

Intent Activation™

ACTIVATING INTENT DATA

Understanding, Selecting, and Monitoring Topics & Keywords

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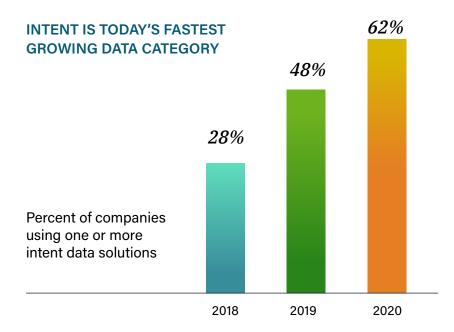
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Introduction (Why We Created This Guide)

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



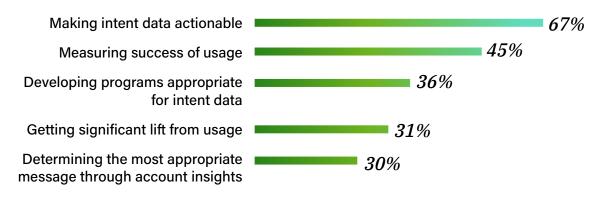
B2B organizations aren't sticking to just one source of intent data, either. According to TOPO,

"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 TM Software and Solutions.

However, the "actionability" problem is also a result of marketers simply not having the required education or 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 subsequent installments focused on specific intent data use cases) will help you build your own framework around how to maximize 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 & Keywords

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 buyers' 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.

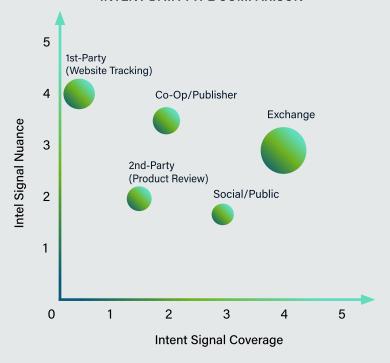
Section 1: The Differences Between Intent Topics and Keywords

The Importance of Topics and Keywords

Several types of intent data exist. Some intent sources offer a general, global view of businesses' research activities. Others provide a more focused, niche picture. Some sources derive signals from a cooperative of third-party web properties. Others focus on content consumption among their own web properties. And still others gather intent signals among ad exchange data or public domains.

Importantly, almost all types of intent data are modeled on businesses' content consumption around either *topics* or *keywords*. Understanding the differences between the two methods—and how to use them to your advantage—is critical to ensuring the success of your intent data investments.

INTENT DATA TYPE COMPARISON



NOTE: Circle size indicates breadth of solutions and range of intent signal coverage/nuance.

There are multiple types of intent data, each providing significant, complementary value:

First-party (i.e., website tracking) intent data typically offers marketers great granularity into target accounts' research interests, but because it only tracks your own properties, its target-account coverage is minute compared to other intent data types.

Review-site data provides a bit more coverage than first-party data, but insights typically aren't as nuanced.

Co-op and publisher data offer far more breadth while also being quite granular in their signals, but they still fall short of the coverage offered by exchange-based intent sources due to a substantially lower number of monitored web properties.

Social and public intent data provide slightly more exposure to your target-accounts, because more web properties can be monitored, but signals are less nuanced.

Exchange-based intent data by far offers the greatest coverage, and depending on the intent data vendor, the signals can be quite sophisticated.

The key point: the more intent data sources you use, the greater your understanding of target-account interests and needs.

The Fundamental Differences Between Monitoring Topics and Keywords

Monitoring *Keywords* looks for the use of exact words or phrases within a piece of content and/or its URL. If, for example, an article includes the keywords a marketer is tracking, and a business user reads the article, that activity then registers as an event that will help inform whether that business is showing intent.

Monitoring *Topics*, on the other hand, looks at the entire piece of content to assess its relevance to one or more pre-defined subjects (i.e., topics). Such relevance is typically identified using machine learning, such as natural language processing (NLP).

NLP is a subfield of computer science and linguistics that focuses on the interactions between computing and human language. More specifically, NLP is how we program computers to process and analyze large amounts of human language data.

Enables more segmentation

Higher contextual relevance

Customized targeting

TOPICS

Looks at
context
of an entire piece
of content

KEYWORDS

Looks for exact words or phrases within a piece of content

Identify interest in niche solutions

Prevents "false positive" signals

Monitor any combination of terms

*The main benefits differentiating topic and keyword tracking.



The Benefits of Monitoring Keywords

Tracking keywords allows for more specific intent targeting because you can monitor whatever terms and/or combination of terms you'd like. This is especially helpful when trying to identify a target account's interest regarding niche solutions.

Further, it's a dataset that can be customized to each organization, unique to your specific needs. Whereas topics are preset according to a taxonomy leveraged by many other organizations, keywords can be customized to the strengths and weaknesses of your business, as well as your competitors' brands and solutions. It provides a one-of-a kind dataset specifically for you.

The Drawbacks of Monitoring Keywords

Used alone, tracking keywords doesn't account for the contextual relevance of the entire piece of content being consumed. Such relevance is important.

For example, say you're interested in identifying companies looking to buy a financial technology

(fintech) solution. One webpage may discuss the stock market value of specific fintech company and another page may contain an article ranking the best fintech solutions. Monitoring keywords alone may weight a user's visit to each site equally, based on the number of mentions of "financial technology" and "fintech." Yet, the article ranking fintech solutions is obviously more important when assigning an intent score to the company consuming the content.

The Benefits of Monitoring Topics

Because tracking topics is much better for ensuring the contextual relevance of a piece of content consumed, this method is valuable for preventing "false positive" intent signals. As in the example above, monitoring the topic of "fintech" or "financial technology" would consider the context of each page, and therefore give more weight to the article discussing the best fintech solutions.

Another great thing about monitoring topics is that, using NLP, this method enables further segmentation, allowing intent data providers to classify pieces of content by the extent of their relevance.

For example, Intentsify's proprietary intent data feed provides customers with intent insights for both standard topic-based activities and *high-value content (HVC)* activities. The latter measures a business' consumption of content that has been identified by NLP as highly relevant, such as product comparison sheets, buying guides, and case studies. Because high-value content tends to be product-focused, HVC signals often help marketers understand where target accounts are in their path to purchase. This, in turn, helps you better select follow-up tactics and messaging.

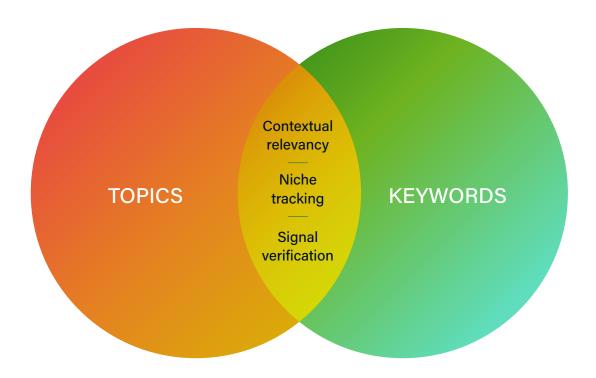
The Drawbacks of Monitoring Topics

With topics, you must select from a pre-set taxonomy of topics. A lot of analysis goes into understanding which webpages are relevant to specific topics, which means it can't be done in real time. Instead, intent data providers offering topic-based signals must gradually expand their taxonomy.

Consequently, marketers are confined to monitoring a set of relatively broad topics, preventing your ability to track businesses' research into niche solutions or less-known brands.

The Best Approach: Monitoring Topics and Keywords Together

The optimal course of action is to monitor both specific keywords *and* topics. This ensures contextual relevance and targeting precision. You can then layer the findings of both types of signals to identify the companies exhibiting the strongest intent to buy.



Unfortunately, most intent data providers only track one or the other, which requires you to do some heavy lifting around gathering the data and overlaying signals to uncover the most meaning insights. And any extra time required to process the data can diminish its value. One of the key benefits of intent data (if not *the* key benefit) is that it helps you know whether target accounts are showing interest *right now*. This week's intent signals may not be relevant next week.

Think of it this way. A sport-fishing boat may have all the best technology, showing exactly when a school of bluefin tuna is active below the hull. But if the captain isn't looking at the monitor or takes too long to notify the fishermen aboard, it's of little value—and they'll miss their opportunity. Similarly, if marketers don't act quickly on intent insights, they can lose out to competitors.

The successful use of intent data depends on marketers' ability to quickly aggregate, digest, and act on insights for relevant use cases. But as Jay Famico, Chief Research Analyst at Iron Horse Interactive, explains:

"Integrated campaigns are difficult to begin with. So, without the right infrastructure, processes, and knowledge in place, marketing teams can struggle to gather intent data and absorb the insights quickly and efficiently enough to ensure its effective use across numerous use cases."

That's one reason why Intentsify began developing Intent Activation TM Software —to automate the aggregation and analysis of numerous intent data types, so you can act on the data quickly and efficiently to drive more impactful results.

Jay Famico
Chief Research Analyst,
Iron Horse Interactive

Section 2: How to Select Topics and Keywords

The Buyer Journey Should Determine Your Selection

Intent data has many use cases. Leveraged the right way, it increases the impact of marketing, sales, and customer success efforts throughout the demand funnel. Driving such cross-functional impact, however, assumes intent data users are monitoring the right topics and keywords associated to relevant buyer journey stages.

Such journey-based topic/keyword tracking is what will provide valuable benefits beyond simple account prioritization. It's what will allow your team to uncover where prospect businesses are in their path to purchase, which issues they're most concerned with, which messaging and content you should use to engage them, and how you should score and route leads from those accounts.

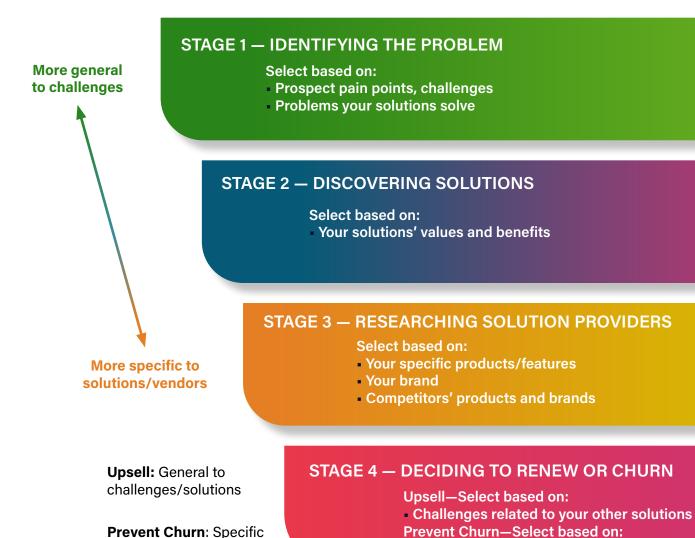
For the purposes of this guide, let's use a common scenario based on a few made-up assumptions:

- 1. You're a B2B marketer 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 selecting all the topics and keywords to be tracked at the various buyer journey stages, and you will provide the resulting intent signals to your colleagues tasked with acting on the insights (e.g., BDRs using the data to followup with prioritized accounts/leads using the right messaging).
- 4. You have a good grasp of the important topics/ keywords used in your market and relevant to your specific solutions, as well as their individual features and the pain points they solve for. (Keyword planning tools used for SEO can be very helpful here.)

- You've 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 solution providers
- Stage 4: Deciding to renew 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.



to solutions/vendors

Competitor's products and brands

Selecting Topics and Keywords for Stage 1: Identifying the Problem

The topics and keywords you use for early-stage (i.e., top-of-funnel) efforts should relate to the pain points your prospective customers feel as well as the problems your products/services solve. Assume your target audience isn't aware of your solution, let alone your brand. Their research at this moment most likely consists of trying to better understand any issues they're having.

Let's assume you're currently trying to generate demand for your company's recruiting product. HR directors at this stage will likely be reading content around how they can more quickly and easily recruit high-quality employees.

You'll want to select topics relevant to the challenges or pain points of acquiring quality talent, like:

- "Guide to recruiting"
- "Recruiting strategy"
- "Recruiting talent"

At this stage, keywords will likely be fairly general, so it's a good idea to use the opportunity to create keywords that aren't available as topics, such as:

- "Talent acquisition strategy"
- "Talent recruiting tactics"
- "Recruiting better applicants"

Selecting Topics and Keywords for Stage 2: Discovering Solutions

By this stage, your target audiences have likely identified *why* they're having problems. Now they're focused on finding solutions, so your topics and keywords should reflect, in general, the solutions your organization offers.

Continuing with our HR director example, you may want to select topics similar to:

- "Applicant tracking system"
- "Recruiting automation"
- "Recruiting technology"

If your solutions are more niche than what is available under the topic taxonomy—e.g., if they fall under an unavailable sub-category—use those terms for your keywords, such as:

- "Talent acquisition software"
- "Recruiting analytics"

Selecting Topics and Keywords for Stage 3: Researching Products/Services

Understanding the solutions available, your audiences are now getting ready to make decisions. They're trying figure out whether investing in a solution is worth the cost, and if so, which vendor they should choose.

This is the time to get specific with your topics and keywords, selecting those related to your company's specific product names as well as your organization's brand name. Similarly, you'll want to track your competitors' brand and product names.

For larger companies, brand and product names may be available as topics. If not, select those names as keywords to track.

Topic- and Keyword-Selection Checklist (Preferably completed before implementing intent data) Develop ICP and buyer persona profiles (including typical responsibilities, pain points, motivators, preferred communication channels) Outline your typical buyer journey, defining each stage Audit and organize your content according to relevant buyer journey stages (Typically completed upon implementing intent data) List all the keywords related to your: ☐ Target-personas' challenges/pain points Solution categories' names, value propositions, and benefits Specific solutions' name, value props, features, and differentiators ■ Brand name Competitors' brand names □ Competitors' solution/product names Cross references your listed keywords against your intent data provider's topic taxonomy ■ Select topics that match your keywords (and remove those keywords from keyword list) Assign selected topics and keywords to relevant buyer-journey stages

(See "Example: Topic- and Keyword-Selection Matrix" on page 15)

Selecting Topics and Keywords for Stage 4: Deciding to Renew, Churn, or Increase Investment

When it comes to account retention (i.e., churn prevention), the topics and keywords you select will typically be almost identical to those of Stage 3—but for very different reasons. You'll want to track current customers' research around topics/keywords related to your competitors' brand and product names. If you identify current accounts are researching competitors' offerings, it may indicate they're a churn risk. In which case, your customer success team should be made aware and take appropriate steps to fix any issues.

On the other hand, you'll also want to monitor the research behaviors of current accounts around any products/services that you offer, but which they haven't yet purchased. This signals an opportunity to upsell. For example, let's say one of your best accounts has purchased your talent acquisition product, but you'd like to expand the account with your employee learning product. You'll want to monitor Stage 1 and 2 topics/keywords relevant to that product offering, such as "Employee development" and "Improve productivity."

	Human Resources Technology					
	Interest Category 1: Talent Aquisition		Interest Category 2: Employee Learning			
Stage	Topics	Keywords	Topics	Keywords		
Stage 1: Problem Identification	Guide to recruiting, Recruiting strategy, Recruiting talent	Talent acquisition strategy, Talent recruiting tactics, Recruiting better applicants	Employee development, Improve productivity, Employee onboarding	Employee learning and development, Employee onboarding challenges		
Stage 2: Solution Discovery	Applicant tracking system, Recruiting automation, Recruiting technology	Talent acquisition software, Recruiting analytics	Human capital management software, human resource management	Employee onboarding technology, Employee learning software, Employee surveys		
Stage 3: Product/Vendor Research	HR vendor, Workday, Lever, Ultimate Software	Zoho Recruit, CEIPAL TalentHire	Workday, Cornerstone OnDemand, Ultimate Software	eLearning software, iSpring, eloomi.com		
Stage 4: Account Churn Risk	HR vendor, Lever	Zoho Recruit, CEIPAL TalentHire	Cornerstone OnDemand, Ultimate Software	eLearning software, iSpring, eloomi.com		
Stage 4: Account Expansion	Employee development, Improve productivity, Employee onboarding	Employee learning and development, employee onboarding tech	Guide to recruiting, Recruiting strategy, Recruiting talent	Talent acquisition strategy, Talent recruiting tactics, Recruiting better applicants		

Example: Topic- and Keyword-Selection Matrix

Section 3: Prioritizing & Segmenting Accounts

So, you've selected the right topics and keywords for each stage of your buyer journey. Now what? It's time to translate the resulting signals into actionable insights.

Prioritizing Accounts

Identifying and prioritizing businesses' that are increasingly researching challenges and solutions related to your products is the quickest way to start seeing value. Your first course of action should be to develop an intent-prioritized target-account list (or "priority list"). This is a subset of your initial target-account list, which is typically based on some combination of firmographic, technographic, predictive, and sales intelligence data.

(Note: Starting with a target-account list isn't required—you can simply target firmographic and technographic data and generate an intent-prioritized target-account list from there.)

Narrowing your original list into an intent-prioritized target-account list enables you to allocate resources to those businesses most likely to be in an active buy cycle. Consequently, you'll see increasing conversion rates and pipeline contribution, while sales cycles shrink, and marketing budgets go further—all because you won't be wasting resources on businesses that aren't in market to buy.

However, the benefits of intent data extend far beyond simple account prioritization. By monitoring topics and keywords according to buying stage and interest category, you can better identify which solutions prospects are most interested in and where they are in their path to purchase. This intelligence enables you to better select the messages, content, tactics, and channels to use with specific accounts and contacts.

Thus, you should always further segment your intentprioritized target-account list by interest category (i.e., the solution-related columns in the "Topic and keyword selection matrix") and buying stage (i.e., the buying-stage rows in the "Topic and keyword selection matrix").

Segmenting by Interest category

This will help you pick the messaging and content to use during engagement with each account. The more proficient you become with using intent data, the more you'll want to focus these categories around specific customer pain points (rather than product lines), because that's ultimately what your prospects will first be most interested in. This will allow you to better customize messaging for intent-prioritized accounts earlier in their journey.

Of course, as you shift your segmentation method from product to features to customer pain points, this will require you to create, fill, and monitor many more interest-category rows in you topic/keyword selection matrix. It will also require you to create more content, specific to those pain points. It's best to let your available resources inform how granular you should go with your segmentation.

Interest Category Segmentation Level BASIC **ADVANCED** Paint Point/Challenge **Feature** Paint Point/Challenge Product/Solution Paint Point/Challenge Paint Point/Challenge **Feature**

Advanced segmentation typically requires more content and refined messaging.

Paint Point/Challenge

Segmenting by Buying Stage

Segmenting by buying stage will further help you select messaging. More importantly, though, it will help you select engagement tactics and channels. For example, businesses spiking in Stage 1 and 2 topics/keywords are good targets for 3rd-party demand generation/content syndication campaigns. (See Intentsify's Intent-Activated Demand Gen solution). Alternatively, for accounts spiking in Stage 3, you may want to route directly to the BDR team to identify and engage contacts at that company.

Of course, it's unlikely that your target accounts will always fit neatly into one interest category and buying stage. More likely, each account will generate intent signals across several categories and stages. This is good news. It indicates a breadth of interest while providing you with several tactical options for engagement. And it's fine if accounts span a few interest categories and stages. Yet, there are a couple things you can do to focus follow-up efforts:

 Assign a minimum threshold for placement, such as requiring a minimum topic score of 75+ For accounts spiking high across multiple interest categories, focus on the buying stage

Once all intent-prioritized target accounts are assigned to the most relevant interest categories and buying stages, you can start planning engagement tactics by assigning content to each field and selecting follow-up efforts.

	Account- & Cor			
	Interes	t Category: [Name]		3rd-Party
Stage	Accounts [Segment intent-identified accounts by stage]	Content [Assign content assets to relevant stages and interest categories. Content formats listed below are typical of each buying stage.]	Follow-Up Tactics	Demand Gen Programmatic Advertising
Stage 1: Problem Identification	[Accounts spiking on topics/ keywords related to your prospects' pain points/ challenges]	Blog postsEbooks/guides/white papersWebinarsInfographicsAd banners		Email Nurture
Stage 2: Solution Discovery	[Accounts spiking on topics/ keywords related to your solutions' values and benefits]	Blog postsEbooks/guides/white papersWebinarsAd banners		BDR/Sales Outreach
Stage 3: Product/ Vendor Research	[Accounts spiking on topics/ keywords related to your brand and product names, and your competitors' brands and products]	 Case studies Sponsored research reports BDR talk tracks/battle cards Customer testimonial graphics Demo/solution videos 		Social
Stage 4: Account Churn Risk	[Accounts spiking on topics/ keywords related to your competitors' brands and products]	Copy for direct mail notes Battle cards Rebuttal messages FAQ documents		Direct Mail
Stage 4: Account Expansion	[Accounts spiking on topics/ keywords related to pain points/challenges your other solutions solve for]	Blog posts Ebooks/guides Webinars Case studies Demo/solution videos		Customer Success

Note: Red text indicates instructions on how to use/fill in table. Also, when dealing with hundreds (if not thousands) of target accounts, you'll want to organize spreadsheets accordingly (e.g., separate tabs for each stage).

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

¹TOPO, 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.



About Intentsify

Intentsify's Intent Activation TM Soft ware and Solutions make intent data more actionable and impactful for B2B marketers by:

- Automating the aggregation of multiple, complementary intent feeds and cross referencing their signals to provide customers with a broader, more accurate picture of target-buyer interests and needs; and
- 2. Offering two turn-key intent-activation solutions for demand generation and programmatic advertising, making is simple for customers to act on intent insights—quickly and efficiently.

Combined, Intentsify's software and solutions transform a once tedious workflow into an effective way to quickly optimize account-based orchestration efforts according to changing buyer needs.

Customer benefits you can expect:

- Increased ROI on intent data investments
- Greater marketing efficiency—time, energy, and resources are quickly allocated to the right accounts
- Better prospect and customer experiences, higher conversion rates, and greater customer retention and expansion
- A jump in marketing's contribution to pipeline, and sales' strengthened confidence in marketing
- More customers and revenue

"With Intentsify, we've seen a much higher MQL-to-opportunity rate as well as increased deal size, which is leading to some of the top pipeline within the channel. In fact, we're seeing a 10x pipeline-to-spend ratio."

—Casey Culler, Affiliate & Partner Marketing Manager, PagerDuty

"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



www.intentsify.io