

USING INTENT DATA TO POWER MORE FULLY INTEGRATED ABM



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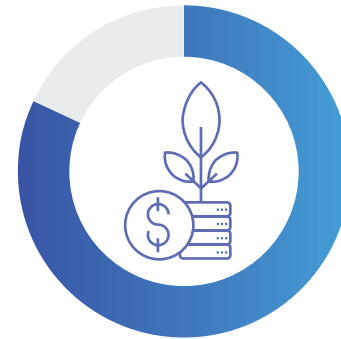
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Introduction

When most people talk about account-based marketing (ABM), they focus on the ‘M’ out of the gate. But fully integrated ABM strategies are conceived to go far beyond being just about marketing; they strive to unite multiple strategies, tactics, channels and internal teams behind one common goal: Maximizing engagement and delivering more revenue from as many target accounts as possible.

This critical end goal depends on prioritizing the right accounts, connecting with real buying teams and acting in the right ways on the right signals. To enable the approach, it must be able to reach across internal silos. Internal teams — from marketing and sales enablement to customer success — need to become more collaborative and in sync. They need to be brought together around the same guiding information sources in order to better deliver an informed and more consistent experience across the customer lifecycle. And since intent data is one of the most in-the-moment insights a team can have, logic suggests that by integrating around it, go-to-market (GTM) strategies can become as relevant as humanly possible.



82% of revenue teams say their investment in intent data will increase over the next 12 months, with **34%** indicating it will increase significantly.

Throughout this report, we'll identify the most effective uses of intent data, discuss best practices and peek into the future of ABM. To provide more context and insights, specific topics of discussion include:



How to identify and leverage reliable intent data and signals



Strategies for maximizing engagement with buying groups



The importance of aligning internal teams



How to utilize intent data to craft personalized interactions



Using Reliable Intent Data & Signals

The bedrock of fully integrated ABM is purchase intent data because it opens the door to identifying and leveraging better action-guiding signals. And while many companies claim to use intent data for ABM, many experts believe the industry is still only scratching the surface of the value available from the best sources.

“I think that most people are at the beginning of their journey of using intent data to its full potential,” explained Samantha Stone, Founder and CMO of The Marketing Advisory Network. “Intent signals are like this golden nugget of amazingness. It’s way more meaningful than a lot of other information we might have at our disposal.”

“Intent signals are like this golden nugget of amazingness...”

– Samantha Stone, Founder & CMO, The Marketing Advisory Network



62% of B2B marketers are looking to incorporate intent insights into their processes.

While more organizations are using intent data across all funnel stages, the caveat is that it must be reliable to be effective. If organizations aren't generating it themselves (first party), then it must come from a trusted source (second party) with transparent methods and metrics — otherwise those golden nuggets are simply fool's gold. Third-party intent data is often based on assumptions; contacts remain anonymous or their actual intentions can't be clearly understood. This can cause a team a variety of issues.

If there is no real “intent” in the data, for instance, sales teams may waste valuable effort. Worse, they may try more aggressive tactics where they shouldn't, perhaps closing doors for the future. Conversely, if the signals are not clear and precise enough, they may be ignored by sales, and precious opportunities will continue to be missed.

“The big challenge is getting reliable data,” explained Jeremy Schwartz, Senior Manager of Lead Management Operations at Citrix. “People are using incognito mode more and more. Networks are trying to champion this sense of privacy. So, people who are relying on third-party pixels are going to be really challenged.”

The most reliable intent data links opt-in permissions and login credentials entered by individuals to a granular understanding of the content that they viewed. Companies can rely on intent data when these qualities exist because they can see who exhibited it and what caused it.



Companies leveraged Priority Engine™, TechTarget's industry-leading intent data platform for account-based marketing, to create and manage more than **28K ABM lists** in 2020.

Maximizing Engagement In Buying Groups

Once companies can rely on intent data quality, they can confidently leverage signals and empower teams to deliver high-value interactions. As the buyer's journey intensifies, increases and more stakeholders join in the purchase process, sales teams gain a valuable shortcut on multi-threading because they know the active players and exactly what each cares about. Better meetings can be created earlier, driving a more focused momentum and boxing out competitors.

“We need to do a better job of looking at the important signals,” noted Stone. “We need to understand our buyers and understand our audience enough to understand their [buying] processes.”

“It’s a whole new audience that we have to start thinking about...”

– Jeremy Schwartz, Senior Manager, Lead Management Operations, Citrix

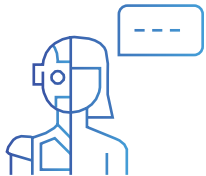


Today’s B2B purchases **involve an average of 11** individual stakeholders, according to Gartner.

Schwartz emphasized that a buying group is a whole new audience to think about.

“It’s easy for me to say, ‘One lead is engaging. He’s moving through my funnel well, and I can get a lead out of him,’” he said. “But there’s probably five other people on a committee that you have to deal with. And we have to make sure they’re on board and getting the right message.”

Without the right intent data sources, it’s exceedingly difficult to identify and bring together the stakeholders in a buying group. And as prospects rely increasingly on digital touches over human touches, reps are getting fewer opportunities to interact directly with buyers. The data must be used both to drive better digital outreach and, by working to bring people together, to maximize the effectiveness of the human-to-human contact that is still available.



In 2015, prospect interactions averaged seven human touches and seven digital touches, but by 2021, they averaged **12 human touches and **15 digital touches**, per Forrester.**

“Interactions with reps are going down, but we’re also seeing they’re just as valuable [to buyers] as they were before,” explained Seth Marrs, Principal Analyst at Forrester. “So, if you have less of them, and they’re just as important, you better be as informed as possible. That’s where intent signals come in. That’s where it becomes so critical to understand what’s going on in the digital world and around what your clients are doing online.”



Unifying & Synchronizing Internal Teams

In principle, leveraging reliable intent data and maximizing engagement of buying groups will move companies closer to their GTM end goals. But to actually reach that next-level performance requires rethinking classical arms-length relationships between sales, marketing and other internal teams. Internal teams must work better together to support improved delivery of what's needed at untraditional parts of the funnel.

For example, in ABM programs, to ensure maximum opportunity creation, sales involvement may need to occur earlier in the buyer's journey. By the same token, to accelerate opportunity closing, marketing may need to contribute more messaging and content support deeper in the pipeline.

“They’re always going to be able to beat you to the punch...”

–Seth Marrs, Principal Analyst, Forrester



More than 50% of B2B marketers are already using intent data to increase sales revenue, and that number is expected to reach 70% by 2022.

Post-sale and beyond, expect all groups to be much more tightly aligned around customer experiences designed to maximize cross-sell and renewal. When everyone is on the same intent-based source of truth, making these moves towards more productive approaches is easier because everyone can see where the rationales come from.

“The biggest success we’ve seen is with partnerships with other teams,” said Schwartz. “Oftentimes, you’re only hearing the internal, product marketing or product folks; you’re getting what we always say is the ‘internal speak.’ And so, partnering with sales, where they’re on the front lines, speaking to customers, making sure that we understand, ‘What are the use cases?’ ‘What are the intent signals?’ ‘What are the things that are actually working for you?’ ‘What are not?’ ‘What can we help you with?’” That is one of the most important [benefits of] partnerships.”

According to buyers, account-based strategies deliver better value and ROI than traditional go-to-market approaches.



86% say it improves win rates



76% say it delivers higher ROI



80% say it improves customer lifetime value

GARTNER

The experts note that ABM teams are moving toward redefined relationships with new synchronization and support. And those that don’t have that support are at a growing disadvantage.

“It’s getting to a point where if you’re a sales rep that doesn’t have access to digital interactions, but you’re competing against a rep who does, they’re always going to be able to beat you to the punch,” said Marrs. “They’re going to be able to see when their contacts and their companies are interacting with information and signaling [their] intent.”

Sales, marketing and other internal teams that unite their efforts, share information and work together are reaping the benefits.

“Intent data is most optimized when we actually execute programs and nurture around those intent signals, so that we support sales outreach in a much more integrated fashion,” said Stone. “The people who are doing that are seeing the best results. That’s the direction we need to head in.”



Focus on Meaningful, Personalized Sales Interactions

With all of this intent data at hand and internal teams aligned around a common goal, it's tempting to want to overwhelm accounts with information and touches. But one strategy that the experts kept returning to for retaining and growing accounts is to ensure that this valuable data is used carefully to nurture contacts.

“There's value in automation, and there are things that automation is really great for,” said Stone. “But one of the things it's not great for is following up on important, high-impact intent signals. The more access to information we have, the less thoughtful we sometimes are with that information. We need to think about automation and scale in a much more personal way and trigger personalized communications based on what the intent actions are showing us.”

“The more access to information we have,
the less thoughtful we sometimes are...”

—Samantha Stone, Founder & CMO, The Marketing Advisory Network



43% of revenue teams say they are currently using intent data to create deeper relationships and build trust with their customers.

Marrs cited Forrester research that showed on average, sales reps only spend 18% of their time in front of buyers. With less time in front of buyers, sales reps need to make the most of it. But they can also contribute to ABM and the overall team in other ways behind the scenes.

“As companies start pulling in sales to ABM, sales can give you context within the account,” said Marrs. “They have the personal relationships. They can start telling you which opportunities go to which contacts and the personality of these contacts, or what their real power is on those deals.”



Conclusion

Fully integrating ABM means moving well beyond ‘M’ for marketing. It starts with a reliable foundation of behavioral insight – intent data – that then fuels a much greater unification of the key teams in a GTM strategy. To achieve more revenue from an ABM list, sales, marketing and other departments must work better together on those target accounts. They must support each other better at the various stages of the funnel to engage accounts in more effective ways.

“Now we have this alignment of content and messaging,” said Schwartz. “I think that really brings it together and brings it to life to move people through the funnel more effectively.”

Contact us to learn about more fully integrating your account-based marketing using a powerful intent data platform like Priority Engine.

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FUELING MODERN ABM SUCCESS

Priority Engine, TechTarget’s leading intent data platform, captures high quality, intent data by understanding the activity of known, opted-in buyers and the specific content they view. It also identifies buying groups inside a company and contextualizes behavior by recency, frequency, geography, role and function. This detailed view of users and their buying group’s behavior reveals extremely accurate signals, and when a group or individual is preparing to act, Priority Engine allows sales and marketing teams to see their intent. These highly actionable signals, combined with extensive managed services teams can use to engage buying teams, allows Priority Engine to fuel modern ABM programs across the entire lifecycle.



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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