DEMAND GEN® REPORT

2024 STATE OF INTENT-DRIVEN STRATEGIES

Illuminating Account Insights Through First-Party Data & Intent Layering

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INTRODUCTION

Intent and signal data are nearly synonymous with B2B marketing, serving as the fuel to power hyper-personalized, highly targeted campaigns. But with concerns about data quality, cost, actionability and quality, it's becoming even more important that marketers regulate their databases to ensure they're delivering highly relevant outreach to their target audience.

"There are many different pieces of intent data: First-party data, data from tools and then there's your own data," explained Sarah Sehgal, Director of Growth Marketing at **OpenSesame**, a provider of E-learning courses focused on employee training. "A big area for marketers is figuring out how they want to define intent and determining which area they want to look at, and then the second component is why they want to look at it and what they should do with it."

If you factor in the impending privacy regulations that are set to change the way organizations can collect and leverage intent/signal data, it's clear practitioners must refine their data collection and usage processes. Throughout this special report — which leverages exclusive insights from *Demand Gen Report's* "**2024 Database Strategies & Contact Acquisition Survey Report**" — we'll examine the current state of intent and signal data with a focus on:

- The role AI and other technologies play in automating the intent/signal data collection and maintenance processes;

- The top tools, solutions and platforms practitioners are utilizing to streamline their intent data collection and implementation;

- The role of intent signals for guiding content and ABM strategies and identifying which assets/messaging would resonate best with each buyer/account; and

- Real-world accounts of successful intent and signal data strategies.

POWERING ABM STRATEGIES THROUGH INTENT

ABM and intent data go hand in hand and present a series of challenges: **63% of practitioners** indicated that one of their top intent data priorities is identifying key stakeholders within target accounts, while 54% struggle when trying to collect account-level data. Paul Green, Director of Global Digital Account Insights at designer, developer and manufacturer of wired and wireless network infrastructure equipment **Extreme Networks**, explained that these problems commonly stem from a plethora of targets and insights.

"We're challenged with the element of multiple: There are multiple accounts with multiple signals, so it's tough to identify where a specific signal is coming from," continued Green. "The element of the account is misrepresented and misunderstood. And if you think back to the technology, it's never talked about how to work with your internal data challenges. You need to simplify the signal — you need to get all your inputs aligned in a simple way to stuff that you sell so that it can be activated."

It appears that the silver bullet, so to speak, of data alignment starts with layering. While it might seem strange to figuratively stack the data, it actually helps practitioners get a better handle and more comprehensive view of account behavior.

"When constructing ABM programs, I layer intent in different areas, whether it's buying high-intent lists and putting that into programs or asking my sales team for a wish list," said Whitney Slavin, Director of Marketing for **Revver**, a platform that digitizes and automates document-dependent work, during during the **2023 B2B Marketing Exchange (#B2BMX)**. "Then I decided to take it a step further and only go after buying centers within accounts that were showing certain intent as well as the propensity to engage and act."

Slavin opted for an extended metaphor to explain her motivations behind layering: She said that, in theory, every person in the U.S. has the intent to buy car insurance because it's required by law — but the process is more nuanced than that. Sometimes people purchase it through their spouse or partner, and oftentimes folks just renew their current policy annually without researching. If a marketer was monitoring surface-level intent, they'd be casting an incredibly wide net that generated low conversion rates.

THE GROWING EMPHASIS ON FIRST-PARTY DATA

The eventual elimination of third-party cookies is weighing heavy on marketers' minds, as nearly one-third (31%) are determined to start filling the gaps in their first-party intent and signal data. That third-party demise is twofold: Part of it is the looming depreciation, while the other element revolves around voluntarily sharing information.

"When we were able to track cookies, we could see an individual and know what account and activities that person aligns to," said Green. "However, the amount of people who accept to be tracked on our websites today is dramatically changing, and it's a new game of trying to understand the individual — and that's becoming much more challenging."

That challenge is coupled with some troubling data:

58% of practitioners indicated they don't have enough time/resources to implement an effective data process

55% don't have a standard operating procedure for marketing/sales teams to keep data up to date

"A lot of systems get a lot of data, and what we hear from marketing and sales is that data needs to be simplified," continued Green. "One of the big things we're doing is simplifying the signal: If I can't somehow align what we're seeing to a person or account, I can't activate it. We've gone to great lengths to take every signal and align it to the core solutions we offer."

Instead of getting distracted and overwhelmed by all the data, OpenSesame's Sehgal noted that practitioners need to focus on their solution's use cases and determine how to convey their value. From there, she continued, marketers can pull in the appropriate pieces of data. Doubling down on Sehgal's claims was Slavin, who pointed to the use of manual processes to sift through the pieces of the intent puzzle.

"I also looked at actual prospect engagement," said Slavin. "I read a lot of emails, listened to calls and talked to sales reps to understand what the conversation looked like around leads that weren't ready to convert to determine what we could avoid and how we could weed out unqualified leads. I also tried to find any trends in the data that I could make myself. So, if I saw a big chunk of X, Y and Z converting after three different actions, I inferred that there was a trend happening and I focused on how I could duplicate it and maximize the investment."

"We've gone to great lengths to take every signal and align it to the core solutions we offer."

PAUL GREEN, EXTREME NETWORKS

THE INTEGRATION OF MACHINE-LEARNING & AI

While manual intent data maintenance has its place in marketing strategies, practitioners also can't shy away from the tools and technologies available today. Sehgal noted that while martech spend has increased over the past few years, the utilization of it went down. With that in mind, "consolidation is going to be the future," she explained, highlighting the importance of ensuring multiple teams — including marketing, sales, RevOps and customer success — have access to data, as it's easier to justify spending with stakeholders when many teams are utilizing it.

Perhaps the biggest technological advancements over the past few years is artificial intelligence (AI) — **Forrester research** uncovered that 67% of B2B organizations currently use AI for marketing, with data analysis and management being a key area of application.

"You need to take AI internally and work with your data science team to build internal predictive analytics models," said B2B Marketing Consultant **Pam Didner**, during her #B2BMX keynote session. "To answer a specific question, you must work with your data team to determine a specific question, understand the data set you're going to use and then create a model for that. AI is garbage in, garbage out — if you feed them poor data, you'll get poor results; if you feed them high-quality data, you'll get high-quality results."

CONCLUSION

Intent and signal data are an integral part of account-based strategies, as they provide insights into specific buyer behaviors and help shape campaigns and outreach. As more practitioners embrace AI and commit to enhancing their first-party collection processes, intent and signal data are poised to remain a mainstay in modern B2B marketing strategies.

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201.257.8528
INFO@DEMANDGENREPORT.COM

KELLY LINDENAU

is an editor and writer who loves covering the latest B2B marketing trends, research and industry insights. She's a New Jersey native, runner and reader who always has a GIF from The Office at the ready.