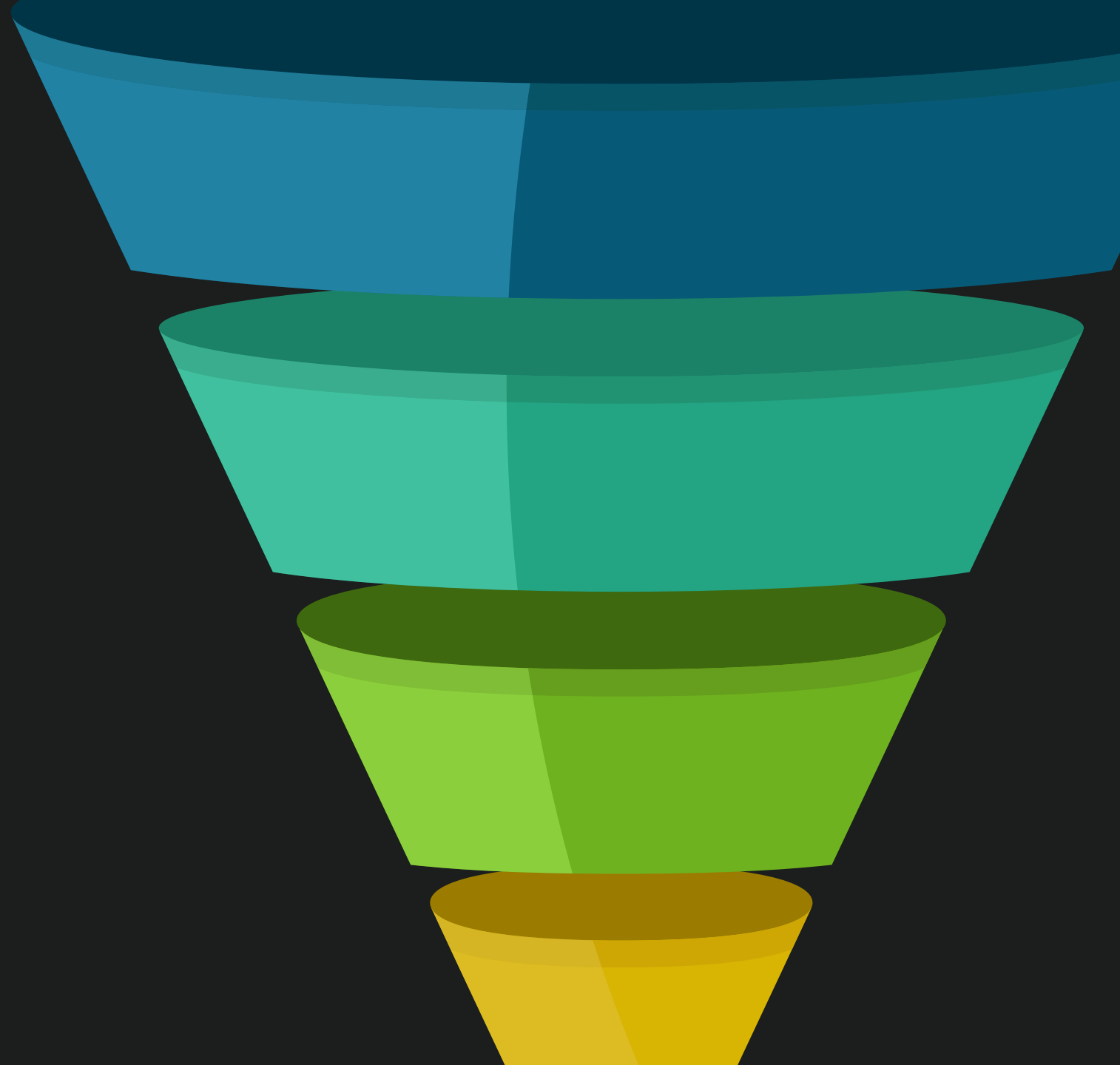




How to Fix Your Funnel:

6 Strategies for Rebuilding
Your Marketing Foundation



Why the Traditional Funnel is Failing

The traditional marketing funnel isn't just outdated — it's actively sabotaging B2B marketing success. Through extensive research and insights from marketing leaders at NVIDIA, Sysdig, Intentsify, Inverta, and Fenwick Media, we've identified proven strategies for rebuilding marketing foundations around accounts and buying groups instead of individual leads.

The reality? B2B buyers don't move through neat, linear funnels. With 9-15 people involved in deals over \$250K, it's time to evolve from chasing MQLs to orchestrating account movement and buying group engagement.



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Chapter 1:

Understand Propensity to Buy

“

Marketing qualified leads [are] the bane of our existence. We're just tossing stuff over the fence based on a dungeons and dragons era style point scoring system.



ARI CAPOGEANNIS

Head of Revenue Marketing • NVIDIA

Chapter 1: Understand Propensity to Buy

The MQL Crisis

The traditional MQL approach fundamentally misunderstands modern B2B buying behavior. Success requires shifting from individual lead scoring to understanding buying group dynamics and using AI-based propensity modeling to identify the right moments for marketing and sales engagement.

The problem? Traditional lead scoring creates a fundamental disconnect between marketing and sales. Marketing sees engagement data from their martech stack, while sales operates from CRM data in their own silo. Neither has the complete picture of account relationships, and even the best bidirectional syncs can't prevent that.

The Buying Group Solution

Modern B2B marketing requires a holistic view of account engagement. Instead of scoring individual leads, successful teams focus on buying center members across core roles from practitioners to executives.

Four Types of Propensity

NVIDIA has moved beyond simple intent data to measure four distinct types of propensity:

1. Propensity to Engage (2-4 years from purchase*)
2. Propensity to Buy (when ~75% of buying group is engaging)
3. Propensity to Buy Again (upsell/renewal opportunities)
4. Propensity to Churn (risk indicators)

*Note that the NVIDIA sales cycles is typically at least two years long.

Chapter 1: Understand Propensity to Buy

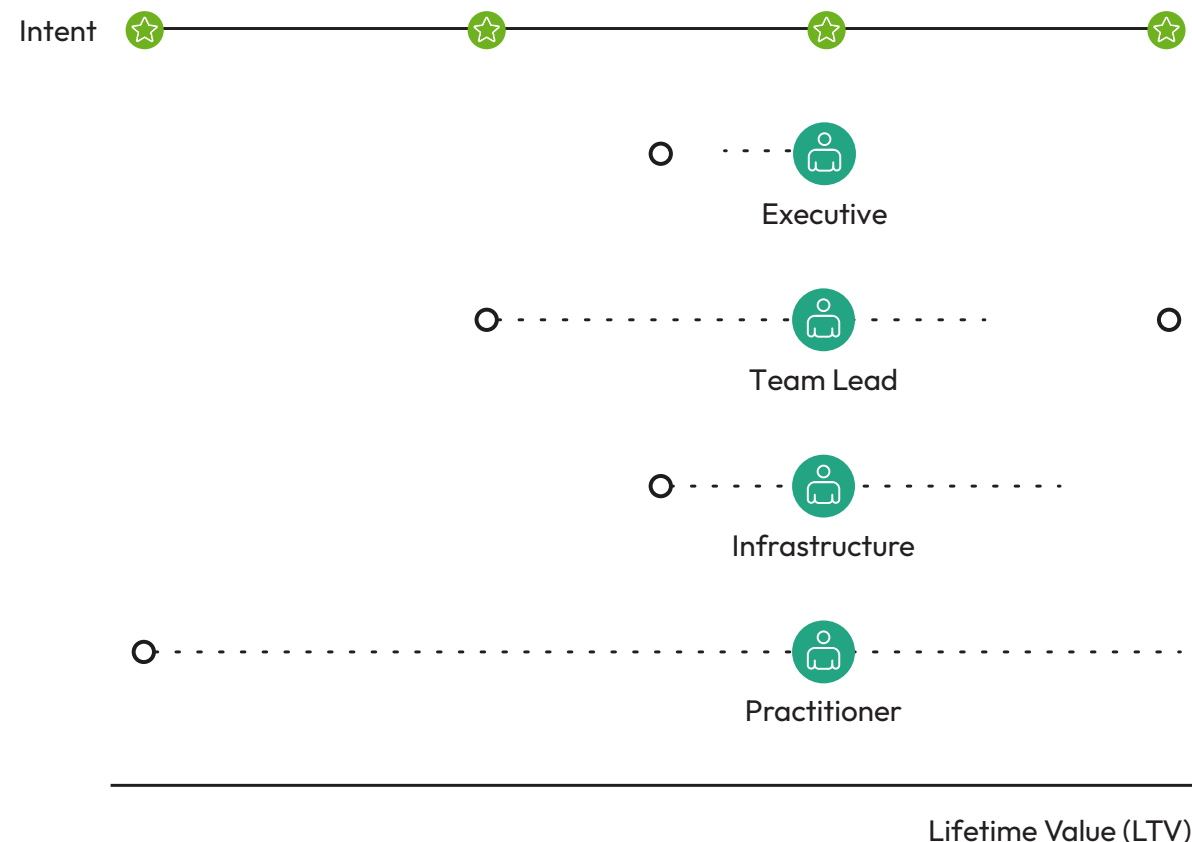
The key insight: Intent data without context is dangerous.

Early intent signals should trigger marketing nurture, not sales handoffs. It's up to you, as a marketer, to understand the patterns that emerge from the buying group members over time to establish a baseline for what intent looks like at each of the four stages.

Results That Matter

When NVIDIA identifies the right buying group engagement patterns, they see 100% reply rates from their target accounts — a stark contrast to spray-and-pray outreach.

PROPENSITY TO (ANYTHING)



Chapter 2:

MQLs, MQAs, and Buying Groups

The Forcing Function

Budget pressure often serves as the catalyst for transformation. Market softening and increased competition demand smarter resource allocation and more focused strategies.

Getting Sales Buy-In

The key to sales alignment? Show them the data. Successful quota-hitting reps typically have larger, multi-threaded deals in their pipeline. If marketing can effectively show the relationship between the programs they're running and how they are surrounding accounts, converting buying groups, and then monitoring the behavior of those buying group members to prep them for a seamless sales hand off, sales is more likely to welcome the strategy.

However, turning off the MQL notification is never an easy trigger to pull.

“

Now that the market has been softened a bit for a couple of years and it's harder to sell, there's a big overhang from AI. We need to get really focused and smart about how we're spending our time and money.



RICH COPENHAGEN

Business Operations • Sysdig

Chapter 2: MQLs, MQAs, and Buying Groups

What Happens to MQLs?

MQLs don't disappear — they evolve. Instead of triggering immediate sales calls, MQLs become moments when marketing starts surrounding accounts with relevant content and experiences.

This is the most critical mindset shift B2B marketers stuck in a funnel need to make. When MQLs become an internal metric that signals the beginning of a customized buying journey, not a metric to report to leadership, the marketing team gets stronger.

The ICP Revolution

The best way to ensure sales has your back is making sure everyone agrees and embraces an ICP. And this ICP can't be basic demographics, but instead a precise formula of sophisticated demographic, firmographic, technographic, and behavioral criteria.

“

That was a big eye opener for me this year. If you can drive that account selection for the highest retention and growth potential companies... you're lining up all your go-to-market engines.



RICH COPENHAGEN

Business Operations • Sysdig

Sometimes, this means removing shiny logos from a target account list, and that's okay. We're building for net retention and lifetime value, not just a large deal size.

Chapter 3:

Build Campaigns that Support the New Way

Once you've secured organizational buy-in, the next hurdle is completely rebuilding your campaign strategy. The goal isn't to abandon lead generation, but instead precisely orchestrate efforts around identifying specific members of the buying group rather than hitting arbitrary MQL targets.



“

The problem with abandoning the old way and fully embracing the new way? We ended up moving into what felt like a brand play with inflated costs. To truly execute on 1:1 ABM, you need a large team, a big budget to customize all of your programs, and a forgiving leadership team to give you some leeway during a monumental DNA shift.



HANNAH SWANSON

Sr. Director of Marketing • Intentsify

Chapter 3: Build Campaigns that Support the New Way

The Hard Truth About ABM

Back in the 2010s, ABM took the B2B marketing world by storm. Teams knew they needed a better way to engage with their audiences, so many went from an all-or-nothing approach and solely focused on marketing to a small subset of target accounts instead of the spray-and-pray lead gen approach of the 2000s.

The reality? Marketers over-corrected.

Instead, embrace the shift to marketing to named personas and converting buying groups.

Note: ABM should not be scrapped. Effectively marketing to buying groups is a product of a strong account-based DNA that is built on qualifying accounts to be your best possible customer. What marketers must focus on is the move away from the single-threaded MQL mindset, because that creates waste.

“

We were handing these accounts to sales and telling them to chase them down. But **who** exactly?



JESSICA FEWLESS

VP of Marketing & Partnerships • Inverta

Chapter 3: Build Campaigns that Support the New Way

Setting Up CRMs for Success

To allow sales to understand what marketing is creating when building programs to attract buying groups, account and/or opportunity views in your CRM need to be updated. We recommend building fields for Buying Group Members. From there, it's a fill-in-the-blank exercise. The blank spaces are the personas you need to confirm and convert for meaningful sales conversations. This is where intent-powered lead generation programs prove useful.

“

Our lead gen programs are focused on filling in those blanks. Once we have a few of those personas confirmed, we're watching the intent trends. This is where it's important to have persona-level intent data.



HANNAH SWANSON

Sr. Director of Marketing • Intentsify

Chapter 3: Build Campaigns that Support the New Way

New Success Metrics

The shift in mindset requires a shift in measurement.

Success IS Indicated by:

- ✓ Marketing program influence on pipeline and revenue
- ✓ Buying group engagement levels
- ✓ Account-level and buying group-intent changes
- ✓ Channel performance by journey stage
- ✓ Deal velocity
- ✓ Deal size

Success is NOT Indicated by:

- ✗ MQL quantities
- ✗ MQL-to-SQL conversion rates
- ✗ Last-touch attribution
- ✗ Marketing vs. sales sourced opportunities

Chapter 3: Build Campaigns that Support the New Way

The Timeline

Front-end investment in buying group development extends initial timelines but accelerates overall sales cycles.

“

Is this going to take longer? Absolutely. But if you have a buying cycle that is typically 9, 12, 16 months that's typically measured by how long sales is talking to that account? I think what you're going to see is that definition of a buying cycle is going to actually shrink because so much more of the buying journey is going to happen before they ever talk to sales.



JESSICA FEWLESS

VP of Marketing & Partnerships • Inverta

Chapter 4:

Create Content That Fuels Marketing Machines

Rebuilding campaigns around buying groups is impossible without the right content foundation. Most organizations approach content backwards — creating first, then figuring out distribution and audience fit. The most successful teams involve content strategists early and use buyer intent data to guide creation.

The Content Crisis

Creating content has historically relied on either SEO viability, or a “gut feeling” of what teams think they need. The result? Content that doesn’t educate or inspire buyers to subscribe to your brand’s position.

“

By the time it usually gets to a content team, the focus is so inward on what the company wants that it really has no resonance with anyone outside of the company.



CHRIS GILLESPIE

Founder • Fenwick Media

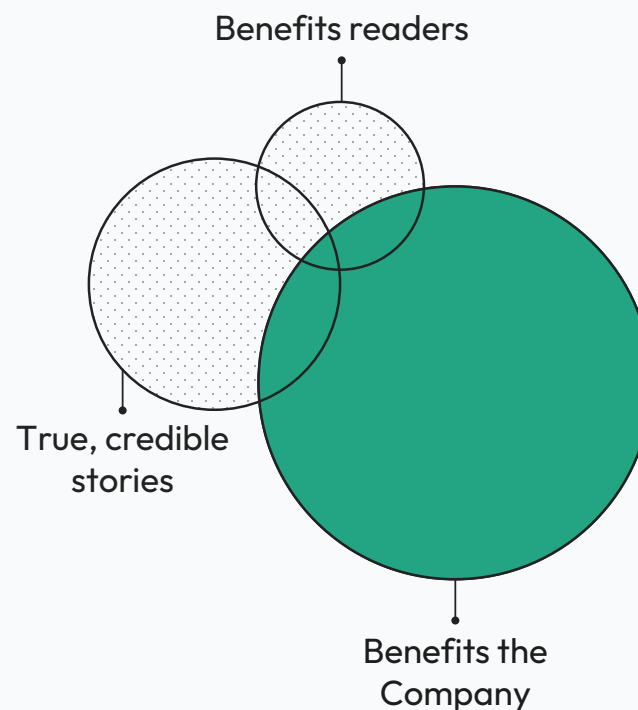
Chapter 4: Create Content That Fuels Marketing Machines

The Three-Circle Framework

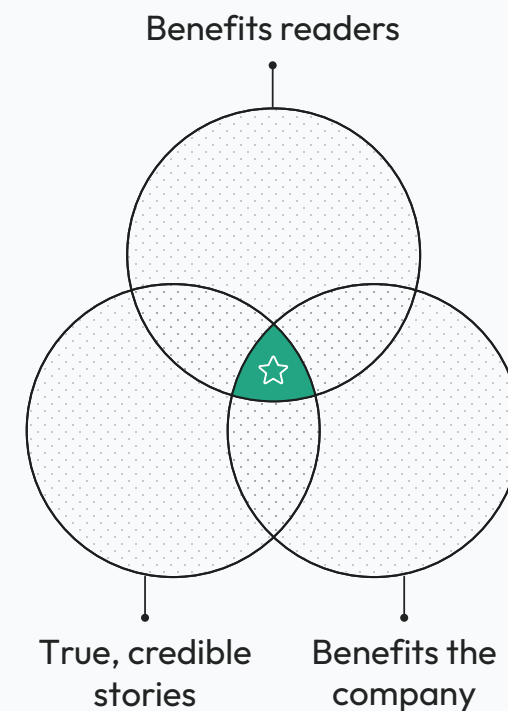
Effective content exists at the intersection of three critical elements:

- **What buyers want**
(their genuine interests)
- **What serves your goals**
(business objectives)
- **What's true and credible**
(authentic expertise)

MOST COMPANIES



THE IDEAL



Chapter 4: Create Content That Fuels Marketing Machines

How to Observe an Intent-Driven Content Strategy

The best content teams use intent data to inform what gets published. By understanding what topics resonate with your target audience, you can capitalize on recurring interests.

We know buyers aren't moving through a linear journey or a funnel. Supplying a plethora of content for each research stage ensures your audience has what they need to learn about the challenges and potential solutions.

Stage	Stage Description	Message Theme	Content Types
Awareness	Not yet aware of challenges + opportunities	Raise awareness of market problems, challenges, opportunities	Thought leadership, blogs, analyst reports, infographics, etc.
Interest	Researching specific challenges + needs	Educate about specific challenges and improvement opportunities	eBooks, guides, on-demand demos, webinar
Consideration	Researching solution categories	Educate on solution categories: value prop, uses cases, how the product works	Videos/webinars, guides, case studies
Decision	Researching specific brands of products	Focus on promoting specific products, services and brand	Case studies, ROI stats, pricing pages, info sheets, product reviews

Chapter 4: Create Content That Fuels Marketing Machines

Distribution-First Mindset

All too often, content teams get orders: “We need another eBook!” or “We haven’t done a webinar yet this quarter; we should probably get one on the books.”

Before creating any content outside an intent-driven plan, content marketers must ask themselves these critical questions:

- ? What is the purpose of creating this piece of content?
- ? What promotional channels do we have access to?
- ? What budget do we have to promote it?
- ? How long will it take for this content to get stale?

“

Content itself is not a channel. Content needs to fuel your channels, it has to have a container.



MEGHAN CROOK BRISSON

Sr. Manager of Content • Intentsify

Chapter 5:

Align Brand to Demand

For too long, B2B marketing has operated as two distinct, often siloed, entities: the creative, long-term vision of brand marketing and the immediate, results-driven engine of demand and lead generation. Regardless of whether your team is ready to ditch funnels for good and embrace an account-based and buying group-centric motion, aligning these two critical marketing functions yields better results.



Teams that combine brand and demand efforts see a **31% boost** in lead quality and **20% scale** in conversion rates.

By strategically integrating the teams that power these programs and activating digital and lead gen programs based on buying signals, marketers can finally create a unified experience that is always on, nurturing key personas from awareness to decision.

Chapter 5: Align Brand to Demand

The Intent-Driven Workflow

Intent data fundamentally changes the disjointed methodologies by providing a shared, real-time understanding of buying group behavior. Instead of guessing what resonates, we know what topics are being researched, what competitors are being investigated, and what pain points are being explored. This shared intelligence becomes the bedrock for aligning brand and demand efforts.

Informed Brand Storytelling

1. **Identifying Emerging Research Trends:** Intent data reveals the topics and challenges your target audience cares about most. Brand teams must leverage this intelligence to refine messaging against research stages.
2. **Persona-Based Messaging:** The buying group is typically made up of at least 10 people. Your messaging has to flex to inform all of them. Having access to persona-level signal data ensures precision when refining key messages.

Chapter 5: Align Brand to Demand

Smarter Demand Generation

- 1. Prioritizing High-Intent Accounts:** Understanding what brands are engaging most with brand campaigns allows demand teams to launch programs with extreme precision.
- 2. Personalized Outreach at Scale:** Knowing the topics that resonate with target accounts give teams the leg up they need to serve them the best possible content that leads to a hand-raise. Teams stuck in a funnel are sending blasts and playing a numbers game when it comes to demand gen. Data-driven teams are triggering campaigns based on buying signals and never wasting impressions or spend.



Campaign Outputs Become Inputs

Once an integrated campaign is running and teams are observing outcomes (buying group leads, increased brand performance, etc.), the campaigns still in flight become stronger. With intent data learning from every buyer action, your programs get smarter as they keep running.

Chapter 6:

The Reality Check

Even with perfect strategy, content, and channel orchestration, most buying group transformations fail due to implementation missteps. The difference between success and failure often comes down to change management, not marketing tactics.

The Five Pitfalls That Marketers Must Avoid

1. **Skipping Organizational Buy-In:** Prove the business case with your own data and show that multi-threaded deals close faster, larger, with higher win rates.
2. **Over-Engineering from the Start:** Get interested parties involved in testing and refining rather than creating perfect theoretical frameworks. The change doesn't have to happen overnight, and the perfect process will take time to present itself.



Chapter 6: The Reality Check

3. **Excluding Sales from the Process:** Sales must agree with marketing's definition of a target account and more importantly, a buying group. Show them the data and methodology for building qualification criteria and make sure they understand the 'why' behind the change.
4. **Misaligning Stakeholders:** Your entire marketing team must evolve: Paid media, digital, field, and content teams all need to change their approach alongside sales. And finally, leadership and those that hold marketing accountable with KPIs must be informed and involved.
5. **Measuring the Wrong Things:** When leadership focuses on speed-to-lead while marketing pushes account and buying group insights, transformation efforts derail. Ensure shared definitions, workflows, and success metrics. Consider presenting two versions of marketing metrics during the initial transformation.

“

Marketing needs to resist the urge of getting too excited and leaving key stakeholders behind. Getting buy-in from everyone must happen, it's not just a technical issue.



KATHY MACCHI

EVP and Co-founder • Inverta

The Ongoing Evolution of Modern Marketing Strategies

The Steps for Evolving Your Funnel:

- 1. Build Propensity Models.** Shift from lead scoring to buying group engagement patterns using holistic data across marketing and sales systems.
- 2. Prove the MQA Business Case.** Analyze your closed-won deals to show that multi-threaded opportunities close faster, larger, and with higher win rates.
- 3. Redesign Campaigns as Fill-in-the-Blank Exercises.** Treat each target account as having specific buying group roles to identify and nurture, not random MQL targets to hit.
- 4. Involve Content Teams Early.** Include content strategists in campaign planning, not just execution, and use intent data to guide what buyers actually want.
- 5. Create Consistent Cross-Channel Experiences.** Ensure the same message, design, and user experience across all touchpoints to build memory through repetition.
- 6. Start with Pilots, Not Perfection.** Test MQA approaches with willing sales reps and iterate based on feedback rather than over-engineering complex definitions.

The Ongoing Evolution of Modern Marketing Strategies

This transformation requires patience, alignment, and willingness to measure success differently. But for organizations ready to make the shift, the results are compelling:



**Better sales
+ marketing
alignment**



**Faster
deal velocity**



**Larger
deal sizes**



**Higher
close rates**

The funnel is broken.

It's time to build something **better.**



Special thanks to the marketing minds at **Inverta**, **NVIDIA**, **Sysdig**, and **Fenwick Media** for lending their time and knowledge to creating this series.

To hear their thoughts firsthand, watch the on-demand webinar, The Funnel is Broken, [here →](#).



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.

Learn More →



About Inverta

At Inverta, we believe great marketing happens when smart strategy meets flawless execution—and we've built our entire agency around this principle. While most marketing firms excel at either the thinking or the doing, we've deliberately mastered both.

Our team doesn't just understand the latest marketing theories and frameworks; we know exactly how to bring them to life in ways that drive real business results. We've helped companies achieve remarkable growth—like 5x increases in qualified leads and generating 75% of sales pipeline through strategic ABM programs—because we approach every engagement with both strategic rigor and operational excellence.

When you work with Inverta, you're not just hiring an agency. You're gaining a partner who's as invested in your success as you are.

Learn More →

