



Intent Data: It's Becoming a Key Ingredient for Revenue Growth

NEW STUDY SHOWS INTENT DATA EXPANDING
FROM SIGNAL SOURCE TO KEY GROWTH DRIVER

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Introduction

The increased utilization of intent data among B2B organizations has already been well documented in research reports and case studies. However, while it is widely accepted that deployments are expanding, many have viewed intent data solely as a source to flag companies that may be in research mode for immediate marketing or sales outreach.

Now a new study from *Demand Gen Report* has uncovered that intent is actually already seen as a key pipeline accelerator — particularly for companies in “high-growth” mode — use cases for intent data are rapidly expanding within sales and marketing organizations.

The survey, titled *The Full Funnel Impact of Intent*, shows that an increasing majority of revenue teams are employing intent data across demand generation, account-based marketing (ABM), digital marketing, sales operations and customer experience.

Quickly shifting past the experimentation stage, the study showed revenue teams are applying intent data in highly strategic manners to support key go-to-market initiatives, including:

- Improving the quality of leads generated
- Accelerating sales opportunities
- Identifying buying teams/demand units
- Uncovering customer pain points
- Increasing conversion rates on website visitors
- Prioritizing leads and accounts
- Gathering intelligence to optimize content
- Supporting brand awareness initiatives
- Informing advertising/marketing decisions
- Informing sales/sales enablement strategies

The study reinforced the growing utilization of intent data, with 85% of respondents reporting that they are either currently leveraging or planning to leverage intent data. It also showed that a majority of companies (55%) are already seeing positive returns from their investments in intent data, with 24% reporting great success and 31% citing notable success.

Based on the success of early rollouts, the study found revenue teams are planning to ramp up their investments and applications of intent data in the coming year. More than 8 out of 10 (82%) respondents said their investment in intent data would increase over the next 12 months, and 34% indicated it would “increase significantly.”

The study revealed that intent data is being utilized by a range of companies both large and small; however, one interesting trend that emerged from the research was that companies that categorized themselves as high-growth were more likely to use intent data and also reported higher impact from their initiatives than companies with mature or moderate growth.

This report provides a deeper look into the findings.

- How companies are currently deploying intent data across marketing and sales;
- The growing alignment between intent data and ABM strategies;
- Analysis of the types and sources of intent data that companies are using;
- The business objectives companies are looking to address with intent data;
- The specific points in the pipeline where intent data is having the greatest impact on conversions, and
- How businesses are using intent data to increase revenue and relevance with existing customers, as well as prospects.

Expanding Use Cases of Intent Data

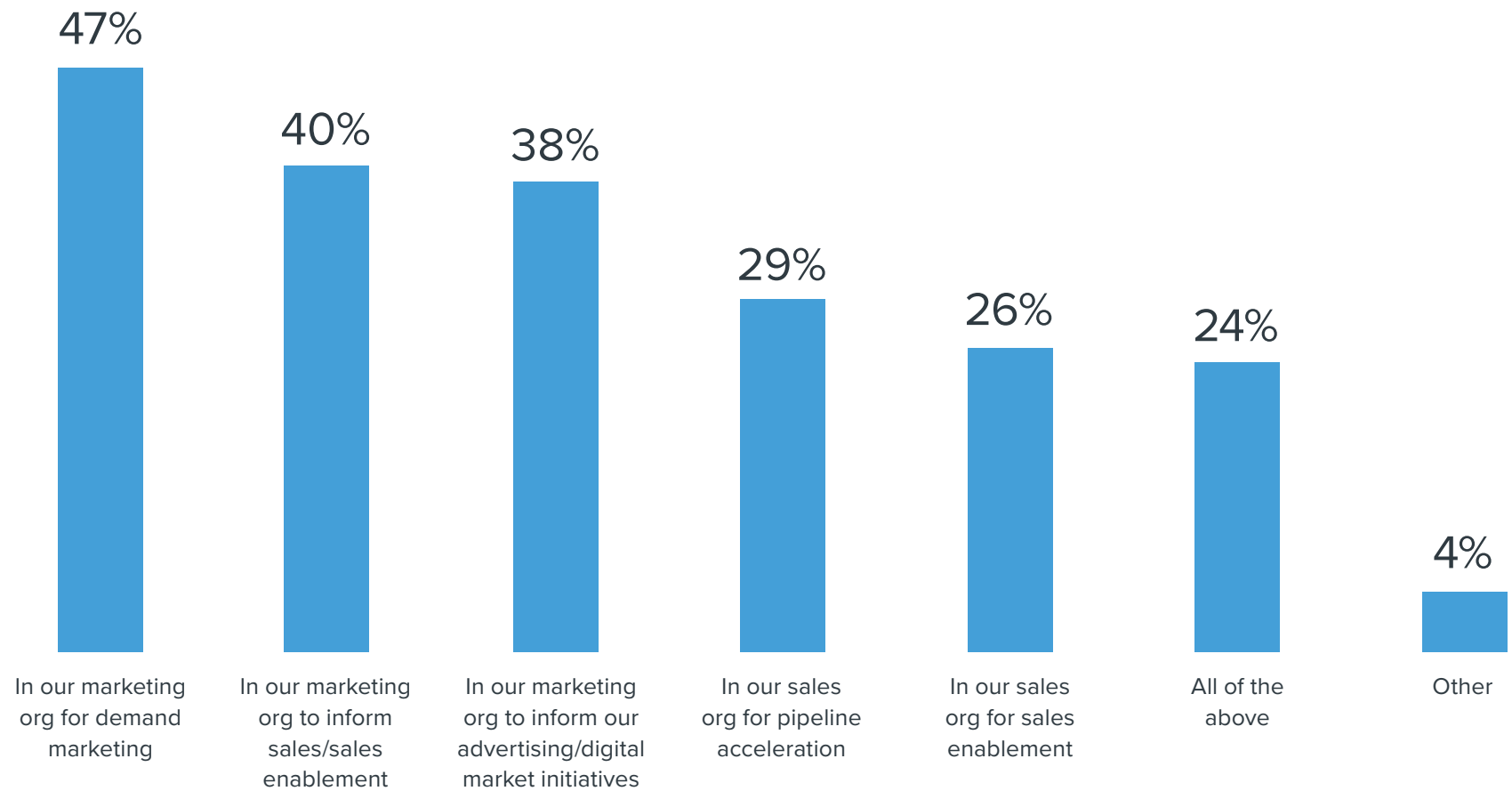
Not surprisingly, demand marketing ranked as the top area where companies are employing intent data currently — with 47% selecting this as an area of use. That said, the study also found many companies are using the insights from intent data in a number of other important ways across the organization.

For example, while 38% said marketing team members are using the intelligence to inform advertising and digital marketing initiatives, 40% said they are using the data in their marketing organization to inform sales and sales enablement.

The survey also showed that the usage of intent data within sales organizations themselves is also expanding, with more than one quarter of respondents (29%) indicating their sales organization leveraged intent data for pipeline acceleration and another 26% that said the sales organization utilized the insights as fuel for their sales enablement efforts.

The research pointed to a similar pattern of expanded use regarding the business objectives companies said are now supporting with intent-derived insights. While generating higher-quality leads was the first choice by a wide margin (cited by 57%), use cases other than demand gen came in nearly as high.

How are you employing intent data in your organization?

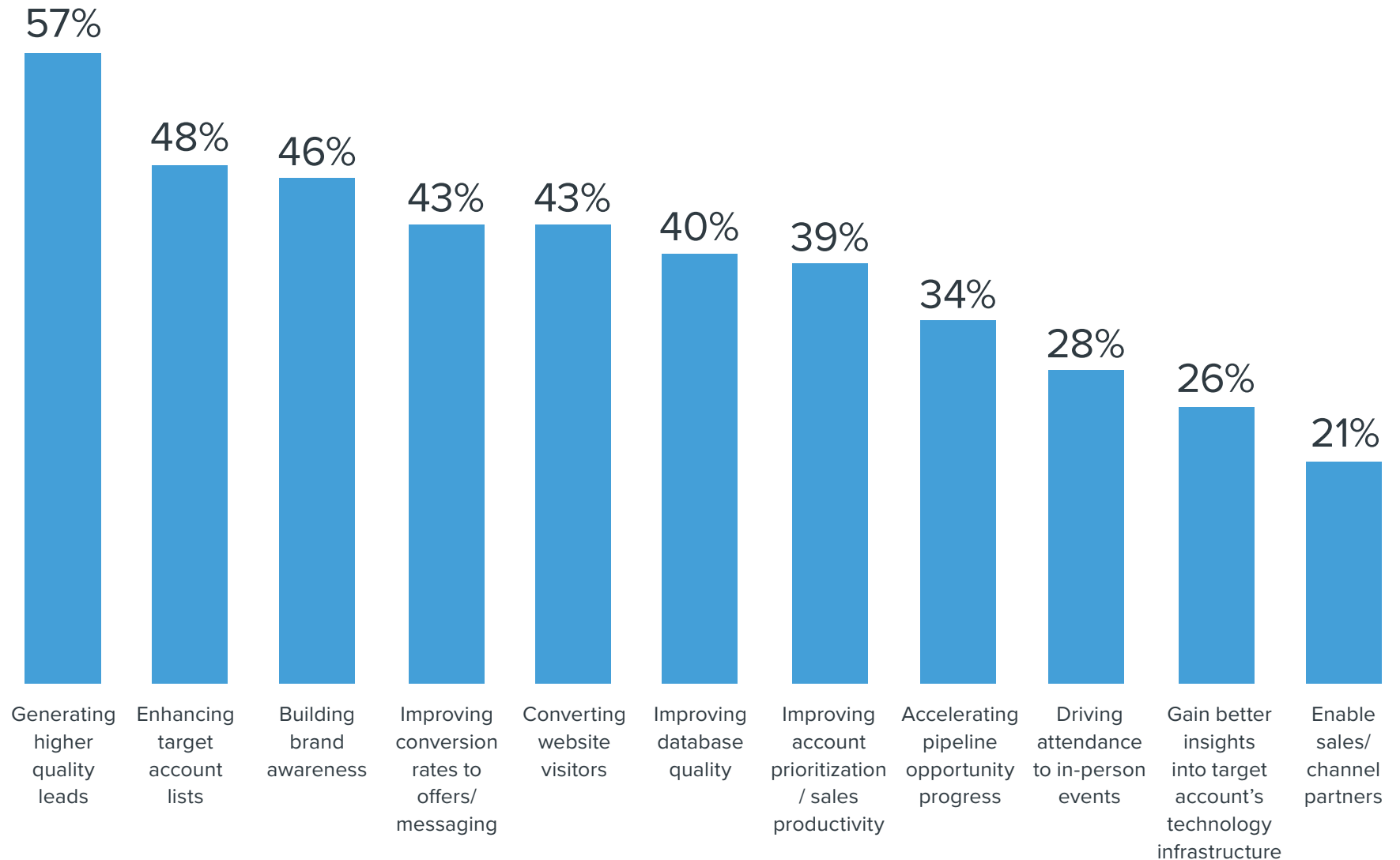


Close to half of respondents (48% and 46% respectively) indicated they are leveraging intent data to enhance target account lists and to support brand building and awareness initiatives. More than 40% of companies said they are using intent data to improve conversions, with 43% saying they utilized the data to move website visitors to known leads, and the same percentage used the intelligence to improve the conversion rates around specific offers.

Gathering more and better data on buyers and accounts also emerged as a top objective for employing intent data, with 40% citing improved database quality as one of their top use cases.

Sales efficiency was also identified as a major initiative relative to intent data, with 39% indicating they were using the insights to improve account prioritization and 34% leveraging the intelligence to accelerate pipeline opportunity progress.

Which of the following objectives are you currently using or plan to use intent data to address?



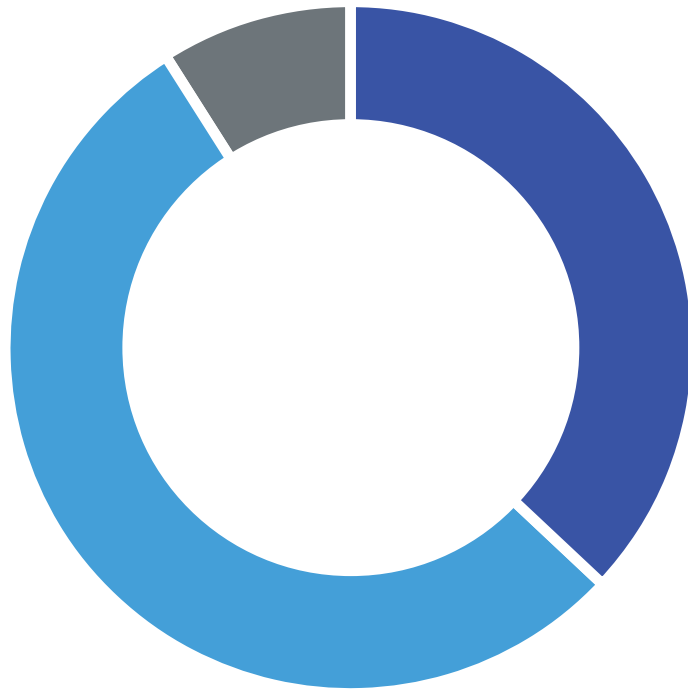
Impact of Intent Extends Across All Funnel Stages

Though intent data is still a relatively new tool for many revenue teams, the survey showed maturity levels are on the rise. More than half of respondents indicated they had been utilizing intent data for 12 months or longer, and 37% said they had been using it for six months or more. Only 9% indicated they had just recently started using intent data.

Despite the relatively short time revenue teams have been leveraging intent data, the survey showed that the ROI from the data has been clear. Out of the 141 respondents who indicated they had been using it, 84% said they are seeing success leveraging intent data — with 37% categorizing it as a great success and 47% calling it notable success. Only 16% replied that they were using intent data, but not yet seeing success.

Looking specifically at where in the revenue cycle intent data was having the greatest impact, respondents pointed to a variety of go-to-market initiatives that spanned lead gen to SDR outreach and customer upsell opportunities.

How long has your organization been utilizing intent data as part of its go-to-market activity?



37% 6 months or longer

54% 12 months or longer

9% Just recently started in the last 1-3 months

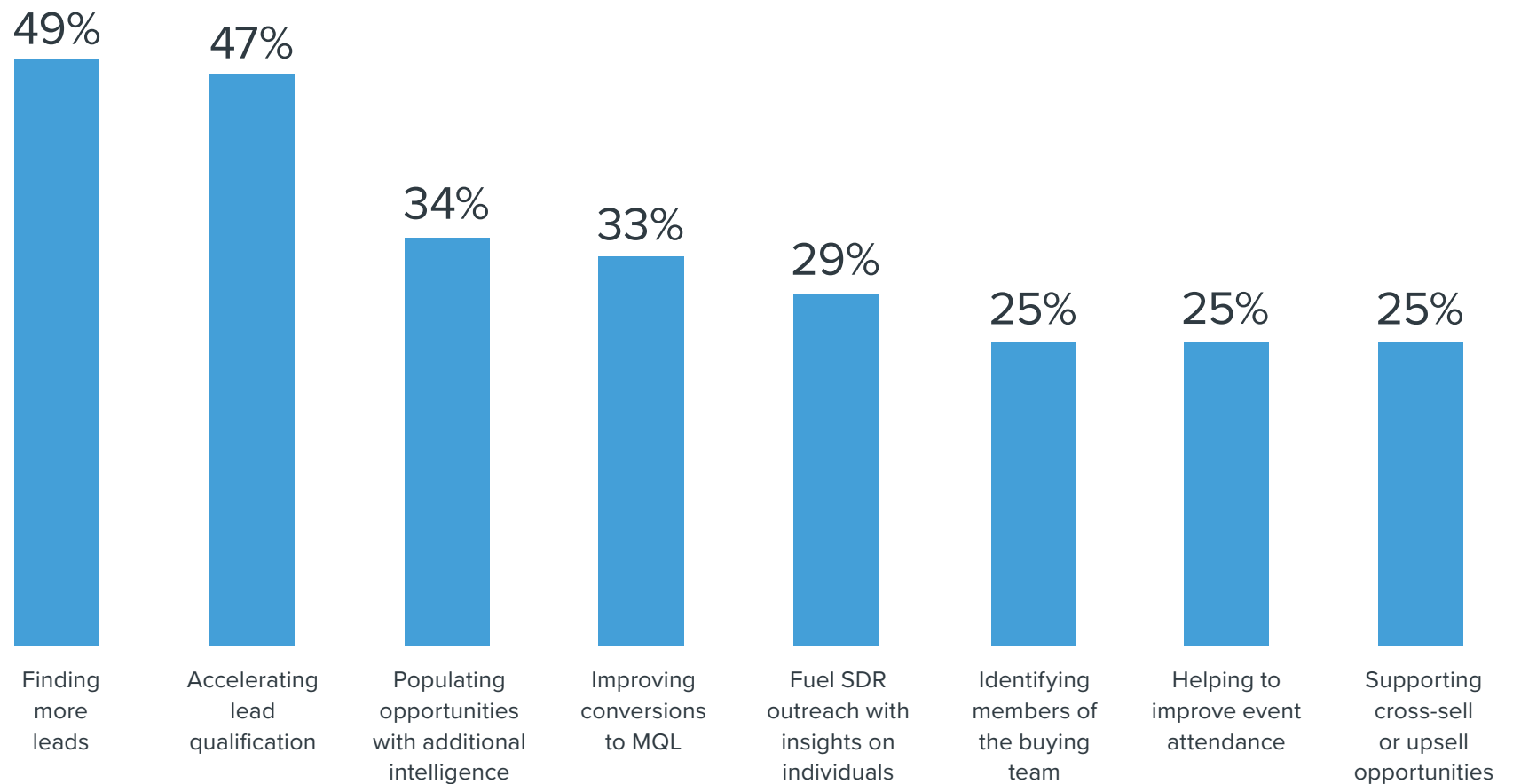
The top five responses to specific points in the pipeline where intent data has had the biggest impact were:

- Finding more leads: **49%**
- Accelerating lead qualification: **47%**
- Populating opportunities with intel: **34%**
- Improving conversions to MQLs: **33%**
- Fueling SDRs with insights: **29%**

Several other use cases also showed significant impact, selected by 25% of responses, including:

- Helping with event attendance;
- Supporting cross-sell, upsell; and
- Identifying key members of the buying team.

At which point in the pipeline has intent data had the biggest impact on conversion?



Applying Intent Insights for the Sales Organization

While, in most cases, demand gen teams have been the earliest adopters of intent data, the survey showed that intelligence from intent data sources is being used aggressively by many sales organizations.

Applying intent data to prioritize accounts was one of the most common use cases for sales, with 85% of respondents indicating they were currently using the insights for this purpose. Another 11% indicated they intended to use intent for prioritizing accounts over the next 12 months, leaving only 4% with no plans to use it for that purpose.

The research also revealed interesting patterns in how revenue teams were applying intent data to prioritize accounts, with 46% ranking accounts based on activity data, 43% sorting based on the intelligence gathered for where the account was in the buyer's journey, and 40% based on relevancy of activity.

Other interesting applications of intent data for account prioritization included the ability to gauge interest in competitors and gauging feature/function needs (both used by 37%), and 30% were prioritizing based on the status of the buyer's current tech stack.

Sales acceleration also emerged as a growing use case for intent data, with more than 80% of respondents indicating they were applying the insights to increase the velocity of opportunities.

The specific applications included:

- Automated sales alerts: **44%**
- Modifying opportunity stage: **40%**
- Modifying weekly activity plans: **36%**
- Building specialized cadences: **33%**

Intent Data's Integral Role in ABM Strategies

When you consider the findings that nearly half of respondents (48%) said they are using or plan to use intent data to enhance target account lists, it is clear that these sources have quickly become integral components of successful ABM strategies.

The research also showed significant utilization of intent data to improve coverage with key accounts, as 47% of respondents said they were using the insights to identify buying teams or demand units.

In addition to using intent data to help identify and prioritize accounts to support the acquisition side of ABM programs, the study showed that revenue teams are viewing intent data as a potential source for supporting retention and expansion initiatives with current customers.

Nearly half of respondents (48%) said they are using intent data to understand customers' usage of their products, while 43% are using it to uncover customer pain points, and an equal number are using it to "create deeper relationships and build trust."

Advanced Applications of Intent Data for Marketing Organizations

While identifying leads and accelerating opportunities have been the most common early use cases of intent data within marketing organizations, the survey revealed that a large number of companies are already applying the intelligence to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their broader marketing initiatives.

For example, 83% of respondents indicated they are using intent data to help create the right content messaging for their audiences, and another 13% said they planned to apply the insights for this purpose within the next 12 months. Specific applications of the data for content messaging included:

- Identifying relevant topics and pain points to address: **52%**
- Identifying buyer's journey stage: **46%**
- Identifying formats/preferences of key buyers: **40%**
- Helping deliver better SDR emails: **35%**

In addition to utilizing intent data to craft and shape relevant and compelling content, the study found companies are also leveraging the intelligence to make sure they deliver the right messages to key audiences. The top applications of intent data for optimizing content delivered were:

- Aligning messaging based on feature/function priorities: **50%**
- Tracking competitive interests: **42%**
- Delivering messaging based on buyer personas: **40%**
- Aligning based on buyer stage: **35%**

With account-based advertising becoming a bigger priority for many companies as they emphasize ABM and advanced segmentation-based programs, the study found the majority (85%) of companies are already applying the intelligence from intent data sources to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their ad budgets.

The top applications of intent data relative to advertising programs were:

- Targeting relative content: **51%**
- Keyword targeting: **44%**
- Persona-level targeting: **40%**
- Account-level targeting: **39%**
- Effectively surrounding accounts: **38%**

The Growth Connection

While the survey showed intent data was becoming a bigger part of strategic initiatives for companies of all sizes, another interesting trend emerged when the research data was broken down further.

Companies that categorized themselves as high-growth versus mature were more likely to have utilized intent data. They also saw stronger results and were able to apply the data more aggressively across different departments.

For example, 57% of high-growth companies replied that they were leveraging intent data and seeing great success, versus 17% of mature companies who reported great success from their use of intent data.

In addition, the applications of intent data were much wider and more aggressive among high-growth companies. When asked which business objectives they were currently or planning to use intent data to address, more than half of high-growth companies were leveraging intent data to generate higher quality leads (55%), convert website visitors and enhance target account lists (both 52%).

Other initiatives where high-growth companies had aggressive plans to utilize intent included:

- Building brand awareness (**49%**);
- Improving database quality (**46%**);
- Improving account prioritization (**46%**); and
- Improving conversion rates to offers (**45%**).

High-growth companies also have more aggressive plans for applying intent data in the future, with 88% planning to increase their investment in intent over the next 12 months, versus 82% of the overall sample. In addition, 54% of high-growth companies said their investments in intent will increase significantly in the next 12 months, versus companies who categorized themselves as mature/modest growth mode — where 16% were planning substantial increases.

Conclusion: Investing in Intent Data Drives Competitive Advantage

Intent data has clearly emerged as one of the hottest new applications in the tech toolbox. This new survey validates that by showing the widespread utilization of data by a variety of company sizes and industries — with 85% of companies either already leveraging intent data or planning to within the next 12 months.

It also validates that intent data is clearly showing positive returns from its early tests, based on the facts that more than half (55%) of respondents said they have already seen positive returns from their investments and 82% are planning to increase their spend on intent data in the coming year.

But what is most interesting about this new research is that it illustrates how quickly intent data has graduated from a tactic used simply by a single department to surface opportunities into an integrated component of a company's overall revenue strategy.

As the survey data shows, progressive companies are now leveraging intent data far beyond demand generation — with a significant number of respondents applying or planning to apply the data to inform advertising decisions, to identify and prioritize accounts and improve lead quality and conversions.

The combination of quickly expanding use cases, as well as the findings showing high-growth companies are leveraging it at a more rapid pace, points to intent data becoming a key competitive differentiator for companies in coming years.

About The Survey

The research was conducted by *Demand Gen Report* during the first half 2020 and surveyed a range of marketing, sales and operations roles from a variety of industry and company sizes.

In terms of industry, the largest segment of respondents was from the high-tech sector (30%), followed by business services (14%), manufacturing (11%), media/entertainment (10%) and financial services (9%). Telecom, healthcare, professional services and other sectors rounded out the list of respondents.

Companies were asked to categorize their growth models, and the sample broke down as follows:

- **47%** high-growth;
- **50%** modest growth; and
- **3%** low growth/mature.

The sample included a range of company sizes, as well, with 19% having revenues of \$1 billion or more, 11% in the \$500 million to \$1 billion range, 14% having \$100 million to \$500 million, and the balance below \$100 million.

The survey featured a range of roles and perspectives, with the sample breaking down as follows:

- **31%** C-level;
- **22%** VP;
- **35%** Director-level;
- **11%** Manager-level; and
- **1%** Other.



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