Anteriad

Quick Start Guide to Intent-Based Marketing

Intent-Based Marketing Series: Part 1

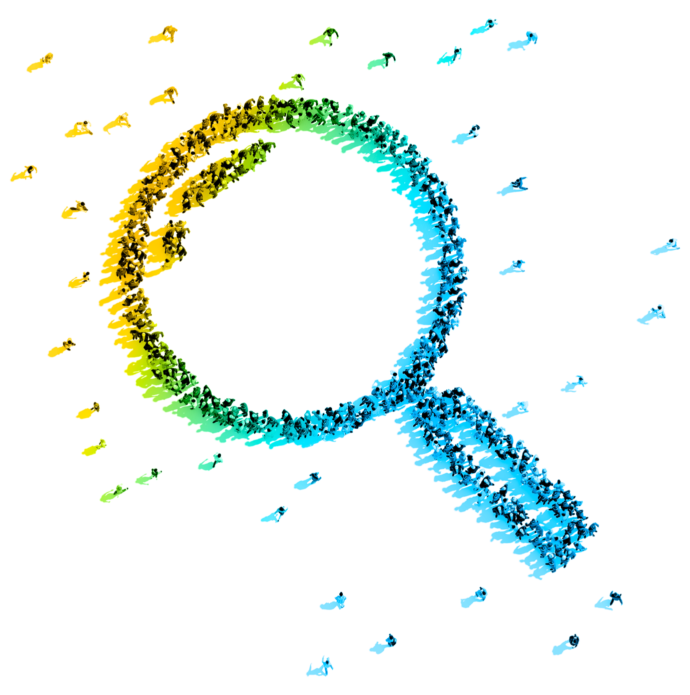
Since the beginning of B2B marketing as we know it, marketers have struggled with how to get in front of the right prospects at the precise moment they're ready to buy. For decades, the only solution was to use firmographic data (company size, industry, geographic footprint, etc.) which unfortunately offered no insights into whether the target would be ready to buy today, next quarter, next year ... or ever.

Things improved somewhat when technographic data came onto the scene. By finding out which tools, technologies, and applications a company used, marketers could gain deeper insights into what they buy, how they operate, and what they might be looking to do next. Technographics offered more advanced clues as to which businesses might be a good fit, but still gave no intelligence regarding where targets might be in the buyer's journey.

Then along came predictive analytics, providing further improvement by predicting buying activity based on past experience through the use of algorithms and mathematical models. As helpful as this approach was in improving targeting for likely prospects based on a lookalike model, getting in front of those prospects at the right time — when they were actually in-market for the solution in question — still involved a large amount of guessing. The result was a great deal of time and energy wasted on uninterested prospects while many good ones slipped away.

Along the way, B2B marketers acquired advanced tools that helped them make better strategic use of the data available to them. Customer relationship management (CRM) solutions allowed them to track relationship-building interactions with current and prospective customers across platforms. Marketing automation platforms (MAPs) let them automate routine tasks and build custom, personalized campaigns that run automatically when triggered by a specific action. And sales engagement platforms consolidated communication, content, and analytics tools to help sales teams maximize their productivity.

All these tools are useful, but only as valuable as the data that goes into them. If that data is missing a vital component — the target's level of interest and position in the buyer's journey — even the most advanced marketing stack can only take you so far.



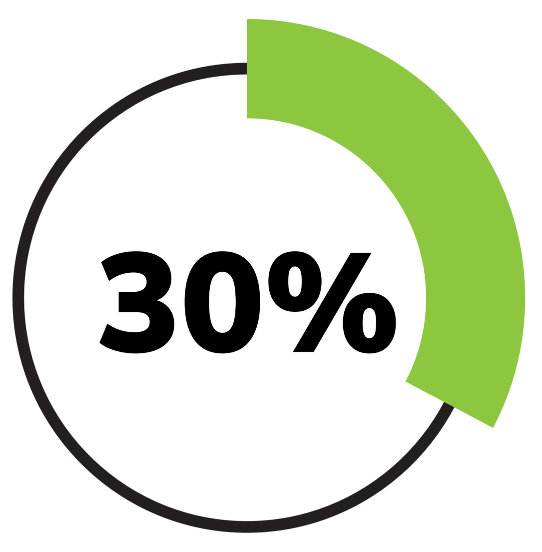
According to a recent survey by HubSpot, marketers' top challenge is generating traffic and leads.

Source: 2023 Marketing Strategy & Trends Report

Today, thanks to advances in artificial intelligence and other technologies, marketers have a new strategic weapon in their arsenal: intent data. By monitoring online activity around topics related to their products, marketers can identify previously unknown prospects and track behaviors within the organizations already on their radars. They can find out which problems prospective customers are looking to solve, how they're looking to solve them, and which solutions they might be considering. They can see activity spikes indicating a warm lead has suddenly become hot. And they can spin this intelligence into personalized marketing and sales actions to place themselves in the ideal position when the customer begins showing signs that they are ready to buy.

For example, a marketing team for a data security software provider can track online activity on topics related to their product — topics such as online security, data breaches, cyberattacks, ransomware, etc. Their intent data can reveal which IP addresses the activity originates from and match those IP addresses to organizations and locations. The marketing team can add those organizations to its target list and create focused campaigns incorporating email, programmatic ads, and offline activities such as telephone-based lead qualification.

As powerful as intent data is, a surprisingly small number of B2B marketers have caught on. According to Demand Gen Report's 2022 ABM Benchmark Survey Report, only 30% of B2B companies are currently using intent data. The reason could be a simple matter of education — marketing teams know about this strategic opportunity, but are uncertain on how to use intent to its full potential. This presents an enormous opportunity for nimble, forward-looking B2B marketers who can put intent monitoring to work today and create a sizable advantage over their competitors.



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Source: 2022 ABM Benchmark Survey Report

In this e-book, we'll briefly explore the basics of intent data — what it is and how it's different from other approaches.

What is Intent Data?

Intent data is the behavioral information users generate as they engage in online activities around a specific topic. As targets conduct online research related to your product or service, they may read blog posts, download white papers, attend webinars, and/or engage in social media conversations. Intent data monitoring gives you a window into this behavior, enabling your sales and marketing teams to leverage the resulting data in finetuning their strategies. They can then customize their approaches, just as you would trigger a targeted nurturing campaign or create a personalized website experience for leads who completed a form on your site. Intent data can come from two main types of sources:

1st **First-party:** First-party data is generated on your organization's own sites, including your website, landing pages, blog, apps, etc.

3rd **Third-party:** Third-party data is generated and shared from external sources not owned by your company

Both sources are important, but using one without the other neglects important context that can be the difference between a won deal and a lost opportunity. Thanks to CRM systems and MAPs, your sales team has more insight than ever into your prospects' content engagement activities — which of your content and assets they engage with, and how often. But few B2B buyers limit their research to one brand; most seek out content from multiple resources, which is where third-party data comes in.

Both first-party and third-party sources generate three types of intent data:

- **Anonymous:** Anonymous intent data offers no name associated with the record of a website visit.
- **Identified:** Identified intent data is the result of using reverse IP lookup to identify sources of web traffic, which reveals which organizations are visiting the website and consuming content.
- **Opted-in:** Opted-in intent data comes from leads who have submitted information — such as their name, title, company name, and email address — in exchange for something of value, usually a high-quality piece of content. These leads have also given you permission, implicitly or explicitly, to contact them.

At first glance, opted-in data may seem like the only actionable data set, but consider that many B2B prospects are reluctant to submit information, especially in the early stages of the buying process. Opted-in data can also generate a large number of false positives. For example, you may offer a white paper that does a great job of attracting interest from your target audience ... but also from casual learners, researchers, and even competitors. Including anonymous and identified data in your assessment provides a more complete picture of who your targets are and how they go about finding answers to their questions.

How is Intent Data Different from Predictive Analytics?

The rise of account-based marketing (ABM), predictive analytics and intent marketing signals a shift in how marketers are approaching demand generation. The focus is now on foreseeing buyer behavior. Tapping into a variety of resources — customer profiles, sales data, etc. — predictive analytics uses advanced technologies such as data mining, statistics, modeling, machine learning, and artificial intelligence (AI) to predict how B2B buyers will behave in the present and future.

While predictive analytics is valuable, intent data takes it a step further. Predictive analysis is focused on past trends, which may or may not be accurate predictors of what will happen in the future when used alone. By focusing on "lookalike" modeling, predictive analytics can overlook any previously untapped markets, causing marketers to miss out on valuable opportunities. Targets in non-endemic markets could be self-identifying as prospects through their online research or technographic behaviors, and marketers relying on predictive analytics alone might never know it.

Finally, leveraging predictive analytics requires a high level of organizational sophistication as well as extremely clean data, both of which may be beyond the reach of some midsize companies. Intent data offers an elegant solution to these shortcomings. Instead of basing its output on information that could be months or even years old, intent data shows marketers what is happening right now. Working with an intent data provider like Anteriad makes it easy to take immediate action, since all the relevance and regressional analysis has been done for you. Intent data also delivers actionable insights you can use to trigger personalization, nurture streams, initiate prospecting, alert sales, and even plan your content calendar.

It's All in the Preparation

Once you discover all the powerful possibilities intent monitoring offers, it's easy to get excited and want to dive right in. Like any solution, intent data is only as effective as how you implement it, and any good action plan starts with preparation. Just about every budget owner has had the frustrating experience of buying a software solution, then having to wait months to be able to demonstrate value because they didn't do the necessary prep work. To ensure that your intent data solution starts delivering results right away, consider enlisting a data provider that offers managed services or self-service solutions with customer support. You may want to work with the partner to refine your use cases and sort out your prep work so you can start using the data as soon as possible. A trusted provider can provide expertise, but it's important to be knowledgeable so you ask the right questions—after all, no one knows your business better than you do. Follow these steps before you onboard your solution.

Define use cases:

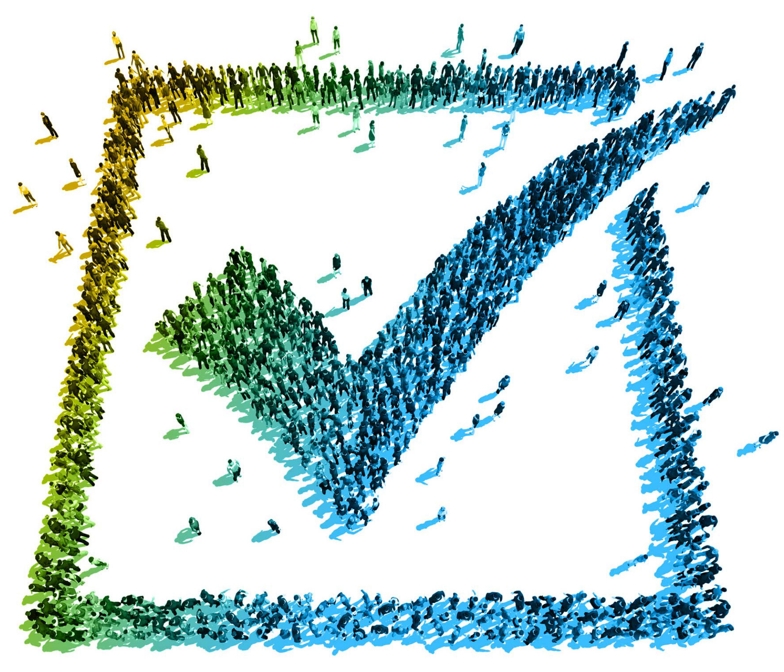
Your use cases will specify who will use the intent data and how. This exercise will help you determine:

- How your data will need to be structured
- How intent data will flow into your marketing automation and/or CRM systems
- What scoring you might want to perform
- Triggers or alerts you will need to set up

If, for example, a current account's contract is coming due and you notice they are starting to look at your competitors, that should trigger an alert to the account's sales rep. Or if a target's search activity is spiking for certain keywords, that should kick off a nurture and retargeting campaign, and possibly an outreach call from an inside sales rep.

Create a change management plan:

Intent data is only useful if you act on it. Once you've appropriately determined how to make the data flow and which behaviors it should influence, your next step is to define those behaviors in detail. Partnering with sales, create a detailed plan — including service level agreements (SLAs) and a timeline — for incorporating intent monitoring into your day-to-day sales and marketing activities. Which campaigns will precipitate a sales development call? Which campaigns trigger which nurture behaviors? When should an account director engage? Remember, without a plan for maximizing its potential in elevating your results, intent data can easily become noise. And this exercise may often identify different use cases or data flows from the ones you anticipated earlier (see "Define use cases" above).



Lay the groundwork to ensure that your intent data solution can start delivering results right away.

Determine history and relevance:

Examine your customer journey to discover which intent trends or historical moments were inflection points and map that information to your new data flow. Decide which "interesting moments" are worth capturing for future campaign refinement, or how the evolution of a target's spiking topics might indicate they are entering the vendor research phase of the buying decision. Have a plan in place for your team to take specific actions in a timely manner so that you can capitalize on those opportunities ahead of your competitors.

Identify the fields you might need to create to capture and monitor data flow:

Structuring marketing flows based on binary intent data (whether an account is spiking on a relevant topic) is a first step. But to take intent data to the next level, you'll want to identify which data is provided by your intent provider and map it to existing or new fields in your MAP or CRM. Even if you don't integrate intent monitoring directly with your marketing automation or CRM system, map out exactly which intent data needs to make its way into the hands of those who will take action on it.

Start slowly with a proof of concept:

When you start using intent data, it's tempting to build out every possible use case immediately, but this approach can lead to "data paralysis." Take your time and become familiar with how intent spikes relate to your actual deal flow, then expand your portfolio of use cases gradually as you become more comfortable. Collaborate with your intent data provider to define use cases that support your business needs. Chances are they have fresh ideas for how to find the relevance and insights that will deliver the highest ROI given your unique business challenges.

Choose your topics strategically:

When choosing topics to monitor, think beyond the terms related directly to your product or service. What are the most common problems you solve, and which words do your targets use to describe them? What are some competing or complementary technologies that targets may also be researching? By strategically expanding your topic stack, you'll stand a far greater chance of finding targets who have identified a need but might not yet know about your solution. While intent data reflects online behaviors, it doesn't work the same as SEO/SEM. For example, if you are in an emerging category, not all prospects will be aware of the category even if they are seeking a solution. What are companion categories or topics that indicate either available budget or an unexpressed need?

Explore cross-organizational uses:

Intent data has many other uses beyond sourcing and prioritizing prospects and accounts. Larger organizations will gain even greater value from intent monitoring when it is made accessible to the product marketing, content development and business intelligence teams. Consider convening a task force consisting of sales, marketing, product management, and marketing operations to explore other areas where intent intelligence can enhance efforts and create market differentiation.

This is just the beginning:

Once you implement an effective intent monitoring platform, integrate it with your current sales and marketing technology stack, and educate your team on how to use it, the possibilities are endless. By combining intent data with marketing automation, you can solve the age-old question of how to get in front of buyers at the right time. Your marketing team can focus its efforts on the approaches that produce results, and your sales team can spend less time playing phone tag with uninterested prospects as they concentrate on serious buyers. The next step is up to you. Will you settle for the same old approaches to B2B marketing … or will you get a jump on your competitors by leveraging the most powerful tool to come along in decades? If you want to learn more about intent data and how it can work for your organization, read the rest of our intent data ebook series Using Intent at Every Stage of Your Funnel and 10 Ways to Put Intent Data to Work.

Ready to continue the conversation?

Let's talk

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