7 Ways to Supercharge Your ABM Strategy With

Real-Time Intent

Learn how capturing buyers' search behavior in real time can shorten your sales cycle.

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Selling or marketing to someone you have limited insights on is like trying to hit a piñata blindfolded. You have a general idea of where it is, but without knowing its exact whereabouts, you're taking swings in the dark, and more often than not—you'll miss your target.

Gaps in buyer insights—pain points, account needs, and goals—are a huge issue for account-based marketing (ABM) teams looking to deepen relationships with existing customers and target high-value prospects. Personalization lives at the core of ABM, and yet, personalization at scale toward target accounts (35 percent) and developing targeted content for accounts and personas (30 percent) are in the top five ABM challenges, according to *Demand Gen Report*.

If you don't have access to actionable buyer intelligence—you risk falling behind organizations that do, resulting in lost time, resources, and revenue. Enter: streaming real-time intent, the ultimate competitive advantage.

Streaming real-time intent immediately flags above-average content consumption spikes from an account, allowing you to engage with prospects while they're still in research mode with a buying mentality—not weeks later when they've moved on or after they've already made their decision. The foundation of any great ABM strategy is knowing who your target customer is and customizing your approach to address their needs. Real-time intent is a game-changer in doing just that.

We'll walk through how streaming real-time intent data can supercharge your ABM strategy, including:

- How streaming real-time intent works

- The benefits of real-time intent in your ABM strategy

- How you can box out the competition

Top 5 ABM Challenges

46% Sales and marketing alignment

43% Proving ROI/attribution

35% Personalization at scale toward target accounts

31% Identifying/predicting accounts that are in-marketing, ready to purchase

30% Developing targeted content for specific accounts or personas

Source: 2019 ABM Benchmark Survey Report, *Demand Gen Report*

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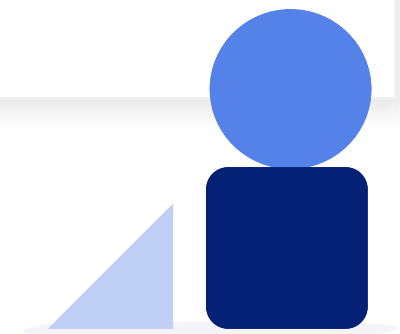
How Streaming Real-Time Intent Works

If you're unfamiliar with intent, it's simpler than it sounds. Generally speaking, search intent uncovers buying signals based on online consumption patterns. This activity—the digital footprints that buyers generate when researching solutions, categories, topics, and vendors on their path to purchase—can be tracked through online searches, website visits, content downloads, event registrations, and other online activity all across the internet.

"Intent data is simply behavior-based buying signals—actions that imply that a person is likely interested in what you have to say or sell," says DeAnn Poe, vice president of marketing at ZoomInfo. "It allows marketers to insert themselves into the buying cycle sooner to help guide the prospect through the decision-making process."
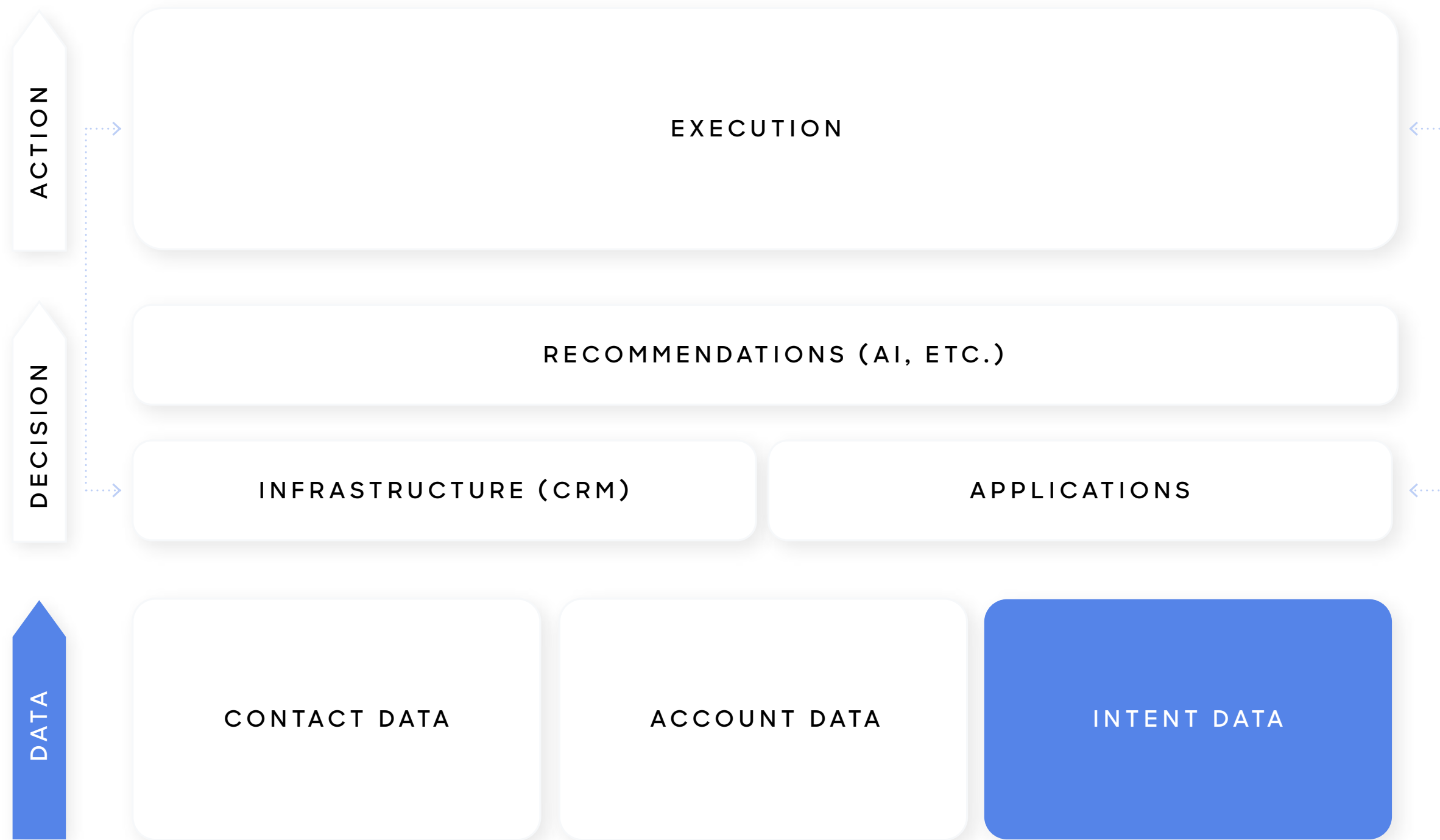
The value of ABM intent data comes from (1) the size of the net cast across the web (i.e., how many relevant websites it can monitor for activity beyond your own website and digital properties, (2) the quality of the signals that are generated by listening, detecting, gathering, and making sense of that activity, and (3) the timeliness of signals being communicated to sellers and marketers.

Streaming real-time intent signals when consumers are searching for solutions like yours—the moment they search for them. "Intent data takes a seat right alongside the two most important pieces of business information—account and contact data," says Henry Schuck, ZoomInfo founder and CEO. "The three together, driving account identification, targeting, and segmentation will soon be table stakes for how sellers and marketers identify their next best customers."

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Intent data respects the privacy of the individuals by preserving anonymity and not revealing, gathering, storing, or displaying any personal information on the individuals conducting research. Rather, it aggregates the activity of multiple individuals and links their activity to a specific business entity. B2B sellers and marketers go-to-market with intent by targeting accounts—not specific people at those accounts.

Using an advanced natural language processing (NLP) engine, artificial intelligence can correctly identify the context of pages being read. This cuts out the clutter and allows for stronger, more reliable intent signals without identifying consumers at the individual level.

ACTION

DECISION

DATA

EXECUTION

RECOMMENDATIONS (AI, ETC.)

INFRASTRUCTURE (CRM)

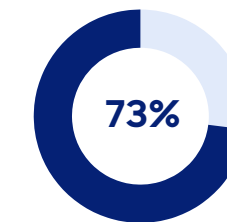APPLICATIONS

CONTACT DATA

ACCOUNT DATA

INTENT DATA

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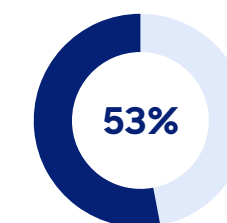According to a *Demand Gen Report* survey, companies that leverage intent see a very positive impact, including:
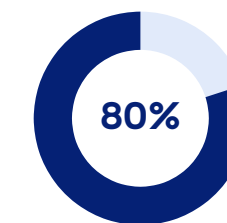
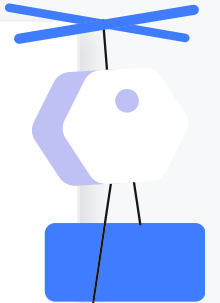**80%** Helped with ABM account prioritization and scoring

73% Accelerated pipeline

53% Improved ability to define ideal customer profile

1. Track Topics Specific to Your Business

Streaming real-time intent allows you to monitor relevant topics and keywords that companies are searching for *while* they're searching for them. For example, at ZoomInfo, we could track industry- and brand-specific terms such as:

- B2B contact database platform
- Contact information tool
- B2B sales intelligence solution
- ZoomInfo pricing

When real-time intent notifies us that multiple people from a specific company have been searching for one or several of these terms, we can assume that they may be interested in purchasing a product that we offer. This helps us prioritize which accounts to target so we can immediately get our name in front of interested companies.

2. Build Prospecting Lists

According to HubSpot, more than 40 percent of salespeople say prospecting is the most challenging part of the sales process—and we're not surprised. Building robust prospecting lists is no small task.

But when streaming real-time intent is paired with a B2B database, you're automatically given recommended contacts to reach out to for each account conducting research relevant to your business. This includes name, title, phone number, and email address for quick, accurate outreach. You're also given access to companies' firmographic and technographic data, which can inform how your teams strategically approach these accounts. This will give your sales team all of the data needed to have an informed conversation with your leads—and save time and resources that would've been wasted doing manual research.

3. Personalize Outreach

The very definition of ABM is using a personalized approach to target high-priority accounts. ABM intent data can tell you what your prospect is looking for, what their pain point is, and how far along they are in their buyer's journey. You can use this information to ensure relevant messaging in your marketing and sales pitch to speak directly to their needs.

"Everyone has software that tells them when someone is on their website and clicking on their content," says Hussam AlMukhtar, senior director of strategic marketing at ZoomInfo. "But what you don't know is what they are doing *outside* of your website. Are they going to G2? Are they going to Forrester? Are they reading articles relevant to your topic? You can use that information to imply where they are in their buyer's journey and customize your messages accordingly."

For example, imagine a company is searching for a sales intelligence solution. If they are reading articles along the lines of, "What is sales intelligence?" you can assume they are at the beginning of their buyer's journey. However, if they're reading articles along the lines of, "The 5 Best Sales Intelligence Solutions of 2020," they are likely further down the funnel and headed toward making a purchase. This helps your marketing team know what kind of content to send their way (an infographic versus a whitepaper, for example) and helps your sales rep prepare their pitch.
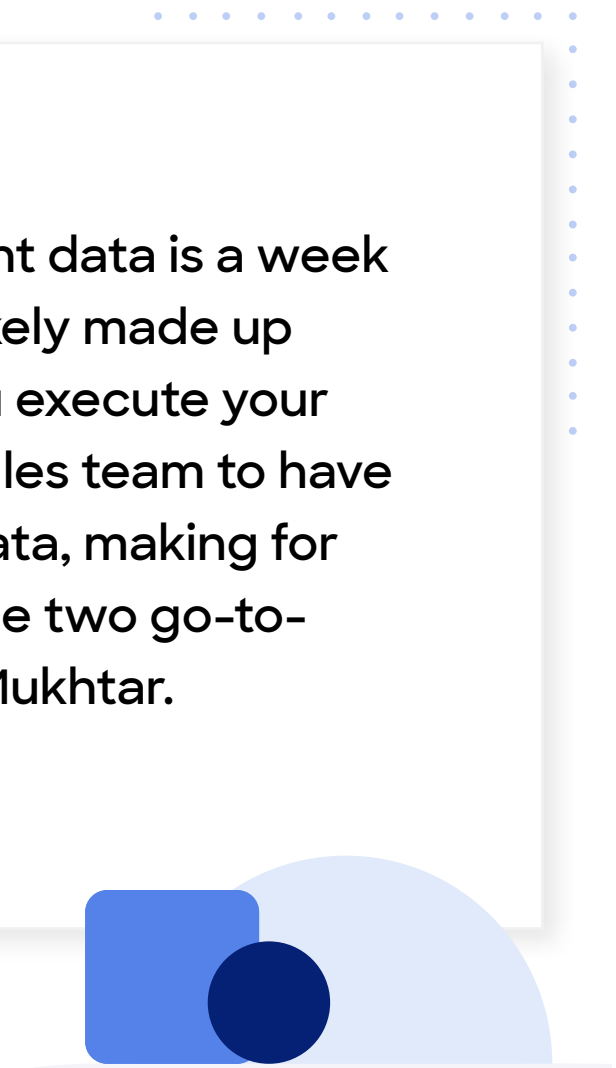
4. Box Out the Competition

Sales is a game of getting your foot in the door first. By interacting with prospects earlier in the buyer's journey, you build trust with them that vendors who come in later simply won't. According to HubSpot, 19 percent of buyers want to connect with a salesperson during the awareness stage of their buying process—when they're first learning about the product. Get a leg up by educating prospects on your product or service while they're still learning about how to solve their pain point.

Additionally, you can target prospects who are starting to research your competitors by tracking your competitors' names. That way, your marketing team can jump straight in and strategically promote your unique selling proposition that differentiates you from the competition.

5. Shorten the Sales Cycles

Using real-time intent, you can create automated campaigns that spark a conversation and warm up prospects for your sales team to call. When your marketing team increases brand awareness at the beginning of the buyer's journey, your sales rep's outreach won't seem completely out of the blue.

"With real-time intent, you can strategically place account-based ads or run email marketing campaigns targeted toward specific accounts," says AlMukhtar. "This way, you can warm up your prospects so when your sales teams reach out, the conversation flows easier. Comparatively, when intent data is a week old, your prospects have likely made up their minds by the time you execute your campaigns, leading your sales team to have lower confidence in that data, making for a bigger divide between the two go-to-market functions."

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6. Retain Current Customers

Intent is not just for prospecting. In fact, one of the primary benefits of real-time intent is identifying when your customers may be unhappy with your product or solution so you can get ahead of the problem.

"The other side of intent is the customer success side," explains AlMukhtar. "If I have a customer that has seen an increase in intent toward one of my competitors, I would like both my customer success and account manager to know about this—because then I could have them intercept any kind of activity that could displace me."

Not only does streaming real-time intent empower you to prevent customer churn, but it can also present opportunities for upselling and cross-selling. For example, perhaps you're flagged that your customer is searching for paid advertising—a new service your company offers. Maybe they don't know you offer this, which opens up an avenue for your salesperson to step in with a pitch.

7. Measure Success

Not only can intent help you identify prospects, but it can also measure the success of your sales team. Oftentimes, a B2B purchase requires a decision by committee. If you start targeting other decision-makers, you want to see that intent is rising for that account.

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 and must deconflict with the group."

AlMukhtar explains how tracking buying committees works at ZoomInfo:

"If a sales rep has had one or two conversations with a prospect, we want to see an uptick in research around 'ZoomInfo,' or its relevant keywords. When big companies have a decision by committee, you want to see more and more people from that company researching your solution day by day. It's a measure of success when you're in the middle of an opportunity, and it legitimizes their interest."

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Get Ahead By Streaming Real-Time Intent

"Intent is not only a marketing function and sales function, but it's also a go-to-market function that can be used across the board," says AlMukhtar.

Knowledge is power. By knowing what your target audience is looking for in real time, your marketing and sales teams are positioned to act quickly to beat out the competition and close more deals, faster. Streaming real-time intent is the only solution on the market that puts you in front of your ideal consumer—the moment they're looking for a solution just like yours. What are you waiting for?

Interested in a real-time intent solution?
We've got what you need.

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