Activating Intent Data for

Sales and Marketing.

Introduction

Sales and marketing leaders have reached a tipping point when it comes to using intent data, and they're not looking back. The reason is clear: intent can provide massive amounts of data that reveal sales opportunities earlier than ever.

The bad news? Intent data can be overwhelming if you don't know how to use it. Once you get your hands on the right signals, how to best use them depends on your role: a sales development rep is going to use intent very differently than an account manager or someone in marketing operations.

A recent ABM Benchmark survey found that, while the vast majority of marketers are incorporating intent data, only 18% were fully executing and measuring the impacts of their intent strategy.

This guide is designed to show sales and marketing professionals how to get the intent signals that matter, and how to translate those signals into higher conversion and win rates.

What Intent Really Means (and What It Doesn't)

Let's say one of your biggest customers is due to renew their contract in the next quarter. Before kicking off any discussions with their account manager, their analysts start researching similar products and assembling a list of possible alternatives to your solution.

That's a pretty strong sign your customer could be lured away. This is the backbone of intent analysis: sifting through the digital signals of modern web consumption to better understand what's motivating B2B purchasers before they ask for a meeting.

We track over 6 trillion intent signals across over 15,000 topics every week to help businesses understand what matters most to their prospects and customers. These signals allow sales and marketing teams to more efficiently align content and outreach efforts to match their targets' interests, engaging prospects with the right approach at the right time.

We think of intent data across a continuum of signal strength:

1. Derived intent signals are insights into behaviors that indicate interest in a company, such as ad engagement, website and web activity, topic engagement, and technology use.
2. Known intent is what we like to think of as zero-party intent – we partner with Qualtrics each year to survey millions of business professionals. These participants are incentivized to share the key priorities, projects, and pain points at their company.
3. Champion moves are perhaps the most actionable form of intent data. ZoomInfo identifies buyers and power users who have moved and can influence future sales.

Intent data isn't a red carpet to a signed contract. However, it can increase conversion rates across the different channels you're already using to engage with your potential customers.

Getting the Signals that Matter

Step 1: Choose Your Topics

Intent data providers typically track thousands of topics, most of which will not apply to your business. This can be overwhelming, adding noise to your workflow and complicating your outreach efforts.

ZoomInfo Intent's proprietary technology avoids this information overload by focusing on data that corresponds with business goals. If your customers tend to follow a similar path when signing a contract, your marketing and sales teams know which topics and messages to emphasize – and which to leave behind.

ZoomInfo Intent sorts data into thousands of predetermined topics to help sharpen your marketing and sales focus. We also offer custom topics, which allow you to specify the exact keywords and topics that best align with the interests of your target customers.

Our team of specialists can also research the topics that make sense for your business and come up with a proposal for keywords to monitor. Custom topics are becoming increasingly popular with ZoomInfo customers because they're very specific to a single customer's needs and visible only to users on your account.

Here are some ideas to help you get started:

- To learn which prospects are interested in your product category, consider selecting keywords and phrases that describe or are related to your solution.
- To identify which customers might be actively evaluating solutions and might be ready to buy, consider selecting topics based on competitor names or products, or that otherwise line up with this phase in the buying process.
- To surface companies that are still in the awareness phase and researching a category at a very high level, consider selecting topics on timely issues, known challenges, or pain points.

Step 2: Focus on Your Target Market

If you sell to businesses with more than 1,000 employees, you probably don't care that a 10-person company is showing intent spikes for your products and services. Use firmographic and fit data to ignore companies that are not ideal fits – or at least prioritize outreach to the best-fit accounts.

Maybe you know the companies that are most likely to buy your products also use Salesforce and Atlassian, and have raised at least $10 million in venture or private equity investment. With ZoomInfo, you can act only on the intent spikes for the companies that meet those specific criteria.

Step 3: Narrow Your Results

There are many ways to incorporate intent data into your strategy in order to surface the best opportunities:

Filter Companies with the Highest Levels of Intent

Within the ZoomInfo platform, sales and marketing teams can access key intent data points: Date Range, Signal Score, and Audience Strength.

Date Range: Identifies the companies showing repeated interest in your topics during a specified time period. These companies are more likely to be interested in your product because they're showing sustained interest over a span of several weeks or months. There is also an option to select a minimum number of intent spikes within the defined date range.

Signal Score: Signal Score represents intensity of interest by showing how far above average a company has been consuming content on a topic. Companies with a high Signal Score are doing something new or unusual, such as researching a new product category. A signal location filter can be added to narrow down where the spike occurred.

Audience Strength: Audience Strength helps identify intent spikes caused by a broader amount of research – for instance, carried out across multiple days or multiple sites – compared to one research session in one place.

Look for Companies Spiking on Multiple Topics

One of the best indicators that a company is truly in the market for your product or service is evidence of intent across multiple topics that apply to your business.

For example: Say you're a company that sells outdoor furniture for office parks and corporate roof decks. You're not interested in the consumer market, but most of the internet traffic related to your product category comes from people looking to spruce up their patio at home.

The solution? Look for companies that are also showing an intent spike in a related category, such as indoor office furniture – the combination of those two signals should get you closer to your target.

Combine Second-Party Intent Data with Third-Party Intent Data

Combining different intent signals is a great way to narrow in on the best-fit accounts that are in-market. Tying together second-party intent signals with third-party intent signals will help maximize your results.

The ZoomInfo MarketingOS platform is infused with two types of second-party intent data. ZoomInfo surveys millions of knowledge workers every month to understand the projects and initiatives their companies are launching in the coming months. We publish these survey results, which we call Scoops, on our platform.

For example: say you see a company's intent data spiking around Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS), and the same company has a spending Scoop for UCaaS, telecommunications, or call centers. Both of these data points add a strong layer of confirmation that they are showing interest in products or services related to these topics.

We also include intent signals from G2, a top source of technology vendor reviews and assessments. The G2 Buyer Intent filters in MarketingOS enable businesses to set up a campaign that targets accounts looking at your category or product profile on G2.com.

Fast Fact:

According to Gartner, "the typical buying group for a complex B2B solution involves six to 10 decision makers, each armed with four or five pieces of information they've gathered independently."

Third-party intent data sources, like Bidstream data, collect insights from a variety of outside sources in order to provide a broader view of accounts' online engagement. Layering second-party intent data on top of these insights can help narrow down the accounts that you target, so you prioritize those with high intent.

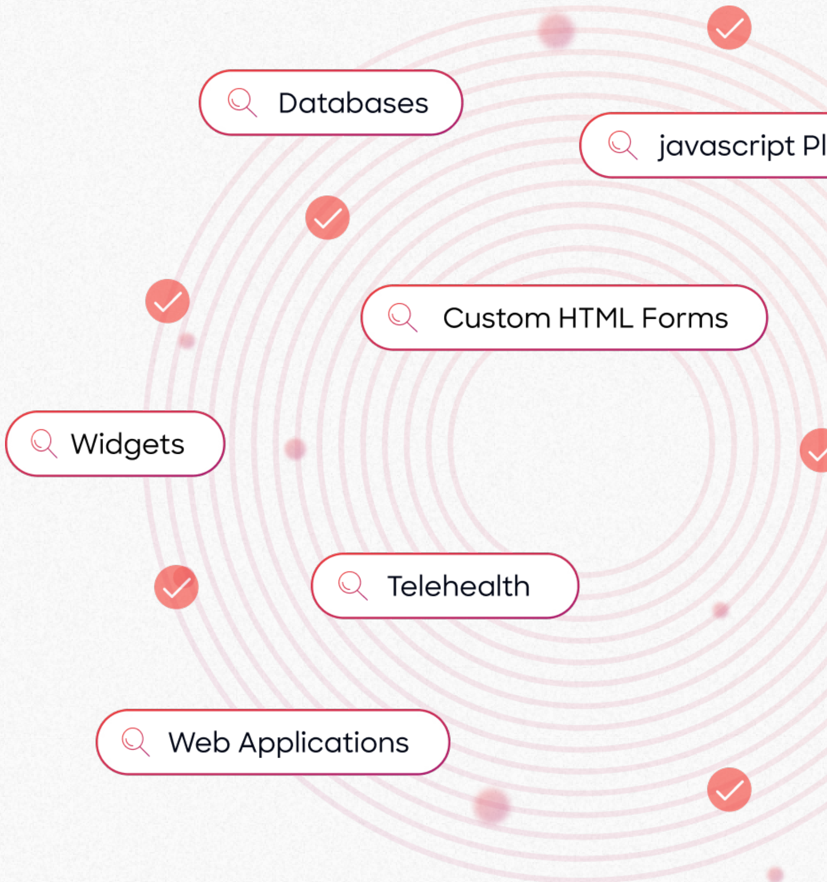
Combine First-Party Intent Data with Third-Party Intent Data

Combining first-party intent data and third-party intent data is another way to maximize reach with those high-intent customers.

WebSights can show you how often a given company is visiting your website, and reveal which parts of the site attract the most attention. This helps you understand where a company may be in its evaluation process: a company that's visiting the pricing page is closer to a possible purchase than one doing initial research on the broader industry. We leverage our proprietary IP address-to-company graph in the WebSights feature, so your business can better identify which companies are visiting your website.

Another form of first-party intent data in the ZoomInfo platform is FormComplete. This is an abandoned form-tracking feature that helps simplify the form completion process and surfaces the full contact profiles of customers based on their email addresses.

When first-party intent data is layered on top of third-party intent data signals, you can build a full contact profile that includes their online engagement.



Three-Step Framework for Activating Intent Data

You've used intent data to inform your go-to-market strategy. The insights you've gleaned offer your team some clear places to focus their efforts. Now, it's time to pivot to execution.

Regardless of their specific goals – whether they're working in marketing, sales, customer success, or account management – go-to-market professionals can save time and grow their business with ZoomInfo's three-step framework for activating intent data.

Step 1: Build Your Key Audiences

After identifying the relevant companies spiking on particular topics, you can begin to build audiences of likely buying group members to target for outreach.

ZoomInfo's recommended contacts algorithm can help get the job done. Our researchers have already mapped intent topics to specific job functions, allowing ZoomInfo to recommend the right contacts at any given account.

Buying committees for B2B solutions can include multiple people, each bringing their own research and questions. By activating intent data, GTM teams can get ahead of the curve with this diverse group of decision-makers and supply the right information to move conversations forward.

Fast Fact:

ZoomInfo's Buying Committee filter allows you to identify up to eight specific personas and have only contacts that match those personas displayed within your search.

Step 2: Build Campaigns and Engage

Once the audience is identified, you can begin putting the plan into motion. Pushing the details of your ideal buyer audience into your team's sales or marketing engagement systems allows you to run GTM plays with increased confidence that you're saving time and money by reaching the best possible audience.

If accounts that are showing intent spikes already have dedicated owners on your team, it's a great time to hand off the action plan.

Step 3: Put it on Autopilot with Workflows

It's time to let the machines take over and help your team optimize its approach. Use the framework outlined in steps 1 and 2 to build automated workflows activated by the intent signals that matter most to your business. With your priority signals covered, you can begin testing tweaks to your approach or new signals that may improve your results.

This framework can be applied across any appropriate activation method: a call campaign list, a Marketo campaign, an advertising audience for Facebook, an email drip campaign in ZoomInfo's sales automation tool, or a campaign in Salesforce.

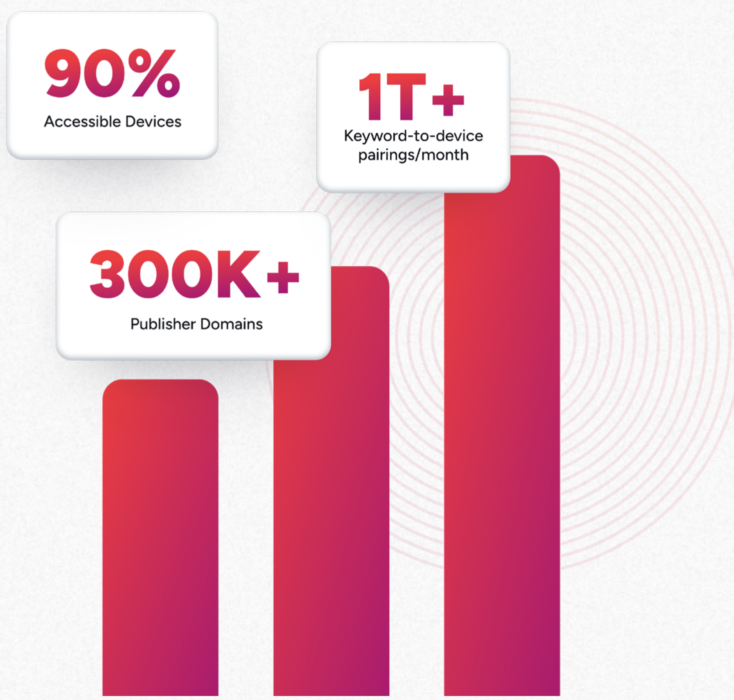
Activating Intent Across the Prospect and Customer Lifecycle

Whether you're a marketer aiming to drive demand, a prospecting sales rep looking for the next priority target, or an account manager trying to find an upsell opportunity, intent data can unlock new opportunities.

Demand Generation and Digital Marketing

Identifying companies that are conducting increased research on a topic is a great way to focus marketing spend and increase your return on investment.

One way to do this is to connect ZoomInfo data with key audience platforms. After filtering down to a list of companies or contacts in ZoomInfo, a user can push that audience into Facebook, allowing them to serve ads to their top prospects at interested companies.



Ever wonder why it seems like you're getting ads for things you were just thinking about? This is one of the ways it's done.

Another option is to leverage ZoomInfo's Targeted Audiences. Marketing departments with data management platforms (DMPs) or agencies that use services like LiveRamp have the opportunity to leverage ZoomInfo data in their broader display, social, or video advertising strategies.

With Targeted Audiences, ZoomInfo can automatically connect intent signals from selected companies with your DMP for activation across the web through external demand-side platforms.

Sales and Sales Development

One of the most common uses for intent data is finding new prospects for sales development teams. By using intent data, you can identify companies that seem willing to buy – or at the very least, are open to learning more – based on their research behavior across the web. Sales development reps can then build a list of professionals to contact at those accounts.

Some organizations do this as a batch process on a weekly basis on behalf of their SDRs: a centralized operations function identifies the accounts, pulls down the contacts, and loads them into a nurture campaign that can be sent from the sales automation system on behalf of the sales development team.

Intent is best activated for sales development teams when it happens in real time. ZoomInfo's Workflows can detect and activate intent, adding the appropriate contacts to a campaign without any intervention by the SDR. Simply set up the workflow and it will run automatically, monitoring your total addressable market.

Account Management and Customer Success

Customer success teams and account managers can use intent to identify growth opportunities and uncover churn risks at customer accounts. For example, we've seen account managers monitor their accounts for intent spikes on solutions they haven't yet purchased to drive upsell and cross-sell opportunities or monitor their accounts for research on competitive products. If your competitors and their products don't currently exist as topics offered by ZoomInfo, you can create custom topics that include them.

Get Started Today

The best go-to-market teams know to spring into action when a lead is submitted or when an introduction is made. They lean on a wealth of content, automation, and pure tenacity to quickly convert interested parties.

But waiting for a prospect to raise their hand means you've conceded a significant amount of time.

That's why intent data is a must-have in your go-to-market motion. ZoomInfo brings intent data together with the key elements you rely on – firmographic data, technographic data, buyer data, automation, and more – so you can execute a best-in-class motion from intent to activation to revenue.

Get the earliest signals to target ready-to-buy accounts –
ahead of the competition.

Free Trial