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ACTIVATING **INTENT DATA**

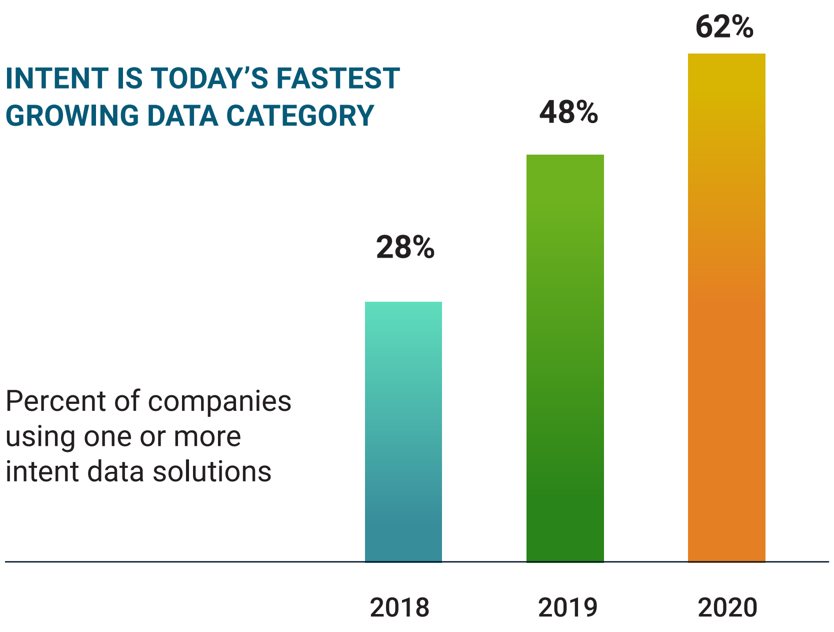
Launching 3rd-Party Demand Generation Programs

Contents

Introduction

Intent data is becoming an increasingly important tool among B2B organizations. According to a recent TOPO survey, 62% of companies are using one or more intent data solutions—up 29% from 2019 and 121% from 2018.[1] And a recent Demand Gen Report survey confirms these findings, reporting that 85% of respondents are either currently leveraging or planning to leverage intent data.[2]

INTENT IS TODAY'S FASTEST GROWING DATA CATEGORY

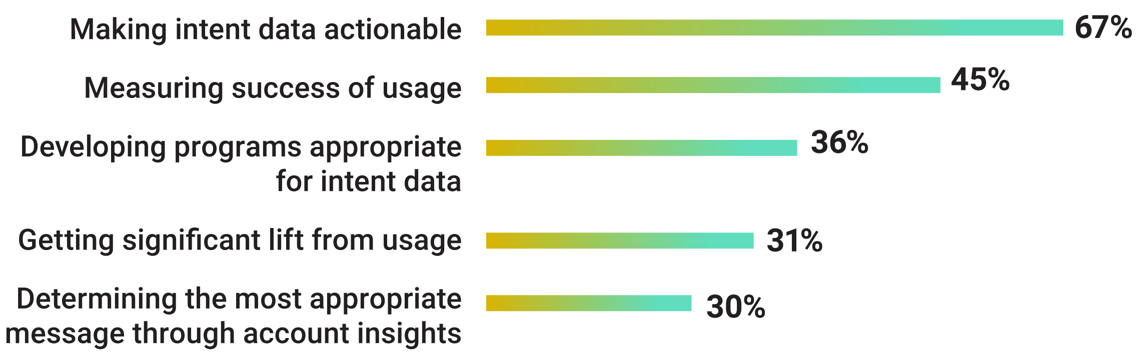


B2B organizations aren't sticking to just one source of intent data, either. According to TOPO,

"Enterprise companies have an insatiable appetite for data, specifically the data that indicates prospect interest. We've seen companies buy all the intent data they can from multiple sources."[3]

Unfortunately, the same survey highlights the challenges B2B marketers are having with activating their intent data. The No.1 challenge marketers face with their intent data investments is "Making intent data actionable."
Of those surveyed, 67% acknowledged having this problem, exceeding the No.2 challenge by more than 22 percentage points.

TOP INTENT DATA CHALLENGES



Such activation challenges are largely a consequence of B2B marketing teams being ill-equipped to properly aggregate, digest, and act on a large volume of intent signals in a timely and efficient manner. And that's why Intentsify is focused on developing *Intent Activation Software and Solutions*.

However, the "actionability" problem also results from marketers having neither the required education nor guidance on how to effectively leverage the data—with the resources they already have. Intentsify's Activating Intent Data series is focused on providing this guidance.

Like any other technology or data investment, developing a framework for how you plan to leverage intent data—before you jump into using it—can determine whether you achieve quick, strong impact or get mired in frustrating, lackluster results. This guide (and the other installments) will help you build your own framework for maximizing the impact of your intent data investments.

> "Marketers aren't using intent data as well as they could, and the activation piece is the biggest need. But the data and insights are often kept in siloes—so there's no cohesive picture. When this is the case, it's hard to make cogent inferences around intent data and know what to do with them.

KATHY MACCHI
VP of Consulting Services,
Inverta

Activating Intent Data (Educational Guides)

Understanding, Selecting, and Monitoring Topics &	Launching 3rd-Party Demand Gen Programs	Boosting Content Marketing Impact	Launching Programmatic Advertising Campaigns

A Note on Prerequisites

Creating a successful framework for intent data typically requires B2B marketers to already have in place the basic elements of a demand generation strategy:

- **A well-defined demand funnel, outlining the various funnel stages and how leads/accounts convert through them**
- **A formalized lead/account scoring methodology, as well as nurturing and/or follow-up processes**
- **A content library organized according to your typical buyer journey**

Such elements are commonplace among most B2B marketing organizations today. And this guide assumes readers already have these elements in place. If you require additional guidance on creating a demand generation strategy for your organization's specific needs, please reach out to us directly and we'll be happy to point you to useful resources.

About the Author

David Crane is VP of Marketing at Intentsify. With a decade of tech-industry B2B marketing experience, David is responsible for articulating Intentsify's vision, technology, and solutions as well as helping guide customers on their intent-driven marketing efforts.

Section 1:
Why 3rd-Party Demand Generation

What Is 3rd-Party Demand Generation?

Third-party demand generation—including content syndication—refers to programs that leverage third-party channels or sources to create demand in the form of leads, contacts, inquires, etc., as opposed to demand generated via your own website, landing pages, or social profiles.

Such programs work by distributing your branded or licensed content to target audiences via third-party emails, newsletters, industry publication sites, and more. Targeted personas (often among target-account lists) then provide their contact information (and any other requested info) to access the promoted content. Marketers buy any resulting "leads" matching the program's targeting parameters on a cost-per-lead (CPL) basis.

The Growing Importance of 3rd-Party Demand Generation

Inbound marketing today simply can't scale to meet businesses' needs. The rise of account-based marketing and sales strategies (ABM for short) combined with the increasing saturation of inbound marketing tactics have made scaling inbound marketing performance to hit marketing's growing pipeline goals incredibly difficult and cost prohibitive.

Jennifer Pockell Dimas, CMO at Gigster, put it best when she said:
"It's crazy to think all your target accounts are just going to show up to your website. With ABM, you must go where your prospects are."[4]

Even the most well-known brands with an extensive owned- and earned-media presence can't expect to generate enough demand among targeted accounts to achieve their pipeline goals. Which is why B2B organizations—from SMBs to enterprises—often use 3rd-party demand gen programs to identify and engage the right industry decision-makers.

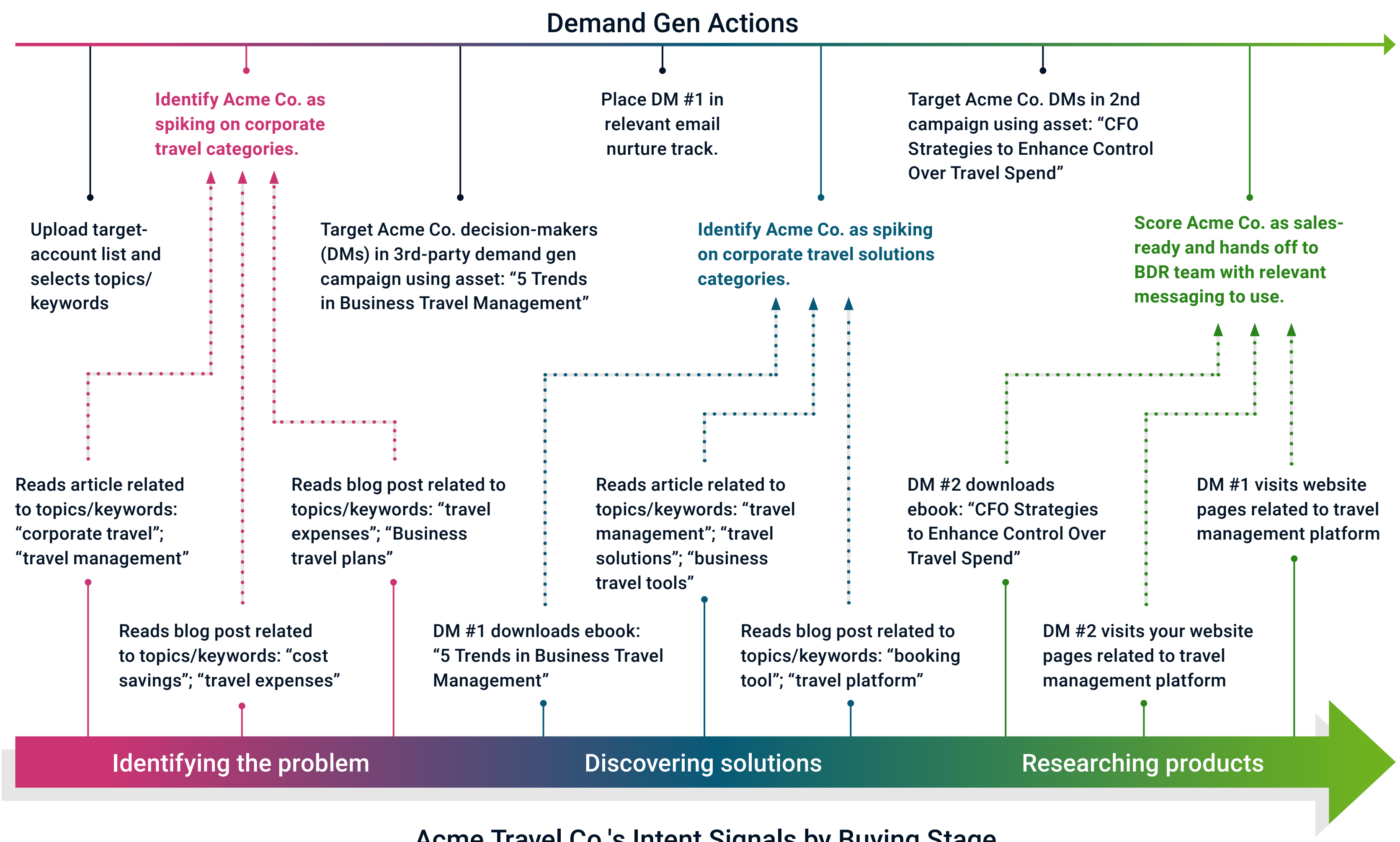
Further, 3rd-party demand gen is great for ABM strategies. Demand gen partners (often referred to as publishers or media partners) usually have established relationships with specific personas at particular companies. This allows you to design customized programs that only target decision-makers at named accounts using your company's branded content.

Intent Data's Impact on 3rd-Party Demand Generation

Intent data amplifies the strengths of 3rd-party demand gen. Used by both marketing teams and their demand gen partners, intent data adds another level of targeting precision. Not only do intent signals identify which of your target accounts are in an active buy-cycle, they also highlight the content and messaging most likely to resonate with those accounts. When used correctly, this results in better prospect experiences, increased conversion rates, and consistent pipeline growth.

The digram to the right illustrates a few common ways intent signals inform demand-generating actions throughout the buyer journey, from account identification and lead generation to lead nurturing and sales follow-up.

Example: How Intent Signals Inform Demand Gen Actions



Acme Travel Co.'s Intent Signals by Buying Stage

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Section 2:
Setting Up A 3rd-Party Demand Generation Program

Setting the Scene with an Example

For the purposes of this guide, let's use a common scenario based on a few made-up assumptions:

1. You're a demand generation manager at company providing human resources technology (HR tech).
2. Your target persona is an HR director focused on recruiting high-quality employees.
3. You've been tasked with leveraging intent data to drive a highly targeted 3rd-party demand generation to scale marketing's pipeline contribution.
4. You have a good grasp of the important topics and keywords used in your market and relevant to your specific solutions, as well as their individual features and the pain points they solve for. (For more information, see Intentsify's guide "Activating Intent Data: Understanding, Selecting, and Monitoring Topics & Keywords.")
5. Your team has already outlined a general buyer journey for your customers' path to purchase, and it includes four stages.
   - **Stage 1:** Identifying the problem
   - **Stage 2:** Discovering solutions
   - **Stage 3:** Researching products/services
   - **Stage 4:** Deciding to renew, churn, or up-level investment

Note: A couple of these stages could easily be broken down into more granular stages (especially Stage 3). Your unique business model, specific products and services, amount of content, technology stack, and more should inform the sophistication of your buyer journey stages.

Moreover, though stages imply a linear progression of prospect research, this is rarely the case. Prospects will typically jump between stages based on numerous additional factors.

ACCORDING TO A RECENT DEMAND GEN REPORT SURVEY...

1 The No.1 objective of intent data is **generating higher quality leads** (57% of respondents)

2 The No. 2 objective is enhancing target account list (48%)

Using Intent Data to Segment Accounts into Separate Campaigns

Before launching your intent-driven demand gen programs, it's critical that you first understand:

- Which accounts are actively researching challenges, solutions, and/or products related to your offerings—so you can prioritize which accounts to target via your programs; and
- Which topics and keywords they're spiking on—so you can segment prioritized accounts into separate campaigns, each using carefully selected content assets most likely to attract the interest of intent-identified accounts.

Good news: We explain how to do all of this—i.e., how to select topics and keywords, and how to use the resulting intent data signals to segment target accounts—in the guide: **"Activating Intent Data: Understanding, Selecting, and Monitoring Topics & Keywords."**

Let's assume the groundwork has been done. You've uploaded your target-account list (TAL), selected the intent topics and keywords to monitor, and segmented intent-identified accounts across the various buyer journey stages under one of your interest categories: "Talent acquisition." (See: Sample Intent-Segmented Target-Account Table.)

Interest Category 1: Talent Aquisition			
Buy-Cycle Stage	**Topics**	**Keywords**	**Intent-Identified Accounts**
STAGE 1: **Problem Identification**	Guide to recruiting, Recruiting strategy, Recruiting talent	Talent acquisition strategy, Talent recruiting tactics, Recruiting better applicants	GE, Adobe, Microsoft, Verizon, Intel, JP Morgan Chase, Citigroup, Wells Fargo
STAGE 2: **Solution Discovery**	Applicant tracking system, Recruiting automation, Recruiting technology	Talent acquisition software, Recruiting analytics	Walmart, Amazon, Exxon Mobil, Apple, Comcast, Visa, MetLife, Honeywell
STAGE 3: **Product/Vendor Research**	HR vendor, Workday, Lever, Ultimate Software	Zoho Recruit, CEIPAL TalentHire	CVS Health, Berkshire Hathaway, UnitedHealth Group, McKesson
STAGE 4: **Account Churn Risk**	HR vendor, Lever	Zoho Recruit, CEIPAL TalentHire	AT&T, Dell

Example Intent-Segmented Target-Account Table (Note: This table has been simplified for clarity—you will likely want to track far more topics, keywords, and target accounts.)

Now you'll want to set up a 3rd-party demand gen campaign to acquire contact info from decision-makers at these intent-identified accounts. Afterall, knowing these accounts are "in-market" is a valuable first step, but you still need to identify and engage these decision-makers if you want to turn target accounts into customers.

Further, you'll typically want to focus on those accounts categorized as in Stage 1 or Stage 2, because those in the latter stages have likely already engaged with your brand directly (though, this isn't always the case for Stage 3).

Setting Target-Persona Parameters

There's a common misperception with 3rd-party demand programs: the higher the title, the more valuable the lead. An executive may have a great deal of decision-making authority, but that doesn't mean they're the best personas to target for 3rd-party demand gen programs, for several reasons:

- Executives typically don't fully recognize the problems your solution solves, and therefore won't prioritize it, decreasing the chances of lead conversion to sales opportunity
- Execs often rely on their subordinates (e.g., directors and managers) to recommend new solutions, because they're the ones who have the specific expertise needed to evaluate options
- Targeting higher job titles usually increases the cost per lead (CPL) substantially, which means fewer leads, hurting your ability to boost target-account engagement

If you're marketing a solution geared directly to helping alleviate executives' pain points, then it may make sense to target them. Yet, this often isn't the case.

It's far more effective to "get your foot in the door" by initially targeting personas with some decision-making authority who feel the pain, understand the problem, and see the value in your solution. Convince these individuals of your value and they'll become your internal advocate, which is more powerful than targeting the execs directly.
To make this work, however, you must develop your persona profiles before launching a content syndication program.
We typically recommend targeting "manager+" titles at larger businesses and "director+" titles at small- to mid-size businesses (SMBs).

Selecting Additional Campaign Targeting Parameters

Setting account- and persona-targeting criteria may be the most important steps, but there are a few other parameters you'll want to seriously consider:

Geographic location(s)

Selecting the right geographic locations to target is important—especially if you're trying to engage larger organizations with numerous offices scattered throughout the country or globe. Intentsify's intent data provides insights into which geo locations among each of your target accounts are spiking on specific topics and keywords. By focusing your campaigns on those localities, you're more likely to acquire contact info on professionals influential to the buying committee.

Note: Unlike Intentsify, most intent data providers don't provide intelligence on the geo locations of intent signals.

3rd-Party Demand Generation Campaign Setup Checklist

- ❑ Use intent data signals to segment target accounts into separate campaigns based on similar interest categories
- ❑ Set target-persona parameters
  - ❑ Roles
  - ❑ Seniority level
- ❑ Choose geographic locations (considering locations of intent signals)
- ❑ Select lead volume for:
  - ❑ Lead pacing
  - ❑ Leads per account
- ❑ Set any additional qualifying questions/fields, such as:
  - ❑ Email address
  - ❑ Phone number
  - ❑ Industry
  - ❑ Company name
  - ❑ Postal code
  - ❑ Email opt-in
- ❑ Assign 3-5 content assets—including abstracts—per campaign, based on:
  - ❑ Relevant subjects, as identified in intent data
  - ❑ Buyer-journey stage
- ❑ Check publisher proof-of-concept (POC)
- ❑ Set lead-delivery preference (direct upload to marketing automation system is preferable)

Lead volume

Other important campaign-setup decisions to consider regard the volume of leads you're seeking to acquire. Of course, overall lead volume will depend on your budget and CPL. However, beyond budgetary limitations, you'll also want to consider:

- **Lead pacing**—Pacing dictates how many leads your demand gen partners will generate and deliver on a weekly basis. It's typically a good idea to spread out your pacing somewhat evenly throughout the length of your campaign. Of course, other factors may influence your pacing, such as your available follow-up resources (e.g., number of BDRs) or any specific deadlines, events, or initiatives on the horizon.

- **Leads per account**—You'll want to limit the number of leads generated per account. If your campaign has a goal of 500 leads and is targeting 1000 named accounts, you're better off with 2-4 leads among each of 250-500 accounts rather than spending all your budget on a lot of leads from just a few accounts.

Additional qualifying questions

Most information requested of target audiences to access your content via 3rd-party demand gen campaigns is fairly boilerplate. Forms filled by targeted personas usually comprise some combination of:

- **First name**
- **Last name**
- **Email address**
- **Company**
- **Job title**
- **Phone number**

Company size, address, postal code, email opt-in, and company revenue are also common for fields for 3rd-party demand gen campaigns.

To keep CPL lower and prospect experiences higher, it's best to limit your questions to those most pertinent to qualification and follow-up efforts. First and last name, email address, company, and job title are fundamental. Other qualifying questions, however, such as those around decision-making authority or estimated timing of need, etc., should only be leveraged if you understand how exactly you'll use this information.

Choosing Content Assets According to Intent-Identified Interests and Buyer Journey

Marketers are often too lax when selecting content assets for their 3rd-party programs. Instead, you should carefully select your assets according to your buyer-journey map, aligning content to the targeted accounts' interest categories and funnel stage (as identified by the intent data), as well as the targeted personas.

Third-party demand gen is usually a top-of-funnel channel used to familiarize relevant personas at targeted accounts to specific problems, your brand, and your brand's solutions (from a high level). In this context, the content assets you use should:

- **Educate target audiences on current challenges and trends that they're facing;**
- **Provide prescriptive advice on what they can do to improve their situation; and**
- **Briefly introduce your brand's approach to solving the problem or improving efforts.**

That said, you can also use 3rd-party programs for middle-of-funnel efforts. This is typically more valuable for larger, established companies selling solutions in well-known product categories, and who are focused on differentiating their offering from competitors' solutions.

It's a good idea to select at least three pieces of content for each campaign. This will allow your 3rd-party demand gen partners to test different variables and optimize campaigns accordingly.

Moreover, remember to provide abstracts for each content asset. Publishers will sometimes write abstracts for you, but they're usually not subject-matter experts, and can understandably miss the mark when trying to highlight why target audiences should download the assets. Providing abstract copy to demand gen partners upfront helps to ensure campaigns are launched quickly and effectively.

Key characteristics of high-performing 3rd-party demand gen assets:

Educational—Informs your target audiences about current challenges and trends they're facing

Engaging—The title and content should be appealing, relevant, and easily absorbed by audiences

Prescriptive—Provides actionable advice on what audiences can do to improve efforts

Branded—Without being overly self-promotional, introduces your brand's approach to solving the problem or improving efforts

Section 3:
Using Intent Data to Sharpen Lead Follow-Up Efforts

Third-party demand gen leads are not the same as inbound leads acquired via your website. With inbound leads, prospects are engaging with your brand and its specific solutions; they've likely already completed some preliminary research into the problem (which is what led them to your website). They're further along the buyer journey, so sending them over to a BDR for immediate follow-up can make sense.

With 3rd-party leads, on the other hand, prospects are engaging with your content—the research, ideas, and advice around a specific issue. These individuals are typically far earlier in their journey, and you'll want to treat them as such. Nurturing these leads with relevant content via email sequences—before BDR follow-up—is usually the best course of action.

Yet, there are exceptions. It sometimes makes sense to route a 3rd-party lead straight to the BDR team if the account is already scored as BDR-ready—whether due to direct engagement, intent signals, or a combination of these.
*(**Note:** It's a great idea to use your intent data to inform your lead and/or account scoring models.)*

In either case, you should always use intent signals to inform your follow-up efforts. Whether for selecting the right email nurture sequences, choosing which messaging to use in supporting programmatic ad campaigns, or helping BDRs develop their talk tracks, intent data is immensely valuable for honing your messaging to prospects' needs and interests. In turn, this will ensure higher prospect engagement and conversion rates.

Best Practices for Email Nurture Sequences

Immediately place leads into appropriate email nurture sequences

Lagging on follow-up is tantamount to wasting the lead. Be sure to select the nurture track with the messaging and content relevant to the account's interest categories and buyer stage, which should be clearly highlighted in the intent data.

Develop a standardized lead-scoring model

You'll want to base this model on a combination of intent signals, email responses, website visits, and other digital marketing engagement. Work with sales to define what qualifies as a sales- and/or BDR-ready lead—and revise regularly.

Continue to review intent signals derived from the leads' accounts

Interests can change or the account may be progressing through the journey—both of which may require you to change your messaging, engagement tactics, and lead/account scoring.

Formalize a lead hand-off process with BDRs or sales team

Once 3rd-party demand program prospects have engaged enough to be scored sales- or BDR-ready, send over to the assigned team—along with assigned talk tracks, messaging, and/or content relevant to the prospect's interests.

Don't disregard leads that don't convert

For those that don't progress to BDR-ready within six to eight weeks, it's a good idea to continue monitoring their intent signals to identify any changes in interest. For example, if the intent data shows continued interest but in a different category, it probably makes sense to transfer to another email nurture sequence with different messaging. If intent signals have simply dropped off, you may want to deprioritize that account for the time-being.

"In addition to helping marketing teams target the right accounts for lead generation programs, intent data should be used in all lead follow-up efforts. In fact, intent signals are valuable to the entire sales process. From the first nurture email to the final sales call, intent data can inform and steer conversations in a way that accelerates and helps seal the deal. But it's the handoff where most companies struggle—and that's why marketing and sales teams must work together to implement intent data according to an overarching strategy."

DAWN COLOSSI
CMO
FocusVision

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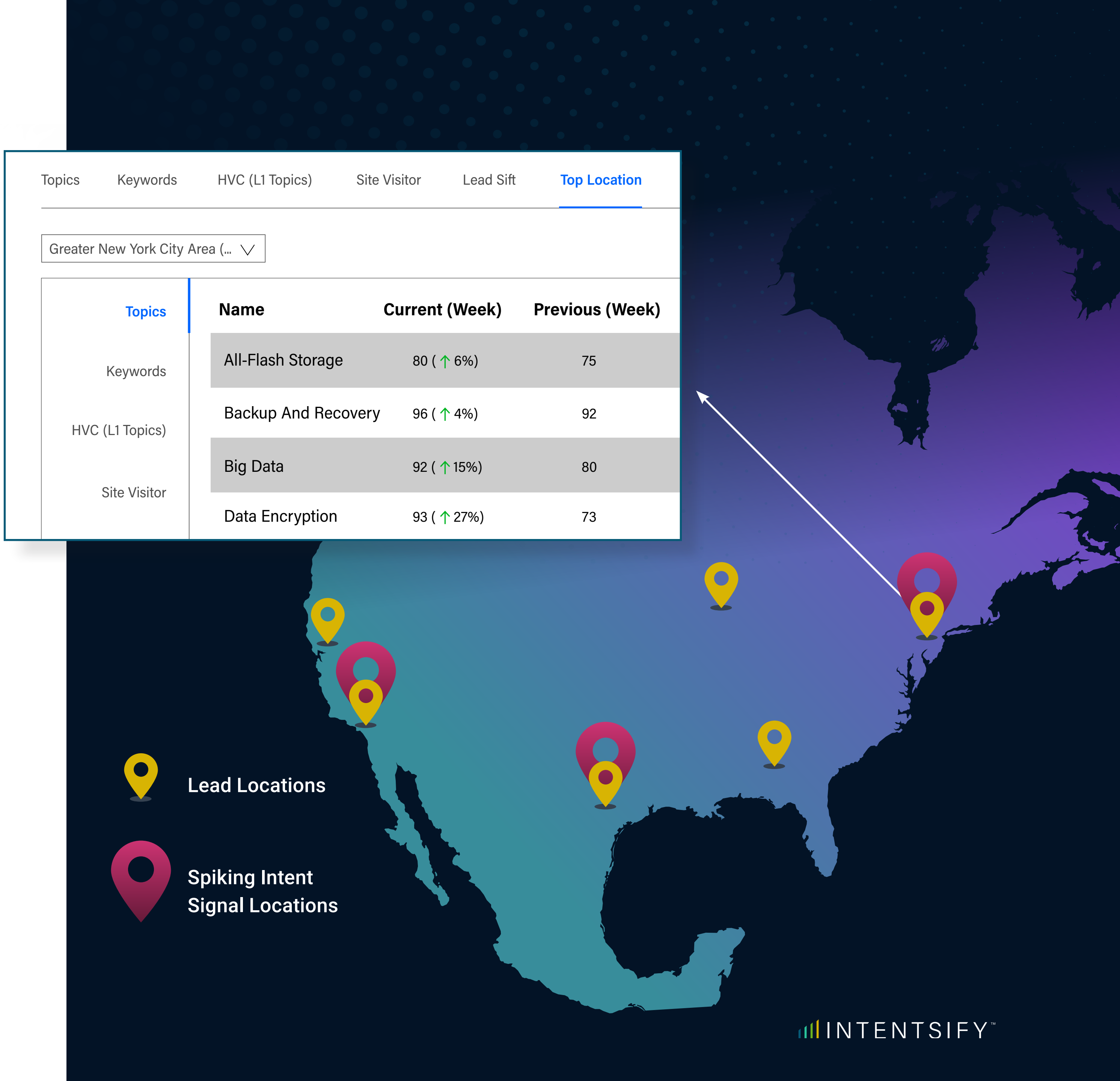
Best Practices for BDR and Sales Follow-Up

Understand the importance of geographic locations

It's important to always reference a contact's location against the geographic location from which the account-level intent signals are originating. This is especially true for enterprise target accounts, because buying committees are more likely to be localized to specific offices.

If a target account is showing significant intent activity from a specific location, but your contact is in a different locality, it's less likely that that person is part of the buying group showing intent. Thus, the signals around particular topics and/or keywords (and the messages you'd use for them) may not apply to that individual.



Use intent signals to select the right follow-up messages

The most effective BDR teams analyze account activity around specific topics and keywords to understand which messages are most likely to resonate with contacts at those accounts.

BDRs and sellers should have access to a table connecting topics/keywords to specific messages and pieces of content. This will help ensure follow-up efforts align with prospects' research interests, concerns, and needs. This is even true if a specific contact was nurtured through an email track differing from what the intent data says. The more account research information you have at your disposal, the better your conversations will be.

Analyze topic/keyword activity to identify buying stage

This isn't always easy, but if you're monitoring the right topics and keywords, you can get a strong idea of where target accounts are in their buyer journey. In general, prospects' progression through the buying stages results in the following evolution in topic/keyword activity:

More general to challenges

EARLY STAGE: IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

Topic/keyword activity is strongest around specific challenges and pain points that your solutions are designed to solve

MID STAGE 2: DISCOVERING SOLUTIONS

Topic/keyword activity is still strong around specific challenges, but you'll also begin to see activity around general product/service categories

LATE STAGE 3 — RESEARCHING PROVIDERS

Topic/keyword activity is strongest around specific product categories, product features, and even brand names

More specific to solutions/vendors

Knowing where target accounts are in their buyer journey allows you to both better prioritize accounts and further customize follow-up messaging. For example, mid-stage prospects likely need information about how your solutions can help solve their problems, while late-stage prospects want to know why they should buy from you rather than your competition.

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Use HVC data to further prioritize leads (specific to Intentsify's data)

High-value content (HVC) refers to research activities around content with a higher level of buying relevance to specific topics—such as product reviews, top-10 lists, product buying guides, product comparison sheets, case studies, etc.

Topics listed under HVC often indicate target accounts are deep into research around products/services relevant to those topics. Thus, those accounts may be in the later stages of the buying process. As a result, you may want to prioritize leads attached to accounts with a high level of HVC activity.

Reference intent signals against your website visitor activity

Intentsify's Intent Activation Software allows you to track your website activity alongside all the other external intent signals. Be sure to cross-reference this data against your target accounts' other research behaviors.

Similar to HVC-identified activity, when individuals engage with your website, it often indicates they're passed the initial buying stages of "Identifying a need" and on to "Exploring solutions" or even "Considering specific products." BDRs will typically want to prioritize these accounts and select late-stage messaging.

INTENT TOPIC SCORES

Topics | Keywords | HVC (L1 Topics) | Site Visitor | Lead Sift | Bombora | Top Location

Name	Current (Week)	Previous (Week)
American Express Global Business Travel	100 (↑ 9%)	91
Business Travel	91 (↑ 7%)	85
Corporate Retreats	91 (↑ 3%)	88
American Express (Axp)	90 (↓ 2%)	91
Group Travel	90 (↑ 12%)	80

WEBSITE VISITS

Topics | Keywords | HVC (L1 Topics) | Site Visitor | Lead Sift | Bombora | Top Location

	Current Week	Previous Week	Current Month	Previous Month
Unique	132 (↑ 915%)	13	157 (↑ 881%)	16
Sessions	197 (↑ 479%)	34	323 (↑ 240%)	95
Page Visits	179 (↑ 1178%)	14	208 (↑ 700%)	26

Intent signals spiking on brand- and product-related topics combined with high level of website visits indicates target account is in late-stage of buyer journey and researching specific vendor solutions. Sales reps should priorities leads from accounts like these.

There's a ton more you can do with intent data. And Intentsify's subsequent *Activating Intent Data* guides will dive much deeper into using intent data to:

- **Launch 3rd-party demand generation campaigns**
- **Nurture and follow-up with intent-qualified leads/accounts**
- **Improve your content marketing strategy and results**
- **Launch and optimize account-targeted programmatic ad campaigns**
- **Measure the impact of your intent-drive marketing efforts**

...and more.

End Notes

[1] TOPO, Intent Data Market Guide Webinar, May 19, 2020: https://webinars.topohq.com/intentdataguide/

[2] Demand Gen Report, Intent Data: It's Becoming a Key Ingredient for Revenue Growth, p.3.

[3] TOPO, Marketing Technology Survey Report: Executive Summary, p.5.

[4] CMSWire, "Inbound Alone Doesn't Cut It: What B2B Marketers Can Do Next," September, 2018: https://www.cmswire.com/digital-marketing/inbound-alone-doesnt-cut-it-what-b2b-marketers-can-do-next/

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Intentsify provides B2B organizations with the most accurate, comprehensive buyer-intent intelligence in the market today, and solutions to act on that intelligence. By delivering and activating proprietary, next-generation precision intent data, Intentsify's Intelligence Activation Platform identifies companies exhibiting research behaviors directly related to your business solutions, pinpoints where they are in the buying process, surfaces the issues they care about most, and enables you to engage identified companies with full-funnel buying experiences that drive revenue.

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Identifying which target accounts are in an active buy-cycle was an important piece, but we still required an effective way to get decision-makers at those accounts to engage with our brand. Intentsify’s intent-activated demand gen solution is the best and easiest way to both get your branded content in front of targeted personas at intent-identified accounts and convert them into quality top-of-funnel leads.

- JOHN PHILLIPS
Head of Demand Generation
and Partnerships, Nerdery

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