

Know your buyer:

Why B2B marketers need
Intent data to maximize ROI

bombora

Introduction

Intent data has been making waves in digital environments by improving customer interactions from that phase of initial interest, all the way to becoming a converted account.

For the better part of a decade, data-driven observations of customer behavior have relied heavily on insights derived from first-party data - insight into what actions customers take directly on an organization's website. While this approach has strong pros for increasing account growth or capitalizing on inbound leads, the decision making process in the buyer journey often starts long before a prospect lands on a business' website.

In 2020, 51% of B2B marketing leaders indicated that they were using Intent data as a tool to better identify and assess prospects in a buying cycle. They cited this in combination with working with sales leaders to ensure lead follow up (66%) and using SDRs/BDRs to qualify leads (56%) - highlighting that Intent data is fast-becoming a critical part of B2B account-based marketing strategies.

Intent data provides a bird's eye view into accounts most likely to engage with a brand's online presence, and equips marketing teams with precise information about target accounts with a possible chance of greater conversion success. It gives rise to a more sustainable approach to email marketing, advertising, and demand generation by narrowing marketing's efforts down to a more concentrated pool of qualified prospects.

What is Intent data?

Data generated by business users' online content-consumption activities, that is aggregated and modeled to provide B2B marketing and sales teams with insight into which organizations are increasingly researching their product or service categories, and to what extent.

“

This is a great time to be in the Intent data space. I'm very excited about it. I mean, we're marketers, right? We know the best way to do marketing is to listen to your customers. And that's what Intent data is all about.”

Russel Rothstein, CEO, IT Central Station

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Three ways marketers can drive revenue growth using Intent data

Intent data helps marketers maximize their revenue, even when faced with budget constraints or market uncertainty. It helps them:

1. Optimize spend to reach the accounts most likely to engage in the near term
2. Target accounts more precisely based on the products and services they're interested in
3. Convert top prospects before the competition does

Intent data allows marketers to build more effective campaigns based on proven intelligence.

With exposure to broader behavioral information, marketers can focus their campaigns and messaging with precision, collect valuable account information during the sales cycle, and ensure buyer journeys have multiple points of contact to stimulate account acquisition.

Veritas increased marketing ROI by 10x using Intent data for segmentation and messaging.

Which Intent data set is right for your B2B marketing goals?

First-party Intent data

First-party Intent data, also known as engagement data, makes up the type of insights your marketing team is likely already tracking through your own assets. This could mean, for example, what's happening on your website at any given point in time. You're most likely already tracking first-party data through marketing tools like [VisitorTrack](#), marketing automation platforms, or the backend of your own website, collecting rich data about your direct traffic. It can be gathered by requesting detailed user data (e.g. name, address, age, etc.) or anonymously.

While first-party Intent data offers credible visibility of direct brand engagement in the buyer journey, third-party Intent data can also provide organizations an aerial view of the comprehensive research an organization is performing along the way.

Third-party Intent data

Third-party Intent data observes buyer research *everywhere else*, outside of an organization's website, so you can gather a more holistic view of your prospects' activities. It can include both online and offline data collection.

Rarely do customer journeys stay put at one specific website's content to make a sophisticated buying decision. It's likely part of a series of events over time, with the majority of research happening before a buyer even visits an organization's website.

These valuable third-party insights for marketing teams typically come from one of three sources:

1. **Co-op data** is Intent data that is gathered from a collective of online sources, including publishers, research firms, tech vendors, agencies, and event firms. Intent is typically measured in the context of topics.
2. **Bidstream data** is gathered through ad exchanges across biddable online advertising inventory, which allows for unmatched coverage and volume of data, but less in depth analytics. Intent is typically measured in the context of keywords.
3. **Publisher data** is collected exclusively from a publisher's own portfolio of web properties. Standalone data is often higher quality but lacks the coverage of bidstream and co-op data vendors.

Check out this [infographic](#) to better understand the differences between Co-op Intent data and Bidstream.

Keywords vs. Intent topics

Intent topics

A method of assigning Intent based on the content and context of a given webpage.

Intent is derived using natural language processing models to predict the topic of content by analyzing the context and content within a page.

Keywords

A method of assigning intent based on the presence of keywords on a given webpage.

Intent is derived simply based on the presence of those keywords, without context. This model is typically used by bidstream data providers.

Example: Your business is interested in prospects consuming content about 'Social Media' across the web:



Content that includes
'Social Media'



Intent topics consider content based on its relevance to the Intent topic 'Social Media' - without needing to contain that phrase.

Therefore, additional pieces of content that refer to websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking will be included in the analysis.

Keywords only consider content that contains the exact phrase 'Social Media'

Keywords consider the presence of a word,
Intent topics consider the context of content.

Capture and convert the right audiences with buyer Intent data

The real key to understanding the value of Intent data comes in being able to visualize how you could put it to use in your own organization to improve marketing performance.

The next few pages will take you through the ways in which organizations leverage Intent data to make their marketing efforts more efficient and more effective.



Display Advertising



Social Media Advertising



Account-Based Marketing



Contact Acquisition



Personalized Messaging



Meetings and Events



Upsell and Renewal

You'll also find practical suggestions for how to test Intent data, and example platforms where the data can be activated.

Display advertising

Marketers have traditionally cast a wide net using basic demographic and firmographic attributes to define their target audience. Account-Based Marketing has emerged as a strategy to further narrow that focus, but the right data is needed to effectively do so.

With better information about what accounts are currently researching particular solutions, marketers can design more precise campaign messaging and accurately target the accounts most likely to convert, therefore optimizing their ad spend.

Intent data helps:

- Focus advertising on businesses interested in what you sell and identify the best accounts to generate leads against
- Tailor advertising messages and content based on prospects' topics of interest to increase engagement
- Dynamically update target lists weekly based on changing consumption patterns or buyer journey stages

Activation platforms:



Salesforce saw a **279% ROI** from display advertising and paid social when they used Intent data to identify target accounts.

Social media advertising

Social channels, particularly LinkedIn, are popular among B2B marketers thanks to their impressive ability to target very specific audiences. But this also makes it a competitive space, so marketers must find ways to ensure they're spending their budget as efficiently as possible.

Infusing Intent data into social media targeting adds an additional layer of precision that helps marketers optimize their spend and generate the results they need to justify increased investment in this important channel.

Intent data helps:

- Focus campaigns on businesses interested in what you sell to drive demand more efficiently
- Tailor messaging and content offers based on prospects' topics of interest to increase engagement
- Dynamically update target lists weekly based on changing consumption patterns or buyer journey stages

Activation platforms:



DataStax uses Company Surge® Intent data to prioritize accounts for paid social, generating a **40% increase in paid social engagement**.

Hushly saw a **54.5% drop in CPM and 79% drop in CPC, paired with a 498% jump in CTR** using Bombora's native integration to infuse Company Surge® data into LinkedIn campaigns.

Email marketing

Marketers preach about having the ‘right message, right audience, right time,’ but that rarely plays out when it comes to email marketing, especially if you only have the data available within your marketing automation platform.

Intent data makes it possible for marketers to have a clearer signal of the right time, and a better window into the topics that matter to prospects.

Intent data helps:

- Create segmented email lists based on topics of interest to deliver highly relevant email nurture campaigns
- Improve metrics like click-through rates by only emailing prospects when they’re in active research mode, and avoid spamming accounts that aren’t currently in a buying cycle
- Find dormant prospects to re-engage with “wake the dead” campaigns when the time is right

Activation platforms:

Engagio

HubSpot

Marketo

eloqua

By using Bombora’s Company Surge® Intent data, Marketo has *improved email open rates by 107% and click-through rates by 120%*, compared to a standard audience.

OneLogin saw a *60% increase in email open rates and a 2X increase in email reply rates* when they started using Bombora’s Intent data.

Account-Based Marketing

According to a recent report from TOPO research and advisory firm, more than 80% of B2B organizations are operating Account-Based Marketing (ABM) programs.

It's clear ABM is no longer a buzzword, yet it remains central to the success of B2B marketing engines. And a major key to ABM success is knowing which accounts you should pursue ASAP, as well as those to leave be for a while.

Intent data reveals vital information about your target accounts' research behaviors. This allows you to improve your ABM results by answering the question, "Which accounts are more likely to purchase this quarter?"

How to test Intent data:

1. Obtain a report with the data collected from businesses suggesting interest in your products and services. These reports are often easily filtered via parameters such as organization size, industry, and your existing target account list. Reputable Intent data providers should have no trouble offering you a data sample.
2. Take the list of accounts in the report and use them for your next ABM campaign. Ensure the messaging is aligned with the Intent topics each account is interested in.
3. Compare the results to an ABM campaign that did not use Intent data to prioritize accounts.

*Remember that Intent data changes often, so you'll need to act fast. The Intent data in your sample report is only useful for about a week, so it's important to plan accordingly.

Intent data helps:

- Prioritize ABM campaign targeting to identify organizations in active buying cycles before they even visit your website
- Apply data-driven lead scoring to surface leads for sales teams at the right time
- Confidently deploy personalized and 1-1 ABM tactics based on meaningful data

Activation platforms:

 sense

 Outreach

 LeadSpace

 EVERSTRING

 Engagio

 salesforce

 Triblio

 HubSpot

Braintree drove \$800 million in pipeline contribution within three months using intent-driven ABM programs.

Contact acquisition

When you look at the cost of contact acquisition, it's no longer a world of buying lists to "spray and pray". With sales teams depending more and more on marketing to deliver leads against a specific target account list, costs for quality data can quickly add up.

Intent data can help with client acquisition costs by highlighting prospect organizations that are already interested in what you sell. Marketers can then use contact acquisition tools or content syndication providers to obtain contact data for just these priority accounts. Thus they avoid spending time and money on accounts that aren't ready to buy.

Since the expiration date of quality contact data is a real problem, with the majority of B2B businesses realizing up to 40% of their data is inaccurate, teams should embrace the ability to only acquire the leads they need right now.

Intent data helps:

- Understand the quantity of quality contact data already in your database
- Identify the best accounts to generate leads against
- Deliver leads that the sales team actually wants to work

Activation platforms:

crunchbase



SalesIntel



Leadspace

LinkedIn



INTEGRATE

DealSignal

Lenovo saw a **6% increase in close rates** from leads sourced using Intent data.

Personalized messaging

Marketing's effectiveness is largely dependent on creating messaging that actually speaks to the needs of that particular prospect, at a specific point in time. Think about your own interactions with email marketing or advertisements; the more the author seems to understand your pain points, the more likely you are to trust their solution.

How to A/B test Intent data:

1. Start with obtaining an Intent data report that lists accounts interested in Intent topics relevant to your business, products, or services. This list should include the Intent topics that each account is interested in.
2. Review the list and group it according to Intent topic interests (e.g. interest in your brand/products, industry terms, competitors, etc.). Then create messaging or content personalized to the Intent topic groups. This can be an ad, ebook, blog post, email message, etc.
3. Design a campaign using the personalized messaging, targeted to the relevant accounts. Consider where the prospect is in the buyer journey as well.
4. Compare the response and engagement rates using the Intent-driven personalized messaging versus your typical campaign format.

Intent data helps marketers:

- Know which products the prospect is most interested in hearing about
- Segment based on specific topic interests or the intensity of overall topic interest
- Craft engaging messages that offer real solutions to the known problems

Activation platforms:



A Historical Buyer Journey Analysis identified **75 new Intent topics that closed-won accounts were researching prior to signing with Pegasystems**. This helped Pegasystems target already interested prospects and personalize its sales and marketing approach for future prospects.

Customer marketing

Retaining customers and finding whitespace is often the responsibility of sales or customer success teams. However, a growing number of marketers are being asked to assist in this space. This can partially be attributed to the suite of tools marketing teams now have at their disposal, chief among them Intent data.

How to test Intent data:

1. Start with obtaining an Intent data report that lists your existing accounts interested in Intent topics relevant to your products or services and competitors. This list should include the Intent topics that each account is interested in.
2. Review the Intent topics each customer is researching and highlight:
 - a. Upsell or cross sell opportunities - are they researching additional products you sell?
 - b. Possible churn risk - are they researching your competitors or alternative providers?
3. Relay this information to your customer success team to prioritize important conversations sooner than the normal process might prescribe.

Intent data helps marketers:

- Detect customer interest in other products you sell, and design nurture programs to assist with expansion or upsell opportunities
- Alert sales and CS teams to potential churn by flagging customers actively researching competitive products or services

Activation platforms:



Collabnet VersionOne
drove engagement with
88% of target accounts
and generated **23% of new business** using Intent data.

Website traffic identification

Extreme Networks drove **\$1M+ in new pipeline opportunities** by using first and third-party Intent data.

It can be challenging to uncover prospects from your website traffic alone. After all, 98% of your website visitors are anonymous and most research is done before a prospect ever visits your site. But insight into which accounts are engaging with your website can be very valuable when paired with other data.

Intent data helps:

- Translate anonymous web visitors into known accounts using Bombora's proprietary IP to domain matching service
- Leverage information for lead scoring

Activation platforms:

The following platforms can help to maximize the number of businesses you can identify using Intent data:



Meetings and events

Meetings and events have long been a powerful sales and marketing tool to get in front of warm prospects. But it can be challenging to recruit and engage a targeted audience who you know will benefit from your products and services.

Intent data helps:

- Identify accounts and geographic regions interested in your products or services for data-driven events planning
- Create content that appeals to prospects based on the topics they are researching
- Attract and drive interested attendees to your events with targeted invitations based on their topics of interest

Activation platforms:



Veristor increased **event attendance by 18%** using Intent data.

“

We were too focused on our own first-party data for our marketing efforts, and that wasn't giving us a true picture of what our B2B buyers were interested in. By adding Bombora into our digital & email campaigns and sales reporting, we could see what our buyers were interested in, and target our offerings to their needs. Better customer experience, more successful marketing.”

Felicia Ramsey, Mgr. of Industry Go-to-Market programs, SAS

Getting started with Intent data

Just like your customers are taking their time to research all of their options between you and your competitors, you will likely do your own due diligence to select a provider in the Intent data space.

✓ [10 Questions to ask Intent data providers](#)

Use this resource to make sure you're asking the most important questions to optimize your ROI in this area of emerging data.

✓ [Sign up for free Company Surge® Alerts](#)

There are B2B businesses in active research mode for your products or services. But do you know who they are? Company Surge® Alerts tell you which target accounts are researching Intent topics relevant to your business. Test Intent data with this free tool to proactively coordinate sales and marketing activities around businesses with active intent.

✓ [Request a free Company Surge® report](#)

Usher in a new wave of B2B buying with a data-driven approach. Company Surge® arms you with the knowledge of which businesses are researching what topics and the intensity of that consumption with a Topic Score from 0 to 100. By using Intent data, you can prioritize target accounts and customize conversations to drive better results for your business.

Surf's up. Let's take off.

Get started with Intent data today.
[Request a demo.](#)

Bombora tells businesses which accounts are researching their products and services. With this understanding, sales and marketing teams can be more relevant and consistent and improve performance across all activities. This intent-driven approach revolutionizes the way businesses market and sell to other businesses through transparent data built on an ecosystem of quality, collaboration and innovation. With direct integrations with dozens of leading data and media-buying platforms, Bombora is building a world in which business buyers value sales and marketing for its relevance, timeliness and accuracy. To learn more, visit bombora.com.

The Bombora logo is displayed in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. It is positioned in the bottom right corner of the slide, partially overlaid by a decorative graphic of white wavy lines and dots that curves from the top right towards the bottom left.

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