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Why B2B Revenue Teams Need Buying Group Intent

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EBOOK

Introduction

Every time technology takes a leap forward, B2B marketing and sales strategies evolve right alongside it — it's a two-way street. At the heart of this relationship? Data. Lots of it. And if you've been in the trenches of B2B marketing lately, you've probably noticed one particular data strategy stealing the spotlight: the powerful combination of intent data and account-based marketing (ABM). This pairing isn't just another industry buzzword — it's fundamentally changing how successful teams identify and engage their best prospects.

In this guide, we'll discuss how ABM strategies led to the emergence of intent, and more importantly, how recent innovations in intent data are fueling more effective go-to-market (GTM) strategies that focus on identifying and engaging the full buying group at your target accounts.

Key definitions

Account-based marketing (ABM)
A strategy that focuses resources on specific accounts that are most likely to close rather than focusing on broad audiences.

Buying group
A set of buyers responsible for making a financial decision to acquire a given solution for their organization. Buying groups form with the explicit purpose of solving an identified and prioritized business need.

Buyer persona
An aggregation of individuals with similar characteristics related to their job role.

Contact
A profile data record containing a collection of attributes pertaining to an individual.

Intent data
Behavioral evidence that an individual or group has been taking actions that suggest interest in a particular topic.

Prospect
A generic term describing accounts, buying centers, individual buyers, or buying groups that represent near-term revenue potential due to the existence of a current high level of active engagement or an open opportunity. At the account level, this term can be applied to either customer or candidate accounts.

Target account
An account within a subset of candidate and/or customer accounts carefully selected to receive specific marketing or sales attention.

User
An individual within the customer account who uses the product or service.

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ABM and the Rise of Intent Data

In the past decade, account-based strategies have been game-changers for efficiency — they've allowed businesses to stop spreading themselves too thin and instead focus their energy on a select group of high-priority accounts (most likely to close or to generate a greater lifetime value). Right around the same time, intent data solutions emerged and they've been the secret weapon behind many ABM success stories. These tools help teams spot which accounts are actually showing signs they're ready to buy — revealing when a company is actively researching solutions just like yours.

In fact, Forrester's 2024 State Of Account-Based Marketing report found that intent data is the most used technology among B2B organizations implementing ABM strategies.[1] Further, a 2024 Ascend2 report found that of 52 surveyed CMOs, 90% agreed that intent data delivers good or excellent "ROI/Impact."[2]

Intent data's positive impact on ABM is undisputed. Yet gaps in intent data capabilities have limited what GTM teams can achieve with their account-based strategies.

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Limitations to ABM

Intent data was originally developed to capture signals at the account level. But here's the thing: businesses don't hold company-wide votes when making purchase decisions. Instead, B2B buying decisions typically fall to committees — comprising an average of 11 individuals representing numerous roles (i.e., buying groups).[3]

It's the signals coming from these specific individuals that really matter. Without access and information to the right group of decision-makers, B2B marketers and sellers can struggle to convert even the most promising accounts.

And there's another problem with only looking at account-wide intent signals — it can skew insights and distort what's actually happening. Picture this: Account A shows moderate intent overall, while Account B is lighting up your dashboard. But what if those signals from Account A are all coming from actual decision-makers, while Account B's activity is mostly from people with zero purchasing authority? Without buying-group insights, you'd end up pouring resources into the wrong opportunity.

Plus, if you're selling multiple solutions like most B2B companies do, you could have several different opportunities brewing within a single account — each with its own unique set of decision-makers. Lumping all intent signals together at the account level doesn't give you the clarity you need to target the right people with the right message for each specific opportunity.

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A Growing Focus on Buying Groups

These limitations have sparked a rapid shift toward identifying and engaging in-market buying groups specifically. As a Forrester report noted, "Adapting marketing practices for the buying groups era is necessary and urgent work."[4]

This shift to buying groups is well underway. Marketing and sales budgets are already attracting and engaging buying groups, but challenges exist. Most marketing-technology systems fail to notice, much less facilitate, the buying-group approach.

The first step? Actually uncovering and understanding the needs of existing buying groups.This is where buying group intent comes into play.

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How Buying Group Intent Data Powers Modern Marketing

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> The great change required in the buying groups era is to use technology to notice and associate the behaviors of buying group members—whether anonymous or known individuals. This allows organizations to assess the intentions of the buying group and use them to prioritize potential opportunities for revenue development and sales to pursue.[5]
>
> **FORRESTER**
> "The Seven Must-Dos: How Buying Groups Change Everything"

Buying group intent doesn't just fix the problems with account-level intent signals we discussed — it supercharges your entire approach throughout the buyer journey and customer lifecycle. By helping your GTM teams better identify and prioritize their target audiences, select the right messaging and content, and choose the best channels based on research stage, buying group intent delivers unique value that complements what you're already getting from account-level intelligence.

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8 Use Cases to Consider

1. Target-account list (TAL) development and account prioritization

From day one, intent data's primary use case has been helping B2B organizations identify which accounts to target. Even at the account-level, intent signals are helpful: accounts showing a high level of research activities (against historical averages) are always more likely to convert than those showing no surge in activity.

But what if you could zoom in and see exactly what's happening within the buying groups at each account? Knowing what the champions, influencers, prospective users, and decision-makers are researching — and to what extent — gives you far more powerful buyer intelligence. This granular view lets marketers fine-tune their TALs and helps sellers constantly reprioritize accounts as they move down the funnel. The payoff? Higher conversion rates, faster sales cycles, and lower customer acquisition costs.

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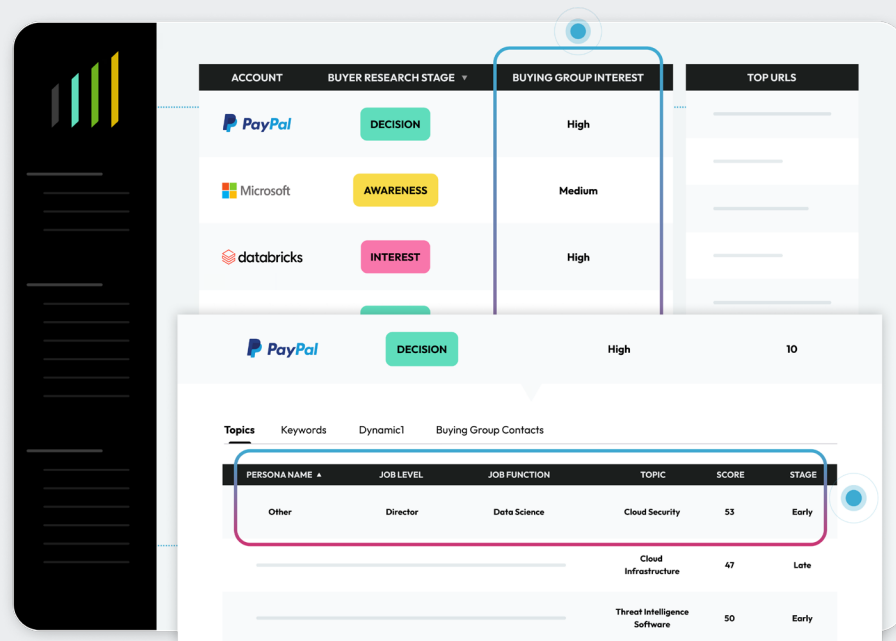
2. Buying-group development/identification

Of course, buying group intent fuels more than just account-wide decisions. When you know exactly which personas are most interested in your solutions, you gain critical insights into buying group composition. This helps every GTM role, not just the demand generation team. For example, product marketers can craft persona-specific messaging that fuels all downstream activities.

3. Lead generation

Sure, account-level intent signals help prioritize accounts for lead generation. That's valuable. But knowing which of those accounts actually have in-market buying groups and who's in them? That's gold for your lead gen efforts.

It's like upgrading from a motion sensor to a security camera — one shows you something's there, the other shows you exactly what you're dealing with so you can respond appropriately. Demand generation teams can refine their TALs and make smarter decisions about targeting parameters (functions, job titles, seniority, etc) and which content to use with each. The result? Lead quality and conversion rates increase and sales finally stops questioning the value of your demand gen work.

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4. Digital advertising

Digital advertisers reap similar benefits from this level of detail. Beyond getting access to more refined target lists, they can segment audiences by persona and align messaging to what will actually resonate with each group.

This is especially powerful if your buying group intent solution — like Intentsify's — identifies the research stage at the persona-level. This lets digital marketers match assets not just to personas, but get even more granular and position ads based on research journey stage.

For example, why waste late-stage case studies on someone who's just starting to explore solution categories? Similarly, why bore a buyer who's ready to purchase with basic educational content? With buying group intent, digital marketers can serve early-stage educational content to people who are just beginning their research, while showing product differentiation assets to those further along. The result? Better clickthrough rates, improved brand lift, and stronger conversions as your messaging stays relevant throughout the journey.

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5. BDR outreach

Higher quality leads from demand gen are great. But they don't mean much if they don't turn into opportunities and closed deals. Thankfully, buying group intent keeps delivering value well beyond lead generation.

Business development reps — and really, all sales roles — benefit from continuously updated buying-group signals in a couple of key ways. First, by seeing which buying groups and specific personas are ramping up their research activity, BDRs can better prioritize which leads to focus on. This matters because situations change constantly; a buying group that showed strong intent a few weeks ago might have had to pause their project for some reason, and fresh buying group data will flag this so sellers can reprioritize efforts.

Second, quality buying group intent solutions show the topics each persona is interested in — and their stage of research into each topic. For example, Intentsify's buying group intent might show that Persona A at Account XYZ is in late-stage research around topics 1, 2, and 3. This precise intelligence lets sellers customize their outreach with the right messaging and content for each persona at each account. The result? A dramatically better buyer experience that drives pipeline conversions and accelerates deals.

6. Competitive intelligence

Just like using buying group intent to customize messaging, sellers can also see which competitors they're likely being compared to within each buying group. If the signals show that Personas A and B at XYZ account are also researching Competitor 1, the seller can prepare messaging that directly addresses how they stack up against that specific competitor's offering.

7. Customer cross-selling

The value of intent data for post-sale efforts has always been undervalued (if not outright neglected). This is a missed opportunity. Revenue teams aren't just missing out on intent data ROI by ignoring cross-selling opportunities — they're leaving customer lifetime value (CLV) on the table. The opportunity cost is huge.

You can spot prime cross-sell opportunities by monitoring key personas at customer accounts that are researching solutions you offer, but they don't have. Customer marketing teams and account executives can see which features and functionalities matter most to each persona, allowing them to approach the right people with the right pitch.

Intentsify In Action

With Intentsify's Buying Group Intent, Unisys uncovered that a leading airline brand with an existing open opportunity was researching how to use AI to improve their airline mechanics operations. Based on these intent signals, Unisys brought in their AI practice team to proactively expand the sales conversation and provide more value.

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8. Customer churn prevention

The flip side of cross-selling is customer-churn prevention — and this use case is arguably even more important because customers are far more likely to research alternatives quietly than to tell you they're considering other solutions.

And the churn-prevention use case is easy to implement. By monitoring the research activities of key personas at customer accounts who are looking at competitor brands, products, or specific features, you can identify at-risk customers before it's too late. This gives account managers a chance to address emerging issues — specific to each persona — before the customer jumps ship. The impact on satisfaction, retention rates, and lifetime value will have executives wondering why they didn't use intent data for this sooner.

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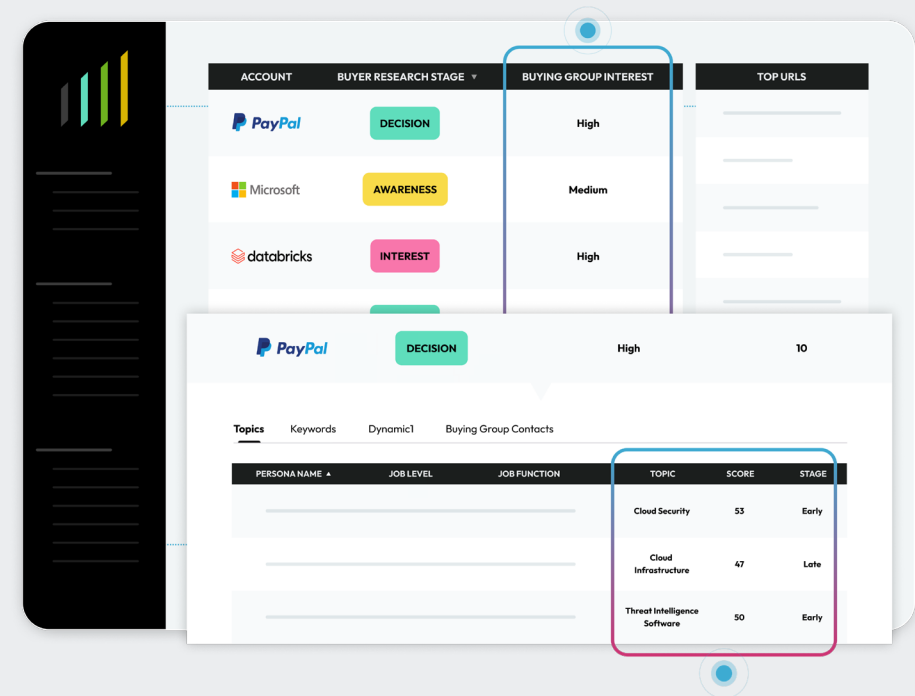
Key Features to Look for in a Buying Group Intent Solution

Of course, success with all these use cases depends heavily on the quality and capabilities of your intent solution. Buying group intent is quite new, and capabilities vary from one provider to the next. To generate the greatest impact across all use cases, be sure the solution you choose offers all the following capabilities.

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Solution-level intent modeling (i.e., bespoke modeling)

Even before looking at a solution's ability to capture intent signals at the buying-group level, you must understand how it derives and scores intent signals. Does it simply weight all selected topics equally? This is considered category-level modeling, and it lacks the precision needed to differentiate buyer interest (whether at account, buying-group, or persona level) between solutions within the same category. This greatly limits benefits across all intent data use cases.

With intent data, precision is everything. And the only way to get that precision is ensuring the intent modeling properly weights the relevance of each captured behavior. Otherwise, all resulting intent insights — even at the buying-group level — will be too general to be useful.

AUDIENCE GRANULARITY	INTENT DATA GRANULARITY	ACTIVATION
Intentsify ▶ Account-level intelligence ▶ Buying-group-level intelligence ▶ Persona-level intelligence	**Intentsify** ▶ Solution-level intelligence ▶ Custom-weighted topics/keywords (powered by AI analysis of your solution messaging)	**Intentsify** ▶ Easy to activate with turnkey media programs ▶ Rapid time-to-market
Other Intent Providers ▶ Account-level intelligence	**Other Intent Providers** ▶ Category level intelligence ▶ Equally weighted topics/keywords	**Other Intent Providers** ▶ Difficult to activate ▶ Slow time-to-market

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Persona-based intent analytics

To power all those use cases with buying-group precision, your intent solution must capture intent signals at the persona level. By "persona level," we mean identifying intent signals by specific job characteristics — typically a mix of titles, seniority levels, role functions, and responsibilities. You should be able to select combinations of these criteria to create custom personas that match the individuals typically influencing product purchases.

Signals captured at the persona level should then be synthesized into scoring models that support a range of use cases. The most impactful scoring models include:

▸ **An aggregate intent score for the entire buying group.** This metric combines the scores of each monitored persona, letting you quickly identify and prioritize target accounts based on the activities of the people most likely to influence purchase decisions. The exact metric may be a label like "High Interest" or a numeric score — what matters is that it's easy to understand and enables quick decisions.

▸ **An aggregate intent score by persona**. This persona-level aggregate score helps sellers prioritize leads and contacts. For example, if the demand gen team delivers two leads from the same account — a VP of IT and a Director of Sales Ops — and the intent signals are spiking from the VP of IT persona but not the Sales Ops persona, the seller knows exactly who to call first.

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▶ **Topics of interest by persona.** You also need to understand the specific topics and/or keywords (Intentsify tracks both) that matter most to each persona. This ensures you engage each persona with the messaging, content, and offers that will most likely resonate. This is crucial — what an VP of IT cares about is usually very different from what a Director of Sales Ops needs to know.

> **Note:** Topics scoring, which feeds aggregate persona-level scores and buying-group scores, should be measured against a historical baseline. 23 weekly signals on a particular topic from a specific persona at an enterprise account may seem like a lot, but it doesn't matter much if 23 monthly intent signals is the normal volume. Signal volume is relative; it's the increase against historical averages that indicates increasing interest.

▶ **Buying cycle analysis.** Similar to topics of interest, marketers and sellers can better customize their outreach when they understand where each persona is in their buying journey. There's no point bombarding prospects with case studies and other late-stage content if they're so early in their journey they're not even sure they need a solution yet.

Intentsify's Buying Group Intent Data includes all the above analytics capabilities.

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B2B contact data matched to persona-level intent

Persona-level intent signals are incredibly valuable, but many sales use cases still require access to actual people. In other words, you need business contact info.

While intent-powered lead generation solutions are powerful tools for acquiring this info, having contact data ready to match to surging personas at each account allows sellers to quickly capitalize on dynamic buying signals.

Insight generation and recommended actions

Effectively analyzing and activating intent data has been a major challenge for intent users since day one. Even as of late 2024, "data analysis" ranked as the second most significant challenge among surveyed intent data users (just behind "data quality").[6] That explains why "Insight generation and recommended actions" was one of 21 categories Forrester used to assess vendors in its recent Q1 2025 B2B Intent Data Wave.[7]

Today's B2B GTM teams need analytics capabilities that identify and prioritize recommended marketing or sales actions. For example, Intentsify's Lead Activation Summaries automatically generate a summary for each generated lead (via Intentsify's content syndication campaigns), including next-action recommendations based on research stage and key topics of interest.

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Red Flags to Watch Out for in an Intent Provider

Fake "buying group" intent data

Buying groups have quickly become hot in both targeting strategy and intent-data capabilities. That means many intent vendors are now using carefully worded language to imply they capture intent data at the buying-group level, when in fact, they don't.

The most common flavor of this is when vendors simply use account-level intent (capturing any signals from an account, whether part of buying group or not) to identify target accounts, and then provide contact info for individuals matching your pre-developed personas. Nowhere in this process are intent signals captured at the persona level and organized into useful buying-group-focused analytics. Rather, general account-level signals are still driving actions that won't perform any better than old school cold-calling.
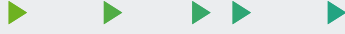
Limited intent sources, topic coverage, and signal volume

Some intent vendors can capture intent at the persona or even the contact level. However, if they're using only one or two intent sources, track fewer than 30K topics (or keywords), or process less than 500 billion monthly intent signals, they likely lack the differentiation of insights and signal sample size needed for accurate intelligence. And none of the above matters much if the resulting insights are inaccurate.

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About Intentsify

Intentsify's AI-powered platform empowers marketers to turn buying signals into pipeline with customized advertising and lead generation programs. Combining an unrivaled portfolio of data sources and an industry-leading media ecosystem, Intentsify enables integrated signal-based marketing programs for revenue acceleration.

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End Notes

[1]Forrester, "The State Of Account-Based Marketing In 2024," December, 2024

[2]Ascend2, Intent Data Survey, 2024

[3]Gartner, "B2B Buying: How Top CSOs and CMOs Optimize the Journey"

[4]Forrester, "The Seven Must-Dos: How Buying Groups Change Everything."

[5]Forrester, "The Seven Must-Dos: How Buying Groups Change Everything."

[6]Ascend2, Intent Data Survey, 2024

[7]The Forrester Wave™: Intent Data Providers For B2B, Q1 2025

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