPONSES INCLUDED:**



## Overcoming Data Obstacles: How Brands Address Early Challenges

Because intent data represents a new key data source, many companies have seen some early challenges with how to operationalize the data, as well as determining which departments and roles will be responsible for managing the data.

The survey illustrated the fact that the task of ensuring data is accurate and actionable ranks among the top challenges most companies face as they look to expand their utilization of intent signal.

The desire to match contact-level data to company data is a priority for companies expanding their ABM programs, as they look to reach key members of the buying committee and operationalize models such as SiriusDecisions' Demand Unit Waterfall.

When asked if they collect contact-level intent data, a surprising 60% said they are already doing so, with 27% saying they are planning to do so within the next 12 months.

Since this capability is currently limited to a small number of intent vendors, it appears some respondents may have been overestimating their current ability to truly get down to the contact level. However, the numbers clearly show this is a priority for B2B brands moving forward.

### RANKING THE TOP-FIVE CHALLENGES, RESPONDENTS CITED:



Developing timely and effective follow-up on intent signals



Ensuring data quality



Connecting company intent signals to contact-level data

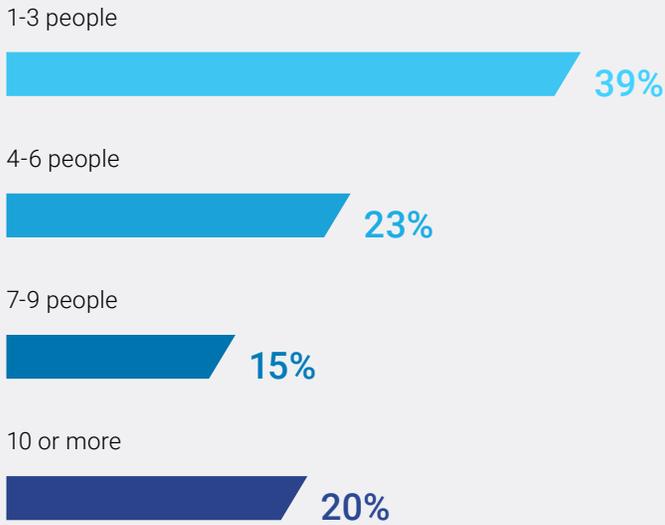


Integrating other activity data with intent data



Avoiding "false positive" signals from intent data

**WHEN ASKED HOW MANY PEOPLE IN THEIR ORGANIZATION ARE INVOLVED IN ENSURING INTENT DATA IS ACCURATE AND NORMALIZED:**



Addressing the other top challenge and concern around data accuracy, the survey found most companies are taking some steps, but this remains an area that will likely need more discipline and advanced solutions in the future. Respondents said they rely on built-in data quality assurance from their intent provider (28%) and are utilizing a third-party data enrichment tool to compare intent insights to their first-party engagement data. On a positive note, only 15% said they are not taking any steps to ensure their intent data is accurate.

The challenges of cleaning up and managing data sources bring some inefficiencies that companies will need to keep an eye on moving forward.

In looking at the initiative of managing and normalizing intent data – in terms of the total number of hours – 54% said they were spending four to five hours per week.

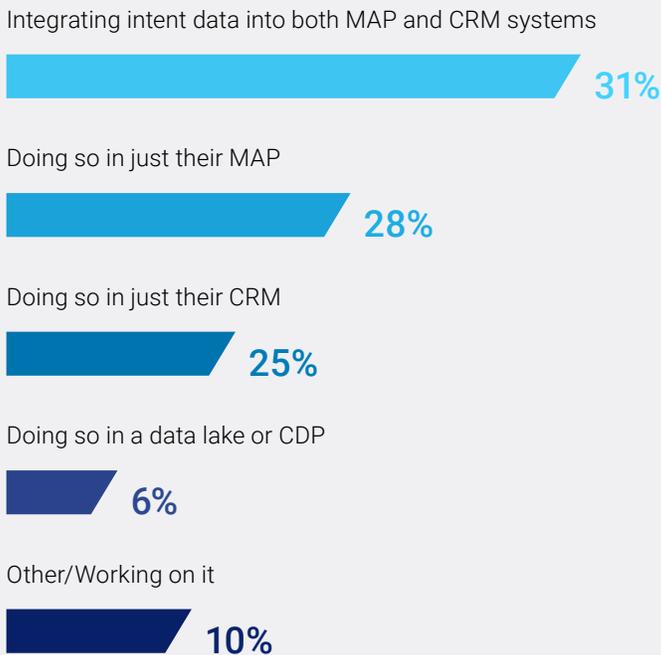
This substantial investment in time and people represents a significant opportunity for new platforms and processes to add efficiency, as companies continue to expand their utilization of intent data at various stages of sales and marketing engagement.



## Operationalizing Intent Data Intelligence Across Marketing And Sales

As mentioned above, intent data is now being utilized across nearly all engagement points for marketing and sales, and therefore, it is also being integrated into a variety of systems and processes

### WHEN ASKED HOW THEY ARE CURRENTLY AGGREGATING AND NORMALIZING INTENT DATA:



In terms of how intent data is being fed into their tech stack, respondents showed a similar mix, with 31% pointing to the intelligence being poured into both MAP and CRM, 25% saying it goes directly into their CRM, 28% pushing it directly into MAP and 6% saying it is fed into a data management solution. Only 10% said they are not currently integrating intent data into any part of their tech stack, which again, reinforces how pervasive and influential signal data has become in such a short period.

The survey showed intent data is also being handled by multiple departments within organizations. When asked to select which departments manage or oversee intent data, 72% selected Marketing, 69% said Marketing Operations, 54% said Demand Generation, 45% said Sales Operations and 37% selected Sales.

The research also showed that intent data is viewed as a strategic initiative by upper management, with 24% of respondents saying intent initiatives are being managed at the C-level, 31% highlighting the VP-level and 66% indicating director and above taking charge.

## Conclusion:

# Intent Data Viewed As A Competitive Advantage

Although there are still some operational efficiencies and challenges that need to be addressed in terms of the way intent data is managed and operationalized, the survey reinforces that the business value of the intelligence is clear across various components of the revenue operation.

Companies view intent data as fuel to their highest-priority go-to-market initiatives, such as ABM, content marketing and targeted advertising, as well as tighter sales and marketing alignment.

Fast-moving companies have quickly realized that intent data can not only help their sales teams focus their outreach, but it can also help them focus their advertising dollars and determine which topics they should address in their content marketing.

As we turn the calendar to 2020 and beyond, the utilization of intent data will only expand and there is an opportunity for advances in both platforms and processes. Revenue teams will likely continue to prioritize the goal of mapping signal data to individuals within the buying team. This is so marketing and sales outreach can be more efficient at the contact level, and advanced platforms will be key in making this a reality.

Also, the need for normalization of data will be another area ripe for advancement. With the survey showing nearly 60% of companies are using three or more data sources, and 53% spending more than four hours to clean up the data from various sources, there is a need for some consolidation and automation of vendors and processes.

With research continuing to show buyers are increasingly selecting vendors who provide relevant, targeted and timely messaging from both marketing and sales, intent data is quickly moving from an experiment to an imperative for B2B companies.

And given that the best-practice models for utilizing intent data within tech stacks and revenue processes are still being defined, the companies that can move quickly and select the right partners and processes will likely have an advantage over their competitors.



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The key to our approach is powerful B2B intent signal monitoring, which we pioneered and continue to define with our flagship InsightBase® Data-as-a-Service (DaaS) solution and its proprietary True Influence Relevance Engine™ intent analytics.

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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 multi-channel demand generation efforts.

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