

AN INTRODUCTION TO:

Content Activation

How to transform your
passive content delivery
to accelerate revenue



**Path
Factory™**

We used to be
LookBookHQ

Think about how you buy anything important

Something sparks your interest. *Maybe a blog post by someone you trust.*

You start seeking more information. *Googling up a storm.*

You find a good source and go on a binge. *eBook. Video. Webinar. Nom-nom.*

Then you hit a wall. *No obvious next step.*

Maybe you go cool for a while. *Still interested but it's not top-of-mind.*

Then another spark. *Someone mentions the thing in a meeting. Aha.*

Sparks. Spikes. Binges. Walls. Decays. New sparks...

This is how we buy. *It's natural. It's human. It's life. The only problem?*

It's not how we sell.

CONTEXT

Maybe we should market the way people actually buy

B2B marketing and demand generation have made enormous leaps over the last 10 years.

Marketing automation. Analytics. Attribution. Personalization. Programmatic.

The potential for a new, dramatically more accountable marketing is nothing short of awesome.

But something has been lost in this martech blizzard: our understanding of the way people actually buy.

Today, even the most sophisticated B2B marketing teams are missing more opportunities than they're seizing—because they're not reflecting real-world buying behavior.

This quick eBook is about a way better way—one that turns every click into the start of a guided purchase journey instead of a random interaction in a wider wander. It lets you see how your own customers are buying, so you can adjust your marketing accordingly.

We call this Content Activation and we're convinced it changes everything about the way performant marketers approach their biggest challenges.



“The concept of the funnel is outdated. That’s not how people buy. It’s more of a tornado!”

Owais Farooqui
Demand Generation—Oath,
a Verizon company

Typical B2B marketing today doesn't map to the way buyers buy.

- It doesn't respond to periods of intense interest
- It forces buyers to browse around, driving them back to Google searches...
- ...or sticks them in a nurture flow, hoping that a few qualified prospects trickle out
- It treats everyone the same, from the tire-kickers to the hottest prospects
- It's far too passive about the demand that's out there to be grabbed

THE PROBLEM

Passive content and the chaotic purchase journey

Left to chance, B2B buying journeys today are long, winding, jerky, fragmented, and unpredictable. They look more like scavenger hunts than straight lines.

The challenge for marketers is to smooth out and speed up purchase journeys by *removing* obstacles and dead-ends. By making the next step in a buyer's self-education process clear, simple, and relevant.

Instead, too many marketing teams create obstacles and design roadblocks into their buyer journeys.

Breaking the journey

Forms and landing pages stop buyers in their tracks.

Random acts of one-off content leave buyers to figure out their next move.

Disconnects between steps trap buyers in content silos.

Gaps in buyer self-education force them back to Google.

Ignoring the most engaged prospects slows their progress.

Not learning from past purchase journeys keeps engagement flat-lined.



This is *passive* content and passive marketing.

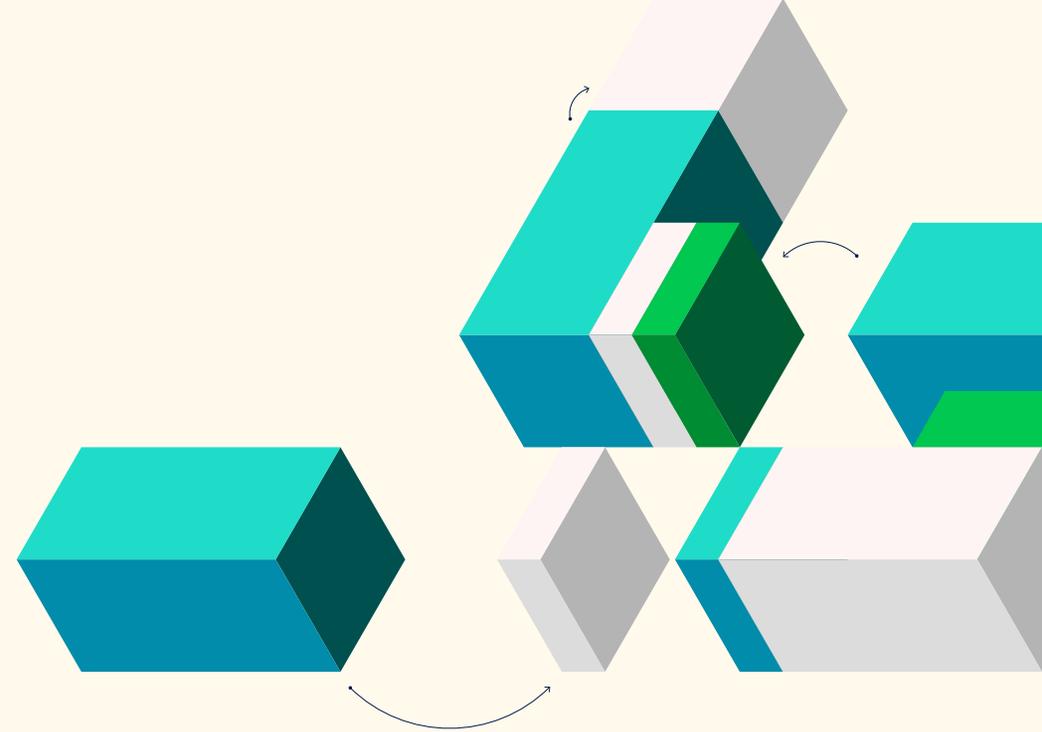
It's built on some fatal assumptions: that all prospects are motivated to progress; that they'll work hard to overcome obstacles and leap over gaps; and that they'll stay with your company as they do so.

They won't.

Logic, experience, and data all confirm the obvious: leaving the bulk of the work of self-education to the buyer ensures they'll wander off before you can constructively engage with them.

THE PROBLEM

Passive content and the chaotic purchase journey



The penalties of passivity

Passive marketing will eventually generate some pipeline. But nowhere near the pipeline you could be generating with the same investment and resources. Because it causes things like this:

Longer sales cycles with no drive to progress

Missed opportunities when you fail to spot hot prospects

Frustrated buyers who go elsewhere to self-educate

Blocked nurture flows with few prospects progressing to MQL status

Static engagement metrics instead of continuous improvement

Under-utilized content assets sitting in content hubs instead of working to accelerate buying journeys

For many B2B teams, these penalties seem like marketing-as-usual. “Buyers are just slow.” “Funnels leak.” “Engagement rates are low.” “That’s just how it is.”

Actually, they’re largely the result of passive content and poorly-orchestrated purchase journeys.

If this were an infomercial, it’s where the presenter would say, “There’s a better way!” (And, as it happens, there is...)



“Passive marketing leads to much slower sales cycles and lower conversion through the pipeline. Actively helping prospects accelerate their self-education changes all that.”

Amber Thompson
Senior Digital Marketing Specialist—
Apptio

A BETTER APPROACH

Content Activation

Some of the world's highest-performing marketing teams are using the same B2B ingredients as everyone else—content, data, automation—but achieving far better results: by activating these assets and resources.

That's what we call Content Activation.

Content Activation is an adaptive process that deploys content in new ways to better serve self-educating prospects.

It's a mindset, model, and methodology that reflects how buyers want to buy:

Focusing on the buyer's immediate information needs

Removing the blocks, gaps and obstacles to self-education

Spotting the hottest prospects so you can accelerate to a sale

Serving the less engaged with content relevant to their stage. Getting better all the time by learning from what works



“The more you know about your buyer the better you can tailor their journey.”

Michele Studhalter
Marketing Specialist—Igloo Software

Unlike passive content, Content Activation never leaves the buyer's next step to chance. It orchestrates content-driven journeys that progress prospects faster and more accurately.

What Content Activation looks like

Content Activation is a content strategy that proactively guides prospects down pre-designed 'content tracks'. Each track is a prescribed series of content assets, each leading to the next, with the buyer's progress monitored, timed, and saved to their profile (for scoring and analyzing).

Instead of a random browse through your content, Content Activation is a closed-loop approach that identifies the most engaged prospects—the ones who binge on content, progressing further along the content track—and guides your engagement strategy.

Content Track examples

The 'Free Trial to Paid' Track

Goal:

Move prospects on the free version to upgrade to paid subscriptions

Channel:

Email, website, ad retargeting

Track:

- Video A
- Infographic B
- Case story C
- Case Video D
- Offer E

Trigger:

4 pieces viewed or 7 minutes in total = MQL

The ABM Track

Goal:

Engage with named accounts and spot sales-ready accounts

Channel:

LinkedIn ads, native advertising, social retargeting

Track:

- Account-specific eBook A
- Slideshare B
- Vertical use case C
- Case Video D
- Case Video E
- Case video F

Trigger:

5 pieces viewed or 12 minutes in total = Account alert to AE

Content Activation uplift



2.3x
faster MQL
conversions

Kareo saw 2.3x faster MQL conversions by deploying content tracks.

DEMANDBASE

2x
increase
in responses

Demandbase saw a 2x increase in responses to content promotions, a 3x boost in time visitors spent with content—and a 300% increase in influenced pipeline.

BetterWorks™

+375%
more
opportunities

BetterWorks saw their LinkedIn ads pointing to a content track generate +375% more opportunities at a 4X lower cost per opportunity than ads pointing to one-and-done assets.

Closed-Loop Content Activation

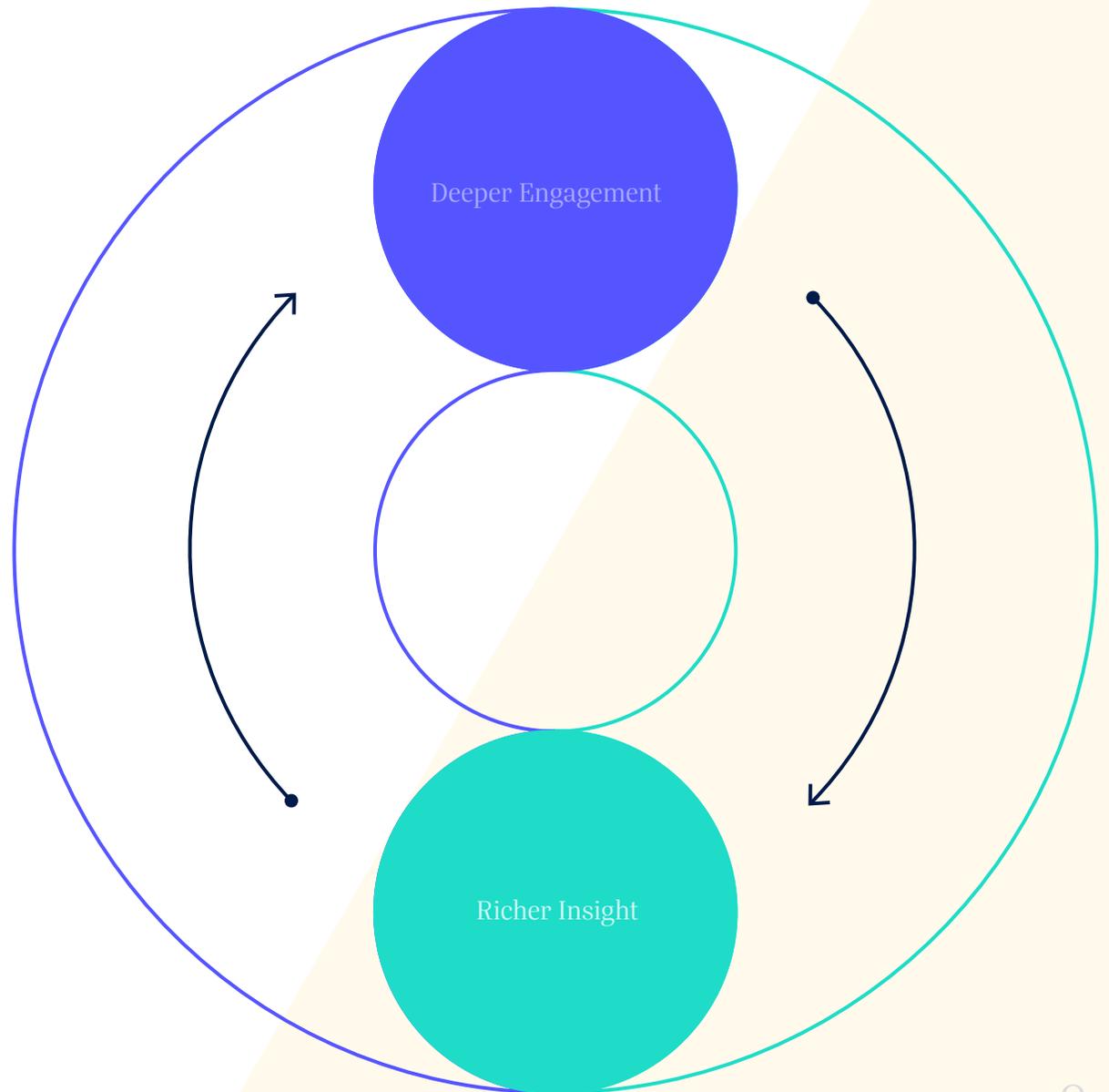
A virtuous cycle of improvement

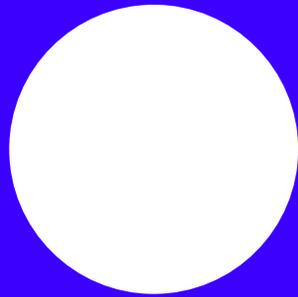
Deeper engagement with content leads to richer insight into each prospect's interests and intent; and that insight drives even deeper, more relevant engagements in the future. It's a flywheel of continuous improvement.



“Only when we know what’s being consumed and at what length can we influence journeys and outcomes.”

Joel Parent
VP Business Development—luc.social





Passive Content vs. Content Activation

Passive Content

Buyer shoulders the burden of self-education

Buyer determines next best content

No visibility into actual engagement with content

Content lives in isolated islands

Little insight to guide future engagements

Content units not designed into journeys

Content Activation

You design adaptive content journeys for buyers

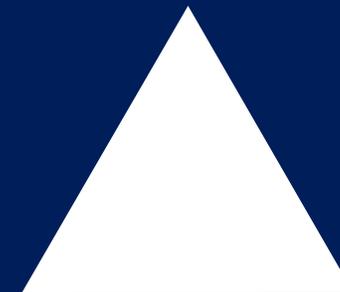
You recommend next best content based on behavioral, engagement, and firmographic data

Monitor visitor and account engagement

Content lives in guided tracks

Full intelligence to enrich visitor and account profiles

Content tracks designed for specific goals



Things you'll use a lot less when you activate your content:

Landing pages

Why put a hard stop in a buying journey?

Premature forms

Ask for data when it's most likely to be given.

Blind downloads

Know if they actually read the content, not just downloaded it.

Click-obsessed campaigns

Every click should be the start of a journey, not the end.

Content hubs

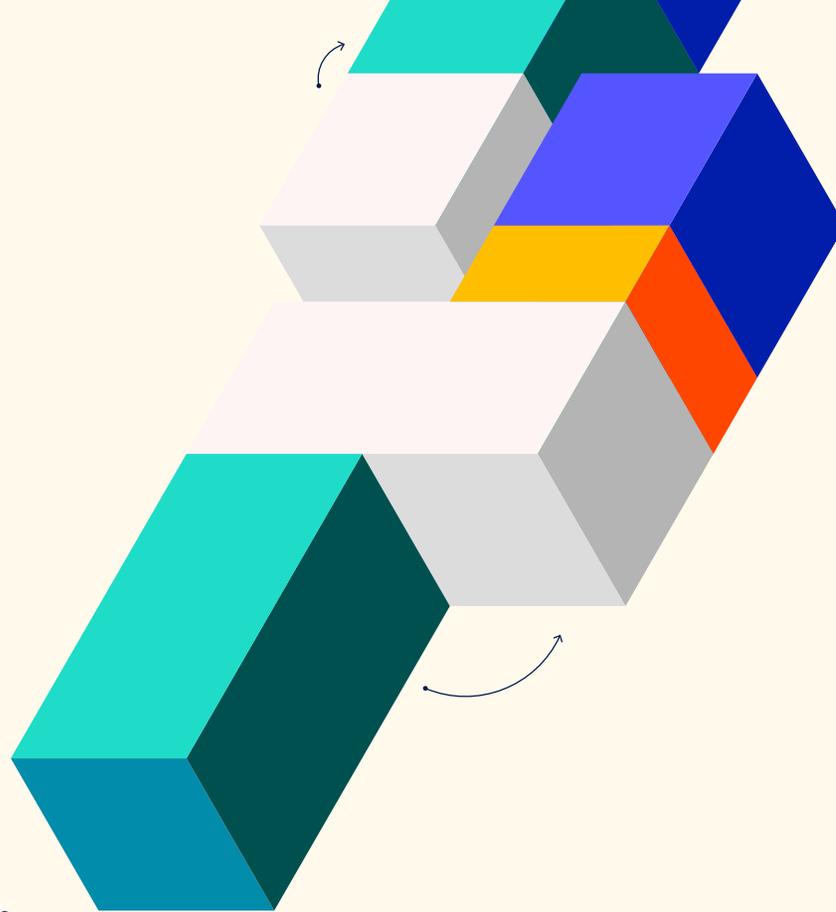
Fine for casual browsing, not for goal-directed journeys.

Channel silos

Which create fragmented, inconsistent buyer journeys.

One-size-fits-all content

The more you know, the better you can target and personalize.



Engaged Intent: the most important buying predictor

The Content Activation approach is all about creating the conditions for goal-directed content binges, then detecting these intensive interactions to identify the hottest prospects.

We call this urgent, real-time interest 'Engaged Intent' because it's a lot deeper than weak intent signals like search behaviour, firmographic profiling, social media activity, or content downloads.

Engaged Intent
is the demonstrated
propensity to buy.

When compared to all other lead scoring inputs, it proves to be the single best indicator of sales-readiness.

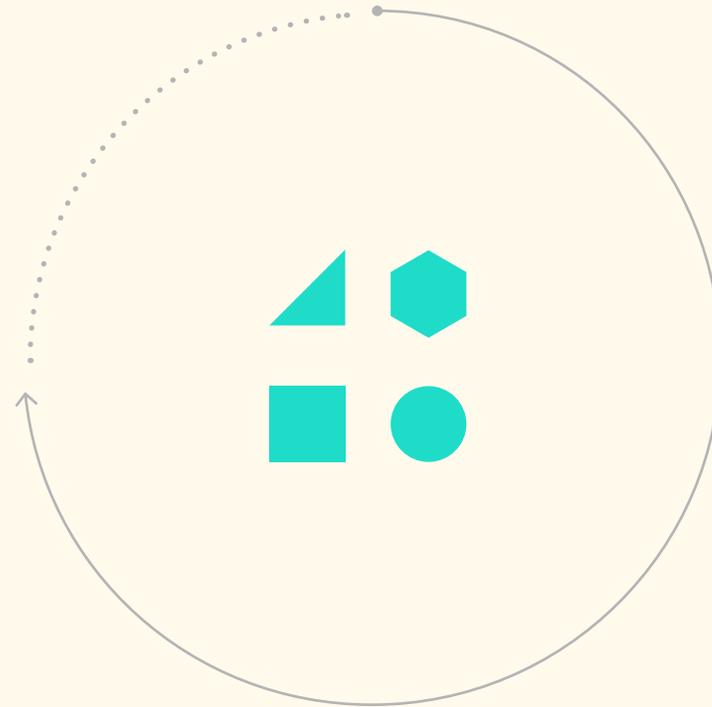
The four signals of Engaged Intent

Engaged Intent is the sum of these distinct signals:

-  **A prospect's appetite for information**
How hungry are they for information on this topic?
-  **Their specific interests**
The topics and issues they care about right now.
-  **Their self-education progress**
Where they are on their purchase journey.
-  **Their openness to your company**
Their willingness to learn about this issue from your company.

Put together, these 4 signals add up to the most reliable signal that a prospect is ready to be sold to.

The best engagement metric: time



Traditional, passive marketing scores a click, form fill, or content download as a complete engagement. It's all or nothing; yes or no. But you never know whether the prospect actually opened the PDF much less read it.

Content Activation uses the best indicator of Engaged Intent: the time they spend in your content tracks, consuming the content you prepared for them.

It's a simple concept: a prospect who spends 17 minutes with 4 pieces of content is many times more likely to be a hot prospect than someone who spends 40 seconds with a single piece.

Add this time signal to insight about the topic, content depth, and track 'stickiness', and you've got a rich indicator of each prospect's potential.

How to act on Engaged Intent signals. Engaged Intent signals guide everything you do with the prospects in your funnel. They tell you:

Whether to engage more. So you can focus your sales and marketing investments where they'll make the most impact.

When to engage more. Based on real-time behaviors that tell you when to act.

What kind of engagement is best. What content type, channel, or format.

What content should drive the next engagement. To systematically progress the conversation.

What topics and issues to focus on. To stay in the prospect's hot spot.

When to pass them to the sales team. Knowing they'll be far more likely to close.

What the sales conversation should be. Helping the sales team pick up where the prospect left off.

Content Activation at work

There are as many ways to use Content Activation as there are ways to use marketing. Here are a few:

Free trial to paid

The freemium model depends on converting people from time-limited free trials to paid subscriptions. Design a content track to show your free users the value of stepping up—then drive them to it directly from service emails or the product itself.

Sales enablement

Spin up sales conversation tracks and let your salespeople share links to them. They can then monitor which prospects engaged with which track and how much time they invested.

Accelerated purchase journeys

Jump-start dormant prospects or speed up the slow. Content tracks that target specific sticking points in your funnel can unblock the pipeline.

Account-based marketing

Create content tracks designed for specific named accounts—and even specific decision-makers in those accounts. Then alert the account exec when the engagement from that account starts to ramp up.

Installed-base customer marketing

Design content tracks to lead current customers to new products and services. Target by product bought, usage levels, or behavioral triggers. Then spot the Engaged Intent... and convert into cross-sell and up-sell revenue.

Vertical campaigns

Design content tracks to target specific industries, then promote them to contacts and accounts in that industry across every channel.



The instrumented purchase journey



Content Activation replaces a blind journey—one that takes place largely out of the view of the marketer—with a transparent journey, instrumented with sensors.

That means you get deeper, better, faster insight into your prospects, your content, your campaigns, and (if you're doing account-based marketing) your target accounts.

That's insight you can act on to boost your performance and to improve the buying experience for your prospects.

Where insight comes from

Learning about each prospect and about the overall effectiveness of your content and campaigns depends on combining three data sources:

1. Engagement data

Your primary, behavioral data, showing you how much a prospect, an account, or an entire segment has been engaging with you, through which channels, and how much time they're spending with your content. (So you can identify Engaged Intent.)

2. Content data

Data about the content that people are consuming and what it's really about: the topics, the issues, the themes, and the level of expertise. (So you can understand their interests.)

3. Prospect data

Everything you know about each prospect you're engaging with (firmographics, demographics, etc.). This comes from your own 1st-party data (in your CRM or marketing automation) as well as from 3rd-party sources from data vendors like Demandbase, Kickfire, or Bombora. (So you can determine how well they fit your ideal prospect profile.)

Each of these sources is valuable. But taken together, they create an incredibly powerful source of insight to guide and improve your marketing performance and customer experience.

If you like it, then you better put a dashboard on it.

Once the data from the buyer's journey has been combined into one view, you need a way to access that data and derive the insights from it. The beauty of this single, centralized profile store is that you can slice it and dice it in many different ways, for different levels of insight.

This matrix shows the kinds of questions a fully-instrumented Content Activation program can help you answer, including questions about prospects, accounts, content, and campaigns—each at an aggregated or drilled-down level:

	Prospect	Account	Content	Campaign
CMO-level dashboard: The big picture	How many prospects are engaging with our content?	Are our named accounts engaging with our content?	Our content: is it working?	Did that specific program or campaign work?
Mid-tier reporting: Aggregated data: by content type, segment, etc.	Are senior decision-makers engaging with us?	Are we getting through to Big Pharma?	eBooks: do they work? Topic X content vs Topic Y content	Did Campaign A do better than Campaign B this year?
Granular data: By prospect, account, piece...	Is Steve an MQL yet?	Is Merck ready for a sales call?	This whitepaper: did it work? That video: how's it going?	What's the uplift created by this topic for this account?

This is how people buy. So this is how you should market to them.

Passive content marketing and static demand generation hurt you in two ways:

1. It degrades the customer experience. By ignoring the signals that your prospects are sending, and failing to respond to those signals appropriately, the customer experience is frustrating, disjointed, full of gaps, and downright annoying.
2. It inhibits your marketing performance. By setting up dead ends and chasms along the purchase journey, just when prospects are trying hardest to educate themselves, you are slowing down and thinning out your pipeline.

Content Activation releases the potential locked inside your content assets and data silos, so you can make it easy for prospects to buy from you—and continue improving your marketing over time.

And by creating prescribed content tracks tailored to specific journeys, Content Activation also makes it easy to spot the hottest prospects: those demonstrating the Engaged Intent that leads to faster sales.

In B2B marketing, active beats passive.

Insight beats ignorance.

And helping your prospects buy beats putting obstacles in their way.

About us

PathFactory's Content Insight and Activation Platform helps B2B marketers understand the role of content in the buyer's journey and discover a new class of data to optimize the path to purchase. PathFactory uses this data and insight to optimize content delivery across every channel, connecting buyers with the most relevant information whenever and wherever they click.

