

Intent Data 101

A Practical Guide for B2B Marketers

How to Identify In-Market Buyers and Build Pipeline that Converts.

Executive Summary

The B2B buying landscape has fundamentally shifted.

Your prospects are researching, comparing, and shortlisting solutions long before they ever engage with your brand. By the time they fill out a form or request a demo, they've often already made up their mind.

Intent data changes this equation.

It gives demand generation and growth marketers a window into buyer behavior—revealing which accounts are actively researching solutions like yours, what topics they care about, and when they're ready to engage.

This guide is designed for marketing leaders who want to move beyond the hype and understand how intent data actually works, what types are available, how to evaluate providers, and practical steps to incorporate intent signals into your demand generation programs.

No jargon, no sales pitch—just the foundational knowledge you need to make informed decisions.





Chapter 1

What Is Intent Data?

The Core Concept

Intent data captures the digital behaviors that indicate a company is actively researching a problem, solution, or product category. Think of it as a signal that tells you:

"This account is in-market right now."

These signals come from various sources: content consumption patterns, search behavior, product comparisons, peer review research, and more.

When aggregated and analyzed, they reveal buying intent before a prospect ever raises their hand.

Why Demand Gen Marketers Should Care

For growth and demand generation marketers, intent data addresses a fundamental challenge: most of your total addressable market isn't ready to buy at any given moment.

Traditional demand gen casts a wide net, hoping to catch the small percentage actively evaluating solutions.

Intent data flips this approach. Instead of blanket outreach, you can:

- Focus campaign spend on accounts showing active buying signals
- Personalize messaging to address the specific topics prospects are researching



- Engage earlier in the buyer journey, before competitors capture attention
- Improve lead quality by prioritizing accounts demonstrating genuine interest
- Accelerate pipeline velocity by reaching buyers when they're most receptive

The New Buyer Reality

Today's B2B buyers complete 70-80% of their purchase journey independently.

They're reading reviews, consuming thought leadership, comparing vendors, and building business cases—all before talking to sales.

By the time they request a demo, they've often already narrowed the field.

Intent data lets you enter the conversation earlier, when your content and expertise can actually shape their perspective.



Chapter 2

Types of Intent Data Explained

Not all intent data is created equal. Understanding the different types helps you build a more effective strategy.

First-Party Intent Data

What it is:

Behavioral signals captured from your own digital properties—website visits, content downloads, webinar attendance, email engagement, product trials.



Why it matters for demand gen:

- These prospects already know you exist
- Signals are highly accurate and directly tied to your brand
- You own the data with no compliance complications
- Perfect for lead scoring and sales handoff prioritization

The limitation:

First-party data only captures accounts already in your orbit. You're missing the vast majority of in-market buyers who haven't discovered you yet.

How to use it:

Layer first-party intent into your lead scoring model. An account downloading your pricing guide and visiting your product pages multiple times is telling you something—make sure your systems are listening.

Second-Party Intent Data

What it is:

First-party data from a trusted partner, collected on your behalf or shared through a direct relationship. Content syndication programs are a common example—a partner captures engagement signals when prospects consume your content on their platform.



Why it matters for demand gen:

- Higher quality than most third-party data because sourcing is transparent
- Often includes contact-level information, not just account-level signals
- Data comes from genuine engagement with relevant content
- Can be tailored to your specific audience and topics

What to look for:

The quality of second-party intent data depends entirely on the partner providing it. Ask tough questions: How is engagement captured? What qualifies as "intent"?

Where does the data originate?

Partners committed to compliance and data integrity—like those using first-party collection methods with explicit consent—deliver signals you can actually trust and act upon.

Third-Party Intent Data

What it is:

Aggregated behavioral data collected across networks of websites, content publishers, review platforms, and data cooperatives. Providers like Bombora, G2, and TrustRadius compile signals to identify accounts researching specific topics.



Why it matters for demand gen:

- Massive scale—reveals accounts you'd never discover otherwise
- Topic-level granularity lets you target by research interest
- Useful for building net-new account lists and informing ABM
- Integrates with most major marketing and sales platforms

Important caveats:

- Third-party intent is typically account-level only (no contacts)
- Signal accuracy varies significantly by provider
- Compliance and privacy regulations create complexity
- Requires validation—not every "surging" account is actually in-market

How to use it:

Third-party intent works best for awareness and early-stage engagement. Use it to inform display advertising, content syndication targeting, and outbound account prioritization. But expect to test and calibrate before relying on it heavily.





Chapter 3

How to Evaluate Intent Data Providers

The intent data market is crowded. Here's a practical framework for separating quality providers from the noise.

Five Questions Every Marketer Should Ask

1. Where does the data actually come from?

Vague answers like "our proprietary network" should raise red flags. Quality providers can explain their sourcing methodology clearly—whether that's a cooperative data exchange, publisher partnerships, or owned digital properties.

2. How is "intent" defined and measured?

What behaviors count as intent signals? How are they weighted? What's the threshold for flagging an account as "in-market"? The answers reveal whether you're getting meaningful signals or just noise.

3. What's the compliance story?

Privacy regulations like GDPR and CCPA aren't optional. Ask how data is collected, whether consent is obtained, and what documentation exists. Your legal team will thank you.



4. How does data integrate with your existing stack?

Intent data is only valuable if you can act on it. Confirm that delivery methods work with your CRM, marketing automation, and ABM platforms without requiring heavy lift.

5. How will you measure success?

Quality providers help you build measurement frameworks—not just deliver data and disappear. Look for partners who want to prove ROI alongside you.

Red Flags to Watch For

- No clear compliance documentation
- Overpromises on contact-level data from third-party sources
- No willingness to run a pilot or test
- Outsourced fulfillment with no visibility
- Pressure to buy volume over quality





Chapter 4:

Putting Intent Data to Work

Understanding intent data is one thing. Activating it effectively is another. Here's how to translate signals into pipeline.

Use Case 1: Smarter Lead Scoring

Layer intent signals into your existing lead scoring model. An inbound lead from an account showing high third-party intent signals deserves faster follow-up than one from a cold account. Intent helps you prioritize what matters most—accounts ready to buy.

Use Case 2: Targeted Content Syndication

Rather than syndicating content to a broad audience, use intent data to focus distribution on accounts actively researching your category. The result: higher engagement rates and better-qualified leads entering your funnel.

Work with content syndication partners who can target based on intent signals and deliver leads with genuine engagement, not just form fills.

Use Case 3: Account-Based Advertising

Intent data transforms display advertising from spray-and-pray to precision targeting. Serve ads specifically to accounts showing buying signals, with messaging tailored to the topics they're researching. Your budget works harder, and prospects see relevant content at the right moment.



Use Case 4: Sales Prioritization and Enablement

Share intent insights with your sales team—but do it thoughtfully. Rather than dumping raw data into Salesforce, surface actionable intelligence:

"This account is researching [topic]. Here's the content they engaged with.

Here's a suggested talk track."

Intent data bridges the gap between marketing and sales when used to enable, not overwhelm.

Use Case 5: Timing Campaigns to Buyer Readiness

Instead of running always-on campaigns, use intent surges to trigger outreach.

When an account moves from passive to active research, that's your window.

Intent data helps you hit timing right.



Chapter 5: Common Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

Pitfall 1: Treating intent data as a silver bullet

Intent signals are indicators, not guarantees. An account showing intent still needs to match your ICP, and buyers still need nurturing. Intent data improves your odds—it doesn't replace sound demand gen strategy.

The fix:

Use intent to prioritize and personalize, not to replace targeting fundamentals.



Pitfall 2: Ignoring data quality for scale

Cheap intent data often means opaque sourcing, compliance risk, and high false-positive rates. The leads generated may look good on a dashboard but never convert.

The fix:

Prioritize quality over quantity. Work with partners who can demonstrate data provenance and deliver leads that actually turn into pipeline.

Pitfall 3: Failing to measure impact

Intent data should improve results. If you can't measure whether intent-qualified accounts convert better than non-intent accounts, you can't optimize.

The fix:

Build measurement into your intent strategy from day one. Track conversion rates, pipeline velocity, and win rates by intent score.

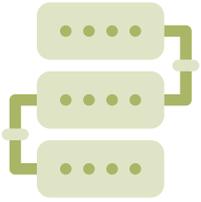
Pitfall 4: Siloing intent data in marketing

Intent signals benefit marketing and sales alike. Keeping them locked in the marketing tech stack limits value.

The fix:

Create workflows that surface intent insights to sales in actionable ways. Align on how both teams will use the data.





Chapter 6: Getting Started- A Practical Roadmap

Week 1-2: Assess Your Foundation

- Audit what first-party intent signals you're already capturing
- Review your current lead scoring model for gaps
- Identify the topics and keywords that indicate buying intent for your solution

Week 3-4: Select a Focused Use Case

Don't try to do everything at once. Pick one application:

- Audit what first-party intent signals you're already capturing
- Review your current lead scoring model for gaps
- Identify the topics and keywords that indicate buying intent for your solution

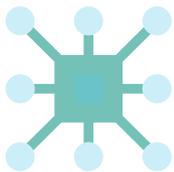
Month 2: Pilot and Learn

- Launch a contained pilot
- Set up proper measurement and control groups
- Gather feedback from sales on lead quality
- Document what's working and what isn't



Month 3: Optimize and Expand

- Analyze results against baseline
- Refine your approach based on learnings
- Roll out to additional campaigns or use cases
- Build intent into ongoing programs



Chapter 7: Building for the Long Term

Intent data isn't a one-time campaign tactic—it's a capability that improves over time. The marketers getting the most value treat it as infrastructure.

Keys to Sustainable Success

- Invest in data quality over volume.
- Better signals beat more signals every time.
- Build closed-loop measurement.
- Connect intent signals to pipeline and revenue, not just MQLs.
- Maintain compliance rigor.
- Regulations are only getting stricter. Work with partners who take this seriously.
- Foster sales-marketing alignment.
- Intent data is a shared asset. Build processes together.
- Choose partners carefully.
- The quality of your intent strategy depends heavily on the partners you work with.
- S2W Media has been at the forefront of B2B lead generation evolution, and we're ready to help you build a strategy that drives measurable pipeline growth.



Our methodology centers on data integrity, compliance, and seamless execution—an approach that has earned the trust of 2,000+ partners globally, including Cisco, SAP, Google, Adobe, Dell, and Saleforce.

Conclusion: Your Next Step

Intent data represents a real opportunity to make your demand generation smarter, more efficient, and more aligned with how buyers actually buy. But capturing that opportunity requires moving beyond buzzwords to practical implementation.

Start here:

1. Understand what intent signals matter for your buyers
2. Audit your current first-party capture capabilities
3. Identify one use case to pilot
4. Select partners who prioritize data quality and compliance
5. Build measurement into everything you do

The marketers winning with intent data aren't the ones with the most data—they're the ones with the best data, activated effectively.

About S2W Media

S2W Media fuels B2B demand generation with precision and integrity. We empower B2B Growth Marketers and Leaders to connect with decision-makers through resonant content, delivered precisely when it matters most in their buyer Journey.



Our Promise

First-party data you can trust

Compliance built into every process

Sales-ready leads, not form fills

Transparent reporting and partnership

Zero outsourcing, full accountability

Visit us: s2wmedia.com

Ready to put intent data to work in your demand generation programs? S2W Media's team specializes in helping growth marketers build sustainable strategies that deliver measurable pipeline growth.



Unlock Your Growth