Using Intent Data for Effective Persona Development in ABM

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With buyers highly focused on mission-critical business impact, extreme value and ROI in a challenging market, buying team members and their degree of influence is changing. To keep pace with what's going on in your target accounts, regularly updating personas should become a part of your ABM routine.

In 2016, a common statistic cited 44% of B2B marketers had already implemented personas and a full 83% expected they'd be using personas in the near future. With the Content Marketing Institute saying that at the end of 2018 73% had implemented personas, it is safe to say that as of now, practically every one of us is applying persona thinking in some form or another. As you shape your ABM strategy to deliver upon shifting business goals, maintaining current personas will help to keep you on track.
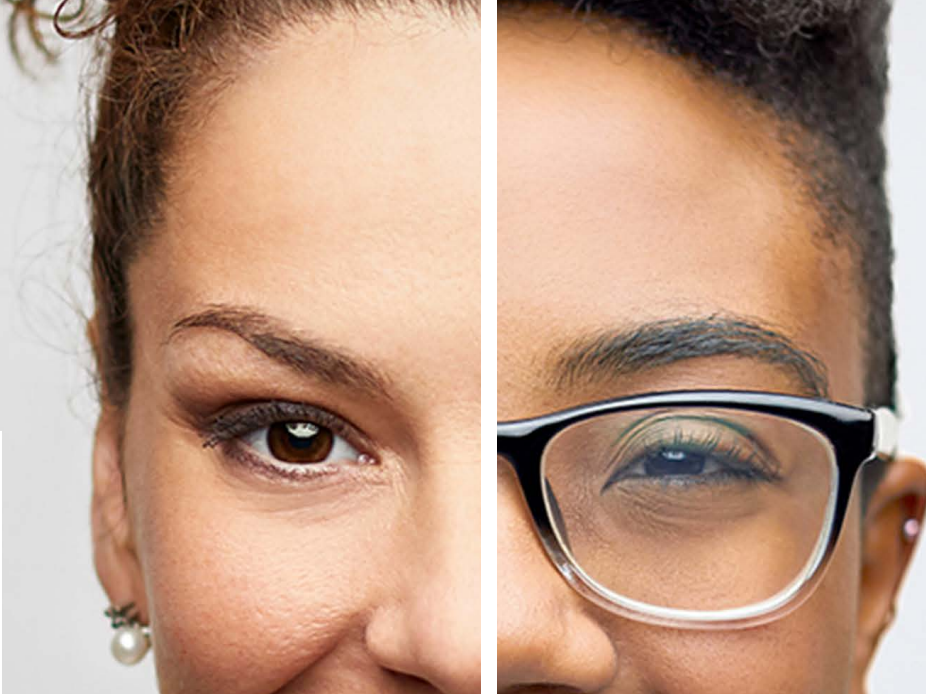
Why do we have personas in the first place?

Given the complexity of B2B marketing, personas provide a framework that can help us make better sense of all the data we have and take more useful action on it. Persona work helps drive efficiency because it focuses us on truly important groups according to their roles, responsibilities and more. This is especially

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vital when responding to changing market needs as buyer priorities and buying team members can quickly evolve and change. As companies reprioritize account lists, taking a fresh look at personas allows you to reach the right people at the right time.

Personas and ABM

At its core, ABM is about selecting a group of accounts based on a rigorous examination of your company's potential revenue from them and then making a commitment to do better at pursuing a larger share of that potential. For marketers and sellers alike, this usually involves working hard at better understanding the companies on your ABM list and better understanding the needs of each member of the buying team at any given time in the buying process. To succeed, your efforts must be more targeted, more personalized, less based on models built for efficiency. They must also be informed by the most current behavioral data and insights that you have available to you.

TechTarget practices exclusively in the enterprise technology space. Since these markets are particularly dynamic, current insight into buyer activity within markets is all the more critical to more effective marketing and selling, especially today with **Gartner predicting an 8% decline in tech spending for 2020.**

Apply current market insights to persona building

If you are proposing a new use case for your technology, at a minimum, you'll need to check whether or not your persona framework should be tweaked. If you're impacting new processes, you could easily be impacting different roles from those you've traditionally targeted. This is where real purchase intent can provide guidance. By providing insight into what prospects around your target use cases are researching, you'll be able to evolve your messaging and make changes to your sales motions to align with what's top of mind for your audience. By tracking behavioral data like what people are reading and what granular key word strings they're using, you'll be able to distinguish between what they already have interest in and that which you're proposing they consider.

When you're introducing an entirely new concept to the market, you'll have to double down on trying to understand facets of your potential market where momentum could be gained. Because few people are searching for what you do, they don't understand it enough to see the connection to their needs. But they will be studying areas where you make a difference – so start to target and engage them there. Discover the new personas that should be interested in you by understanding the upstream and downstream areas impacted by the changes you're bringing. And continuously review and update them based on market conditions.

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Buyer Personas are Changing
Understand the impact market conditions can have on persona building

It's important to make sure you continually review and update your personas because as economic conditions change, buyer directives change as do the people directing the purchase. You need to change alongside it

### MAP OUT HOW THE STAKEHOLDER COMMITTEE HAS CHANGED

DECISION MAKER	Makes final decisions regarding mission-critical priorities
CFO/CIO	Executive approver of transactions; looking for critical priority impact
DEPUTY	Tasked top-down to come up with solutions to critical priorities
CHAMPION	
INFLUENCER	
PROCUREMENT	Deal paperwork

Source: Evolving Buyer Messaging and Insights to Provide Extreme Value, TOPO

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Evolve your ABM list by expanding account personas and taking new market considerations into account

While we usually think of personas as applying to the roles and responsibilities of people, the same idea can be useful in describing and distinguishing between different companies in your total addressable market, which has likely changed with today's market fluctuations. Yet as we've seen with personas and people, it's easy to fall prey to too much rearview-mirror thinking – developing an ABM list based on successes of the past rather than what's best going forward. Today, ABM success requires applying a forward-thinking approach that factors in market forces currently affecting an account's strength like the vertical they are part of, company size, financial health and business outlook for their industry.
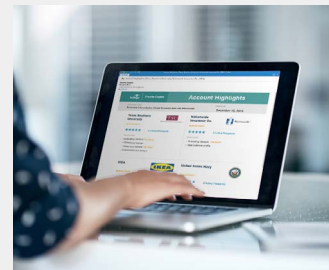
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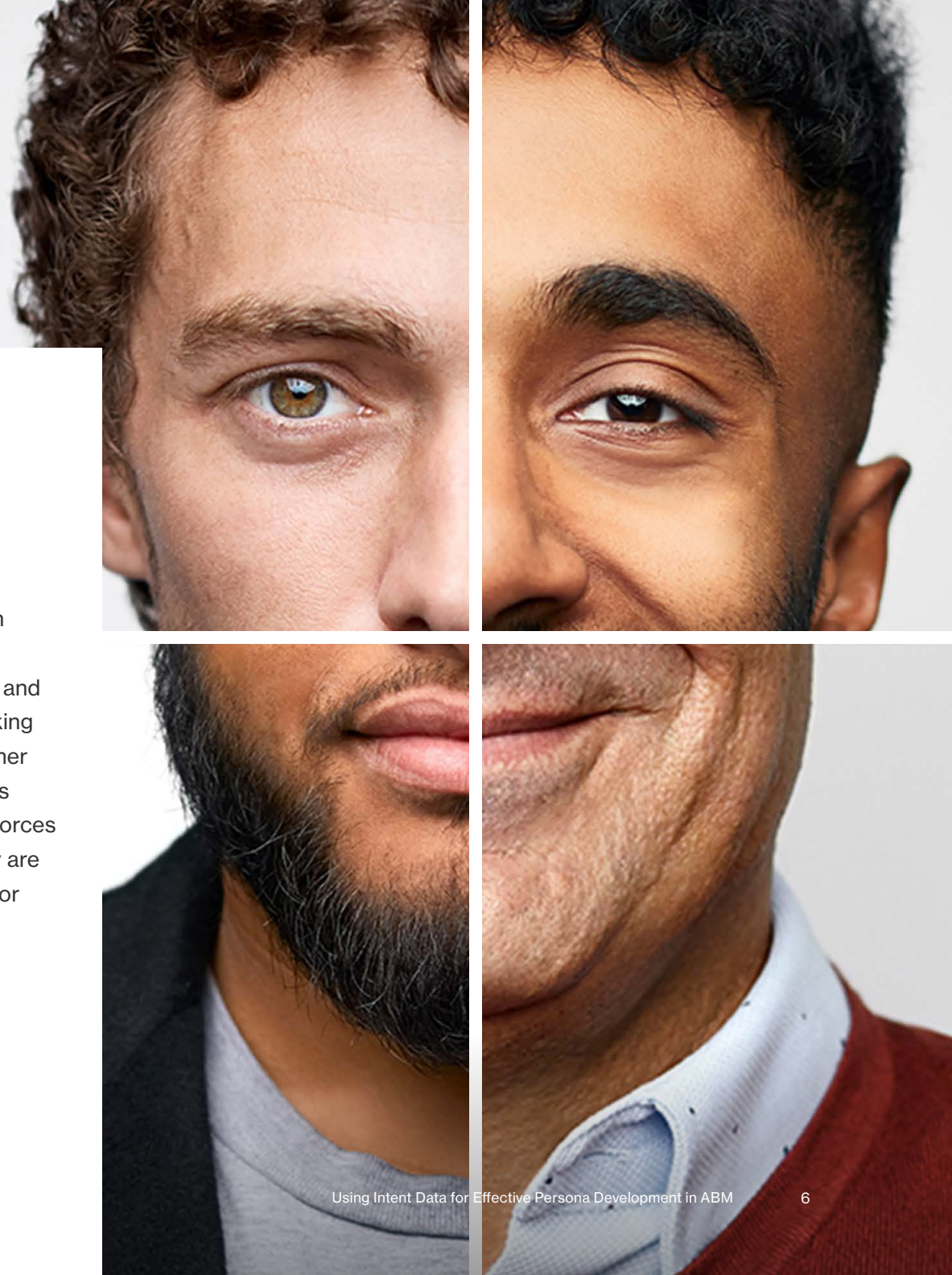
Conclusion

According to research and advisory firm TOPO, 73% of companies have made changes to their target market or target account list.

Their research also showed that deals are being driven top down, changing the makeup of buying teams. It's always been best practice to regularly update personas, but today, it has never been more essential to ABM success.

At TechTarget, we can help you apply the right intent insights to understand more about your key buyers and personas so that you can maximize ABM revenue.

To find out how, visit **techtarget.com/priority-engine**.

Adapted from articles by TechTarget CMO John Steinert, previously published in Marketing Land.

To understand how TechTarget can help you apply these insights to drive more effective results in any enterprise technology market, click here to see real-world examples of buyers in market now.

About TechTarget

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, Paris, San Francisco, Singapore and Sydney.

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