

INSIDE INTENT DATA:

UNLOCKING DEMAND GENERATION RESULTS



InboxInsight 

www.inboxinsight.com

INTENT DATA: A COMPLETE GUIDE FOR DEMAND GENERATION

Imagine getting a head start and knowing a prospect's behavior before they even enter your sales funnel. Imagine understanding exactly which topics your target accounts are researching, and what content is most likely to convert them. Intent data has the power to give you these insights.

Analyzing intent data is something that more and more organizations are prioritizing when it comes demand and lead generation. Applied effectively, its can dramatically boost conversion and increase your bottom line. By cutting through the noise and and prioritizing the signals that matter, you'll be able to improve content marketing performance and lead prioritization, enabling you to make better marketing decisions for the future.

Simply put, intent data is the present and future of B2B marketing, and the earlier on in the process you can harness it, the better. In order to get the most out of your data, you need to know more than just who your customers are - you must know what motivates them, and their intentions in the buying journey. Identifying intent is essential for maximizing opportunities in any demand gen campaign, and our survey looks at how intent data is being exploited right now.

Giving you the inside track on large companies across various industries and sectors, we delve into intent data usage, maturity and strategy length, as well as how the data is gathered, what challenges lay ahead, and how much it costs to deploy.

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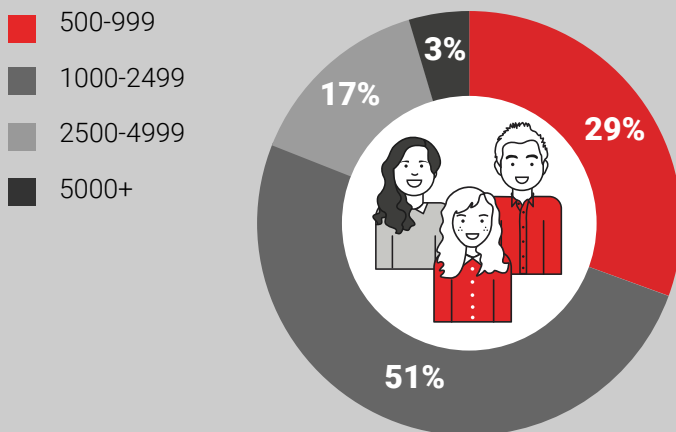
Survey sample

Our survey was circulated to 200 B2B marketers in senior positions within large companies of 500+ employees, based in the USA and UK.

Company Size

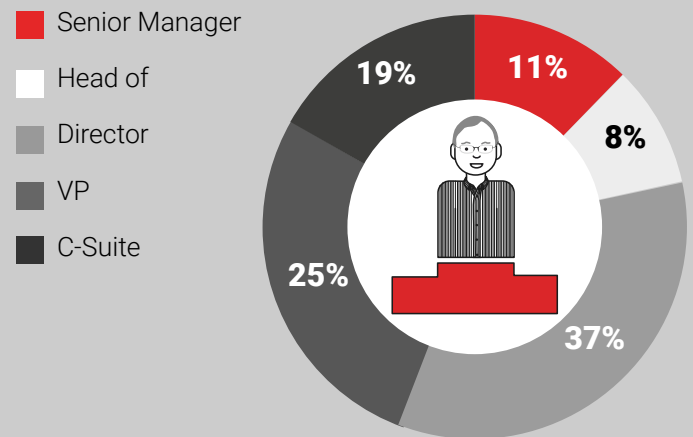
(number of employees)

In terms of company size, there was a mix of businesses ranging from 500-999 employees, 1000-2499 employees, 2500-4999 employees, and 5000+ employees. The largest group made up over half of our respondents, with 1000-2499 members of staff in their organization.



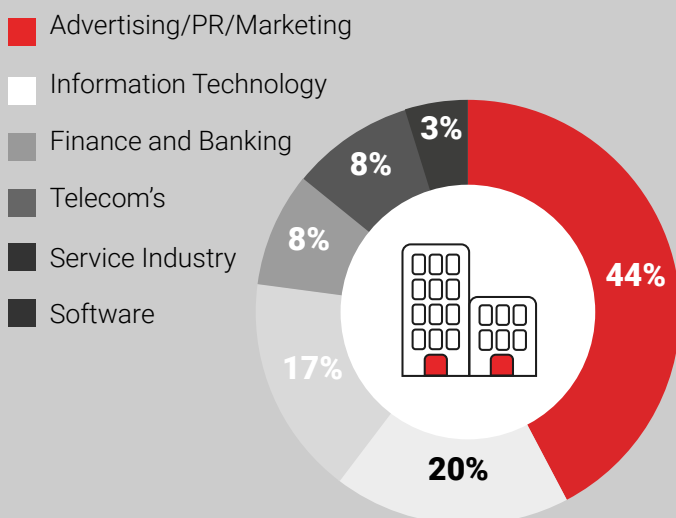
Authority Level

The people we surveyed were all of senior level authority, including senior managers (11%), department heads (8%), company directors (17%), vice presidents (25%), and C-suite level decision makers (19%).



Industry Split

To give a fair overview on the state of demand generation and use of intent data in the real world, we surveyed a large group of B2B marketers within Advertising/PR/Marketing (44%), but also senior marketing specialists across a number of industries. These industries include IT with a fifth of the split (20%), Finance and Banking following closely (17%), plus Telecommunications (8%), Service Industry (8%), and Software (3%).



AIMS OF THIS GUIDE:

In this guide, we'll shed light on how companies are using intent data to leverage their demand generation strategies and explore how you can develop an intent data strategy to suit your own organization.

We'll also explore:

- The 5 types of intent data
- Identifying your objectives and garnering intent insights
- The challenges you'll potentially encounter when implementing an intent data strategy
- How to effectively integrate intent data into your demand generation strategy and channels
- Planning your budgets for intent data
- Outcomes and ROI

INTENT DATA IN 2020

Before we deep dive into how intent data is collected, used and managed, let's review the level of usage among organizations at present.

Who's using intent data?

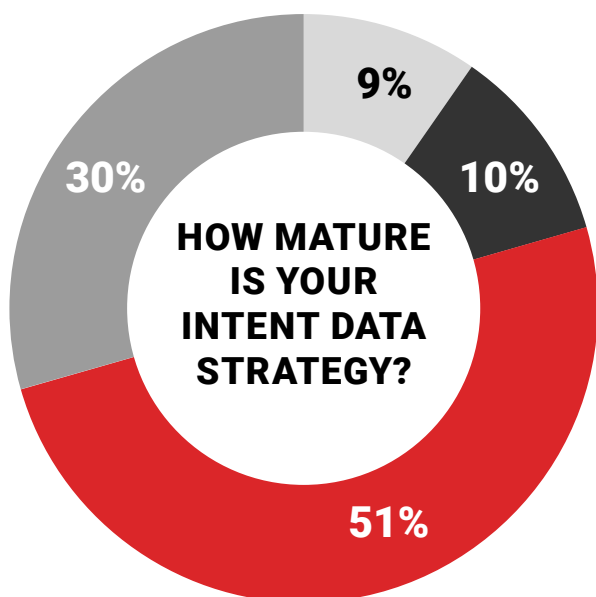
According to our survey results, 99% of companies are tapping into intent data in some way. 1% are yet to utilize this type of data for their campaigns.

DO YOU CURRENTLY USE INTENT DATA IN YOUR ORGANIZATION?



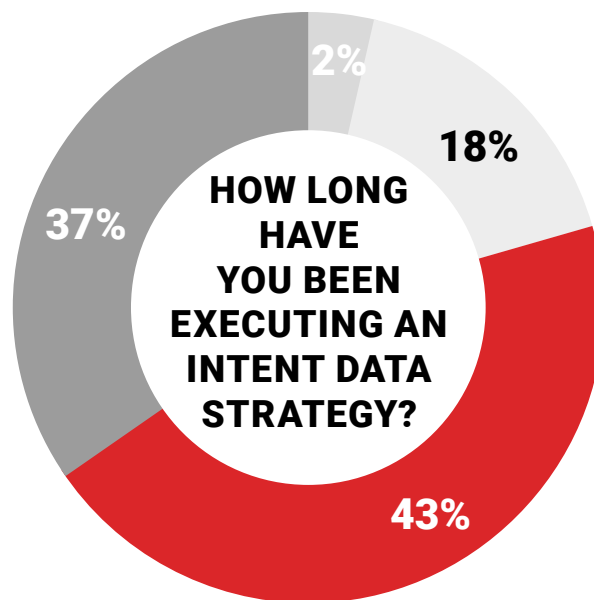
How long have organizations been using intent data?

Looking at experience in using this type of data, over 80% of respondents say that their strategies are in the well-established or fully synchronized phase. A small 10% say they are in the process of scaling up, while 9% are in the early stages.



- Early stages
- Scaling up
- Well established
- Fully synchronized

In line with this, 80% of respondents say that they have been executing strategies for over two years, with almost half of those in the 5+ year range.



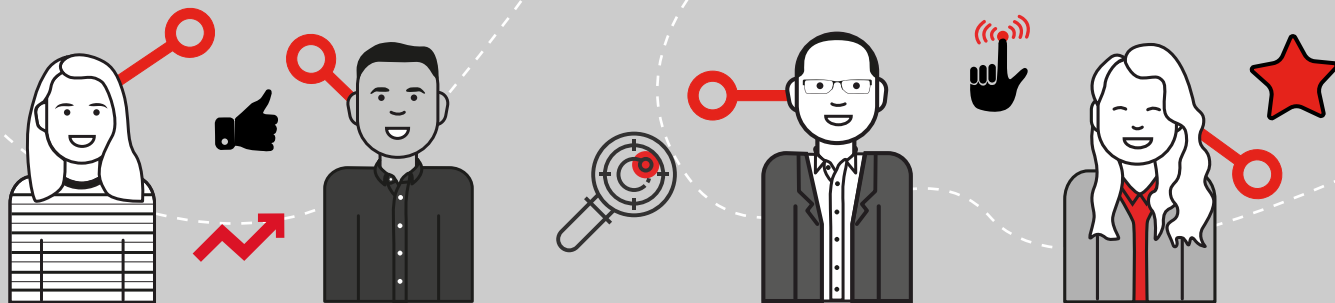
- <1 year
- 1-2 years
- 2-5 years
- 5+ years

There is a clear picture of maturity across the industries, indicating the importance of prioritizing data-backed marketing strategies, if you don't already.

How confident are organizations about intent data?

For the majority of marketers and senior level managers, the overall feeling is one of confidence. A promising 98% are either confident or very confident in their intent data strategies.





What are the types of intent data being used?

There are five types of intent signals that are used to gauge B2B engagement and understand buyer behavior.

1. SEARCHING (KEYWORD & QUERIES)

Online searches are digital signals that give a strong indication of intent. According to Google, it can take an average of 12 searches before a B2B buyer engages with a brand, leaving behind a trail of micro-signals that can be analyzed.

The types of queries to track include:

- **Informational search queries** - these are the searches that cover a broad topic, and learning about these allows marketers to create problem-solving or knowledge-growing content. The type of content that nurtures prospects through the funnel are thought leadership pieces, survey reports, helpful how-to guides, infographics, and more.
- **Navigational search queries** – these are search terms for specific pages or websites, such as ‘Twitter’, ‘LinkedIn’, ‘Inbox Insight’...etc. By gathering and actioning on these search queries, you can measure brand awareness and set a benchmark for campaigns.
- **Internal search queries** – an internal site search can give you an indication on trends and intent behavior flow of customers. It can even give you insight into searches that are unfruitful for the user, raising key opportunities to create targeted content pieces where they don’t exist already.
- **Transactional search queries** – prospects that are in the consideration phase and close to making a buying decision will begin to use words that indicate intent. Queries that include words like “best”, “which” and “cheap” for example all signal that the buyer has identified a need is narrowing down their options to complete a purchase.

2. BROWSING (COOKIES & CATEGORIES)

The use of browsing intent data helps marketing and sales to gain a better understanding of their audience. It does this by tracking content consumption across devices and browsers with cookies and browsing history. Browsing intent can come from pages that users are looking at on your own website or the content they are viewing in your email workflows, and by reviewing markers such as length of engagement or content format, you can get better insight into buyer intent. Further, browsing data from external sites, such as B2B content sites, online communities or social media groups, enables you to target effectively, increasing brand awareness with groups that are prime for hearing about your services.

3. ACTION (INTERACTIONS & DOWNLOADS)

After browsing intent comes interactions. This is all about tracking behavior flow as prospects move around your digital ecosystem – to, from and between channels. Each person’s digital footprint is a key to their mind-set online. The data gained from patterns and touchpoints gives you the inside track on what channels they prefer (and in what order) when it comes to communication, allowing you to customize the entire customer experience. As the buyer journey is rarely linear, mapping their movements is key in understanding their intent during demand or lead gen campaigns.

4. FIRMOGRAPHIC (ABM)

By leveraging specific data about companies and individual buyers, you can successfully segment accounts based on industry, company size, revenue, number of employees, location... etc. The combination of firmographic and intent data at scale will give you access to deep insights about what your prospects are about to do next.

Aside from the basic firmographic information, it could also be beneficial to build data on other aspects, such as changes to budget, acquisitions or increased funding, new hires, or adoption of new business technology.

5. PREDICTIVE (LOOKALIKE MODELLING)

While the other intent markers are based on historic and real-time data, predictive intent recognizes patterns and trends to inform future decision-making. Through lookalike modelling, you can predict the actions or behaviors of similar accounts, prospects and personas. For instance, if a piece of content is proven successful with a certain segment, you can use it for future campaigns targeting new customers.

SOURCES, OBJECTIVES & CHALLENGES OF INTENT DATA

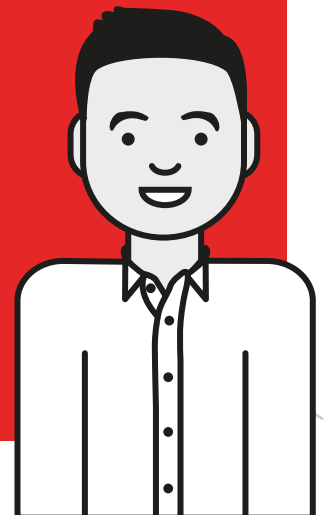
With 99% of respondents using intent data, a key question to consider is why? Why are so many senior B2B marketers using intent data today and what are they trying to achieve? Here's a look at what the marketers in our study had to say about aims and objectives.

What's the end goal?

Intent data has many uses for marketers, providing a huge amount of additional insight into the mind of the prospective and clients, improving content performance and enabling marketers to ensure the right messages go to the right member of the Decision-Making Unit (DMU). It's therefore unsurprising that the majority (61%) of respondents use intent data with the intention of building and developing buyer personas.

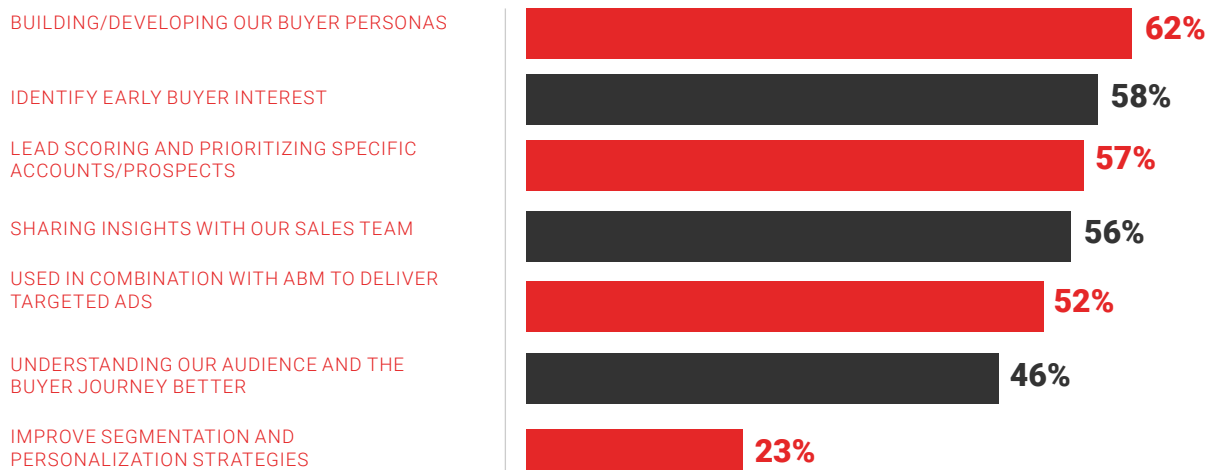


TOP TIP: Intent data creates a wealth of insight for your team to leverage. However, it's easy to get sucked into the analytics and lose sight of your original objective. Try to stay focused on your top priorities, and how intent can drive these outcomes. For example, if you want to improve conversion, track if traffic from intent sources converts at a higher rate through your landing pages. If it does, look at these accounts and prospects for patterns you can use in your segmentation.



Other key uses include: identifying early buyer interest (57%), lead scoring and prioritizing specific accounts (56%), sharing insights with sales (55%), and gaining insight into the buyer journey (46%). Just under a quarter of respondents (23%) said that they wanted to improve segmentation and personalization using intent data. This is a fantastic application of real-time intent, and if applied correctly can boost reach into high value segments and increase conversion rates. We expect to see adoption of this use of intent to rise in coming years.

WHAT IS YOUR OBJECTIVE WHEN USING INTENT DATA?



FIRST PARTY

First party intent data is information gathered about your prospects and clients from across all your own digital touchpoints. For example, this might include data from web analytics software, from your CRM, your email marketing platform or your marketing automation platform. First party intent data is collected within your organization and is based on prospects/clients you have generated in-house. If you're advanced in your set up, you can link cookie data to prospects using AdTech tools such as a Data Management Platform, a Customer Data Platform, and your CRM.

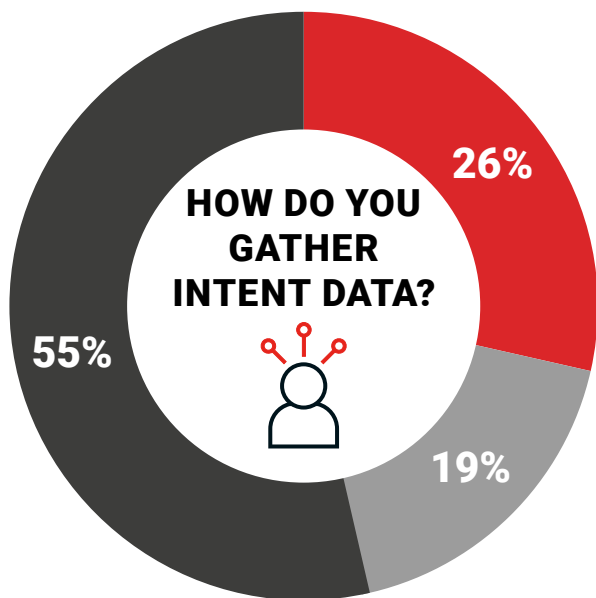
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THIRD PARTY

Third party intent data is information gathered across other digital touchpoints that are not your own, such as external websites. Third party intent data will highlight new prospects who you were not aware of, and also detail where they are in the buying cycle, meaning you can adapt as necessary. Without third party intent data, you are potentially limited to first generating the lead, before getting to know them, as opposed to getting to know an audience who are interested in what you do and adapting to their needs.

How are organizations gathering intent data – and which source do they rely on the most?

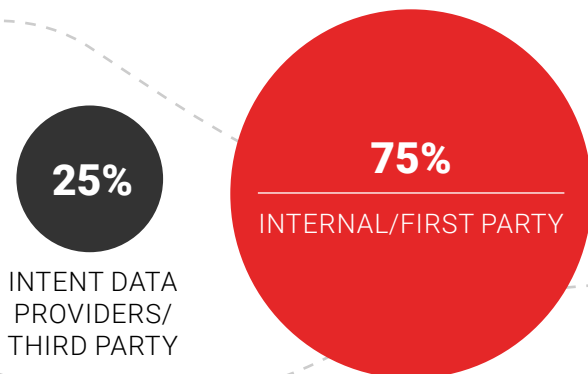
Over half (55%) of marketers are using the combined approach, while a quarter are relying on internal data only, and less than a fifth are using third party data only.



- Internal/First Party
- Intent data providers/Third Party
- A combination of both

Of the people who use a combination of both first party and third party data, when it comes to which they rely on for their campaigns, a significant amount (75%) say first party data holds the most weight. Are marketers missing out on key opportunities when it comes to utilizing third party data?

WHICH SOURCE OF INTENT DATA DO YOU RELY ON MOST?



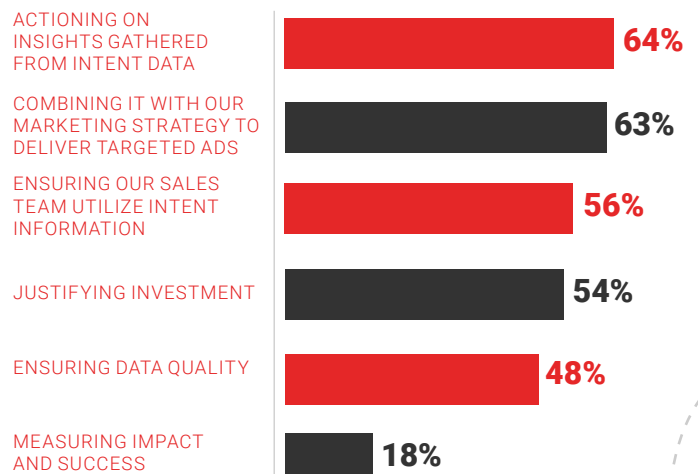
However, as each source is more likely to bring certain benefits, we'd recommend you use a combination of both, if the scale of your operation allows it, in order to build a complete picture and harness as many of the potential benefits of intent data as possible.

What challenges should you be prepared for?

Using intent data across your organization is not straight forward – it relies on communication, time, resources and knowledge. What are the most common issues that organizations face when using intent data?

One of the biggest concerns is how insights are actioned upon after the data has been garnered – with 64% of responders agreeing with this challenge. However, it appears that the majority (66%) of those struggling to action on insights are also most reliant on their own first-party data, with only 33% of responders who mostly rely on third party data feeling this way.

WHAT IS YOUR MOST SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE WHEN IT COMES TO INTENT DATA?



Another significant challenge is ensuring sales teams utilize intent data given to them, to prioritize prospects and build better relationships with clients. Of the 56% that agreed with this issue, 63% consider themselves to be 'well established' or 'fully synchronized' when it comes to intent strategy maturity, highlighting that this is a long-term and consistent issue for companies, beyond the early stages of implementation.

Further, 54% of responders note that 'justifying investment' is a considerable challenge when using intent data. Despite this, all responders who believe

this to be a challenge also responded that they have seen either an increase in ROI or conversion rate, or both (see Outcomes and ROI) – suggesting that their organizations should be open to increasing investment in future. Indeed, 66% of the discussed responders plan to increase spend over the coming 12 months, regardless of any challenges with justification (see Planning).

Other challenges marketers face include successfully combining data with strategy to deliver targeted ads (63%), keeping an eye on data quality (48%), and being able to measure success (18%).



ACTIONING ON INTENT DATA INSIGHTS

In response to the challenges seen with using intent data, organizations should focus on choosing the right tactics to move forward. One of the most vital steps to making intent data work effectively for you is knowing what channels to leverage.

What channels are B2B marketers using?

According to the survey results, the highest percentage (72%) of respondents say they harness intent data within their email marketing strategy. Email is a straight-forward way to segment audiences and deliver a more personalized experience, based specifically on behavior signals.

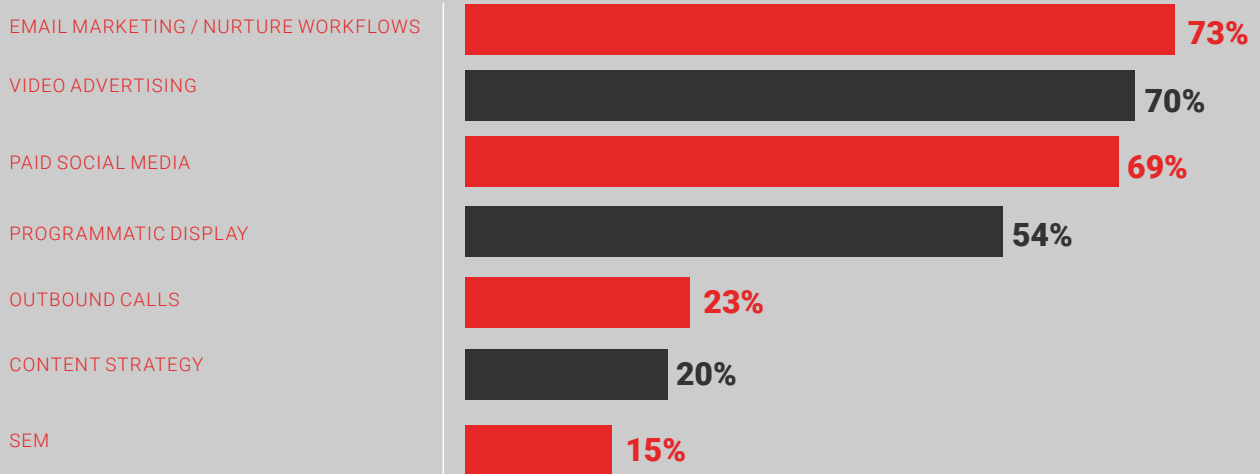
However, whilst email marketing may be the most-used channel for intent data targeting, it's essential for marketers to pay special attention to video and social, which are also optimized with the use of intent data - 70% of responders said they use

intent in video advertising, and 69% use it within social media targeting. According to a study on B2B buyers today, 73% of millennials are now the main decision maker for technology purchases in their company, and social media and online reviews are big influencing factors in their buying journey.

Further, the results demonstrate that users are favouring straight-forward channels and there is an additional opportunity in all channels that can be optimized to a more data-driven approach. SEM is a web of intent signals which will help marketers to understand more about their audience than email engagement, because it enables you to understand how customers navigate.

Other channels utilized include programmatic display (54%), outbound calls (23%), content creation (20%), and search optimization (14%) – all of which are popular channels for demand generation.

WHICH CHANNELS DO YOU USE TO LEVERAGE INTENT DATA TARGETING?



Intent Data Utilization Checklist

Are you utilizing intent data across the most effective channels? The checklist below should help you to understand all the different ways you can harness intent data within your channels and marketing strategy.

CONTENT CREATION: This is your first point-of-call when utilizing intent data. Insights gathered can help you to build a clear picture of your audience pain points, which should be analyzed and used as a foundation for your content strategy.

EMAIL MARKETING: Import your intent information into your email platform and use it to build segmented audiences and specific, personalized workflows. This will increase your audience engagement with your emails and help them to relate better to your business, increasing trust and building a stronger connection.

WEBSITE OPTIMIZATION: Enhance your website and adapt your website around your audience's pain points. Introduce keywords that your audience relate to within your messaging. Use your website as a platform for providing valuable content that helps your audience.

SOCIAL MEDIA TARGETING: Utilize intent insights within your social media targeting to ensure your sponsored ads are showing to the optimal audience for the highest likely engagement – for example, if someone has clicked a certain product on your website, ensure ads shown to this person are relevant to the product they have shown interest in.

PROGRAMMATIC ADVERTIZING Leverage first and third party intent data to target users with display and video advertizing through programmatic exchanges - this will help you serve hyper relevant communications at scale, to and audience that is pre-qualified to have an interest in your solution.

3 key tips for getting the most out of your intent data

With many struggling to action on the insights they have garnered, it's likely companies are not harnessing the intent data to the greatest capacity, and therefore, not utilizing the value that intent can offer. Here are our three simple, actionable tips for getting the most value out of your intent data:

1. BUILD A TARGET ACCOUNT LIST BASED ON INTENT BEHAVIORS TO BRING IN NEW OPPORTUNITIES

If there's only one thing you're going to do with your intent data, we'd recommend using it to build a target account list. By utilizing third party intent data sources, you'll be able to identify highly qualified and audiences and companies and build a picture of the types of companies that are most likely to be in-market. This'll impact everything from your content writing, to your lead follow up and buyer persona creation.

Once achieved, your target account list will help you fulfil multiple intent data objectives, and can be used as the foundation for creating a greater account-based marketing strategy.

RECOMMENDED READING:

[Account-Based Marketing Research Report](#)

2. ENSURE YOUR COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY IS CRISP AND CLEAN, TO ENSURE THE DATA IS UTILIZED

Insights from intent data – particularly about pre-existing prospects and clients – should be communicated seamlessly and effectively to other departments in your organization, particularly the Sales team. If not, you risk passing over insights that are then not actioned upon. We'd recommend having a delegated individual within your marketing team to quality-check each interaction, providing an in-depth overview of any individual activity, as well as setting up automated systems integrated within your CRM to update colleagues efficiently and track further activity between the Account Director and the contact within your CRM. To further ensure Sales action on intent signals, try running a short intent data to workshop, highlighting the meaning of intent data and why it is so beneficial.

3. UTILIZE LEAD SCORING BASED ON INTENT SIGNALS TO IMPROVE YOUR LEAD FOLLOW-UPS

The more you can learn about your prospects, the more likely you are to be able to personalize their follow-ups, engage them with your messaging and encourage conversion. Analyzing specific action intents, such as the number of assets they've engaged with, their unique number of site visits, the type of content they've interacted with and the length of time they have spent on specific web pages will help to build a picture ahead of any communications between Sales and the client. By assigning a 'lead score' based on the activity of that prospect, you can set a benchmark and encourage prioritization of specific accounts and/or leads.

RECOMMENDED READING:

[Demand Generation Masterclass: How to Follow up MQLs](#)



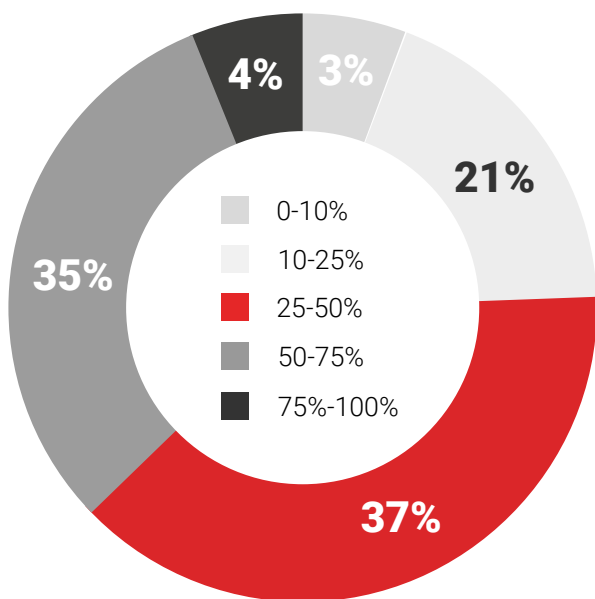
BUDGET PLANNING & INVESTMENT

Our insider data shows exactly how much other B2B marketing professionals are spending on intent data, and what their plans are for the year ahead. It suggests a substantial amount of spending, with indications that intent data is growing year on year.

How much are companies spending?

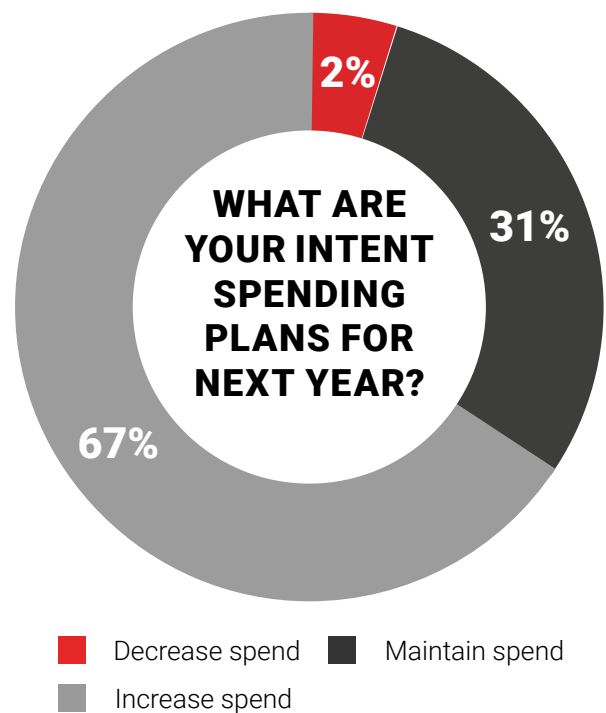
Almost 40% of organizations are spending over 50% of their marketing budget on intent data activity. There's also a significant group (37%) allocating 25-50% of their budget, while over a fifth are spending 10-25% of their budget. Only a small percentage (3%) are spending less than 10% of their budget on intent data.

HOW MUCH OF YOUR OVERALL MARKETING BUDGET IS ALLOCATED TO GATHERING AND USING INTENT?



Do they intend to spend the same next year?

Discussing plans for next year, the majority of respondents say they will spend the same or more on intent data in the coming months. Almost a third plan to allocate the same budget, while over two thirds plan on increasing their budget.



What about those who haven't invested yet?

Of those who are yet to deploy intent data in their marketing campaigns, 50% say they want to.

DO YOU PLAN TO INVEST IN INTENT DATA?



And of those who said they want to invest, all responded that they plan to in the coming year.

BENEFITS & ROI OF INTENT DATA

The biggest question for businesses looking to invest in intent data targeting is whether there's enough return to be able to move forward. Our survey shows resoundingly positive results, with great outcomes in conversions and the bottom line.

What are the main benefits of using intent data?

B2B marketers are seeing a whole host of benefits from tapping into intent data for demand generation. The top three advantages include being able to create more accurate and effective buyer personas, improving personalization and nurture workflow activity, and delivering better predictive targeting and segmentation.

Other benefits worth mentioning are reaching leads earlier in the buyer journey (which is key to successful demand gen) and improved prioritization of lead follow up. According to responders, those relying on third party insights are more likely to see these benefits than those relying on first party.

WHAT BENEFITS HAVE YOU SEEN FROM UTILIZING INTENT DATA?

CREATING EFFECTIVE BUYER PERSONAS

IMPROVED PERSONALIZATION AND NURTURE WORKFLOWS

MORE ACCURATE PREDICTIVE TARGETING AND SEGMENTATION

REACHING LEADS EARLY IN THE BUYER JOURNEY

PRIORITIZING LEAD FOLLOW UP

REPLACING BANT QUALIFICATION WITH NON-INTRUSIVE, DATA-DRIVEN TACTICS

DELIVERING SALES INTELLIGENCE TO IMPROVE ALIGNMENT

IDENTIFYING IN-MARKET COMPANIES

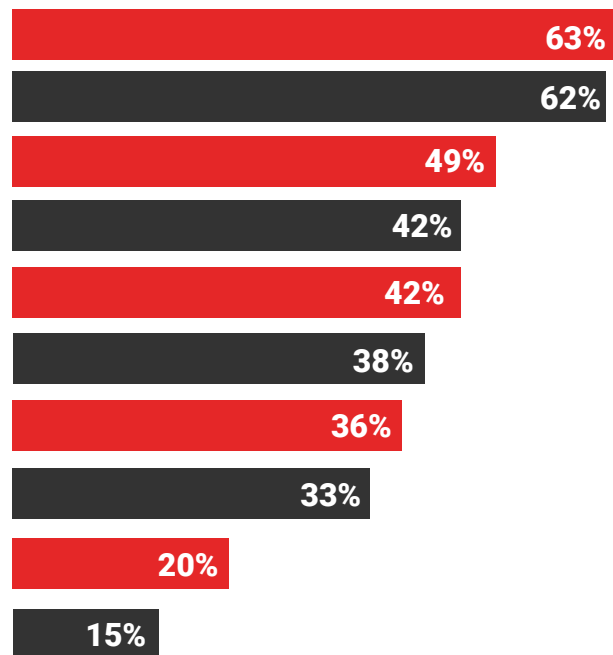
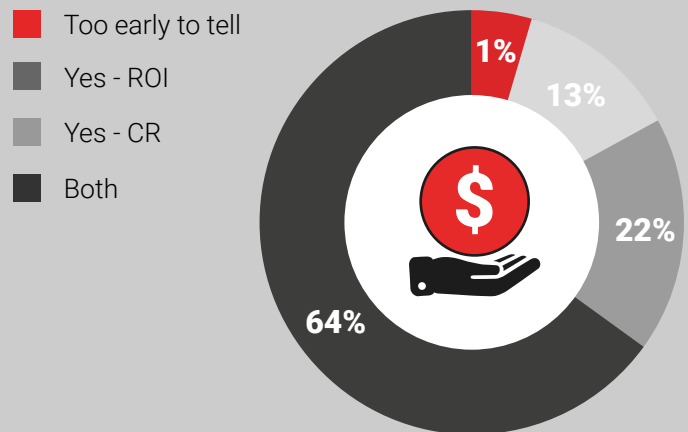
INCREASED WIN RATES FOR OPPORTUNITIES

SHORTER SALES CYCLES IN YOUR PIPELINE

Is there a good return on investment?

In terms of how intent data helps businesses perform, the results inspire a lot of confidence for future campaigns. With a huge 99% of respondents attesting to either ROI increase, conversion growth, or a combination of both, it's clear that intent data is an invaluable tool for marketers.

HAS YOUR COMPANY RECOGNIZED AN INCREASE IN ROI OR CONVERSION RATES SINCE USING INTENT DATA?

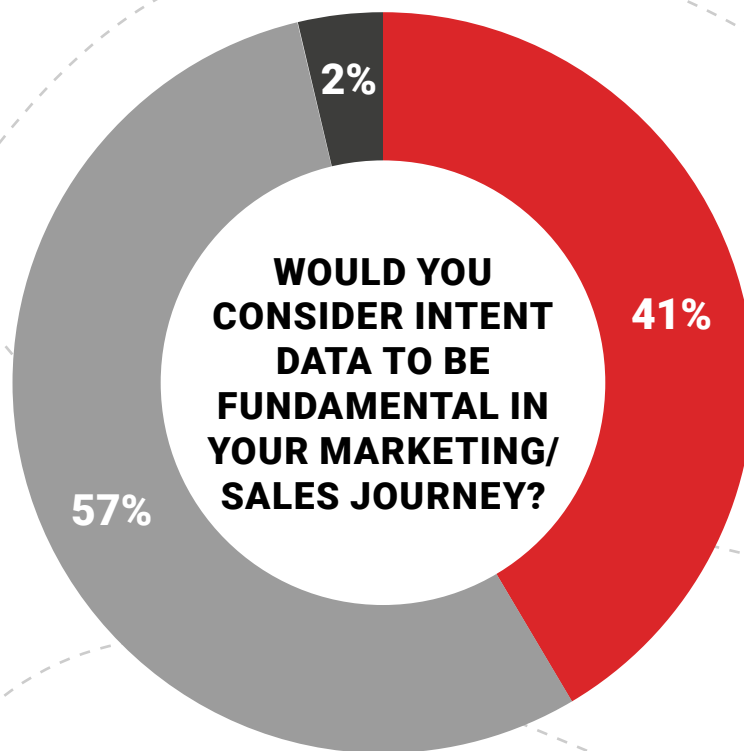


FINAL THOUGHTS

Based on our survey results, it's clear that the outcomes are significantly positive, and that the vast majority of organizations are already on the path to intent data strategy success. Whilst there are some roadblocks and difficulties when it comes to harnessing intent data to its fullest extent, companies are still able to see vast improvement across both ROI and conversions, alongside a whole host of other benefits, when using it in combination with other marketing tactics. Indeed, the majority of organizations plan to increase or maintain spend, indicating that the benefits far outweigh any challenges.

Further, whilst there are 5 key types of intent data to work with, and 2 key options for where to source your intent data, many use a combination of strategies and sources to garner insights. After all, the more insights you have, the more you can get to know your audience, which'll ultimately lay the foundation for improving on your marketing activities.

Overall, with over 1/3 of marketers saying intent data is at the heart of what they do, it is abundantly clear that intent data is not just a trend for marketers today, but it plays an integral role in the future of B2B demand generation.



- Absolutely – it's at the heart of what we do
- Yes – it's very important
- No – we use it where possible but it's not fundamental

ABOUT

This research report was created by Inbox Insight in partnership with Insights for Professionals.

About **Inbox Insight**

Inbox Insight promote the best B2B content marketing practices enhanced by a data-driven approach. We believe putting audience insights at the heart of every digital campaign, drives superior experiences for both our business communities and clients.

It's about continuously leveraging audience intelligence to understand what they want to hear, and translating this into thoughtful demand generation campaigns that resonate with decision makers across the full buyer journey.

About **Insights for Professionals**

IFP gives you access to the latest business knowledge that's customized for you. We provide high quality, credible and relevant resources for senior professionals in one place. An easy to access and personalized library to help you when you are researching specific topics, seeking practical advice, or simply want to stay ahead of what's happening in your industry. To do this we gather the best content from suppliers, brands and industry experts, as well as doing our own research.



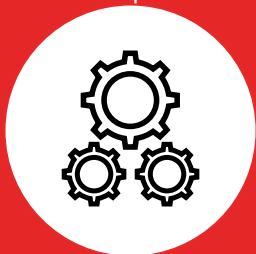
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About Inbox Insight Inbox Insight promote the best B2B content marketing practices enhanced by a data-driven approach. We believe putting audience insights at the heart of every digital campaign, drives superior experiences for both our business communities and clients. It's about continuously leveraging audience intelligence to understand what they want to hear, and translating this into thoughtful demand generation campaigns that resonate with decision makers across the full buyer journey.

About Insights for Professionals IFP gives you access to the latest business knowledge that's customized for you. We provide high quality, credible and relevant resources for senior professionals in one place. An easy to access and personalized library to help you when you are researching specific topics, seeking practical advice, or simply want to stay ahead of what's happening in your industry. To do this we gather the best content from suppliers, brands and industry experts, as well as doing our own research.

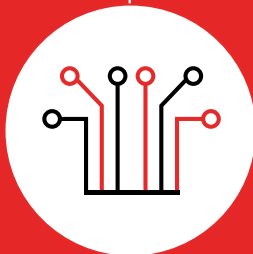
“ We can support your B2B marketing with a series of optimized demand generation products based on your objectives ”

Ready to build your own success story?



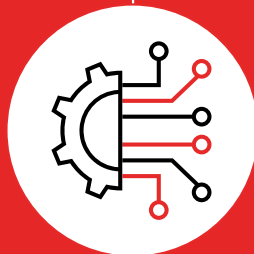
Inbox**ENGAGE**

Identify your audience, activate their interest and generate qualified engagements through our optimized multi-channel campaigns.



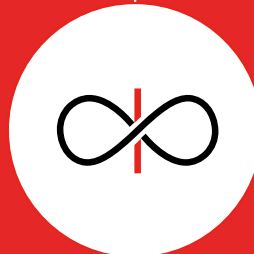
Inbox**NEXUS**

A blend of targeted email marketing and the latest programmatic advertising technology to achieve superior audience reach, relevancy and scale.



Inbox**INTEGRATE**

A powerful end-to-end content amplification solution built around creating seamless digital experiences and optimized reader journeys.



Inbox**INBOUND**

We curate your best content, and optimize it using insight, then drive a relevant audience to the hub with multiple digital touchpoints.



Inbox**CREATE**

A suite of content writing and creative services dedicated to crafting outstanding content that strikes a chord with your target audience.

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