The background image is a photograph of a subway station. A train with red and white cars is moving from right to left, creating a motion blur effect. The station has a high, arched ceiling with exposed pipes and lights. The platform is tiled with a pattern of light and dark squares. A yellow tactile paving strip runs along the edge of the platform. In the distance, a tunnel entrance is visible.

CLOSING THE GAPS

December | 2020

How Buyer Intent Helps Build Your Message, Value & Pipeline

INTRODUCTION

The biggest challenge in B2B sales today is getting in front of your prospect after they've decided to act, but before they've made a final decision. Over the last few years SMB marketing teams have bought marketing automation platforms, tools, and services to accelerate pipeline development. Now a new category called Buyer Intent or Behavioral Intent is cropping up. So, what is this and can it really help us with messaging, prospects and pipelines?

Our interpretation of the word buyer in buyer intent can lead us to the same poor outcomes that have plagued B2B sales and marketing organizations for years. It's not because the idea of observing digital behavior is flawed, it is because we mis-interpret and implement the idea poorly. How so?

Buyer Intent and Behavioral Intent are generally perceived as synonymous in this context, but we can get seduced by the word *buyer* as it obviously implies someone is *buying*. *Behavioral* communicates a different meaning simply implying that someone is conducting themselves in a particular way. This sounds like a trivial distinction. It isn't. When we elect to use the word *buyer*, we're thinking someone is about to buy and before we know it, we are drowning them in content designed to get them to "pick us and pick us now".

We need to fight hard to find the balance.

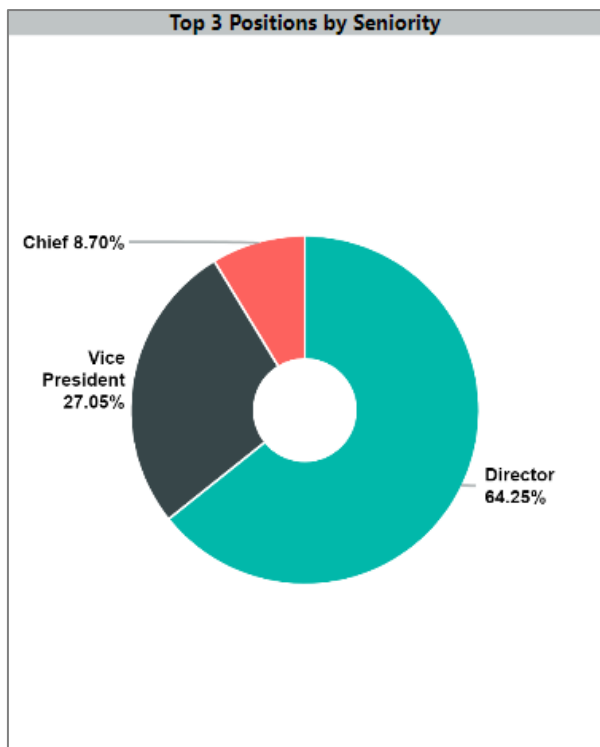
If we use the word "behavioral" intent, it balances us out, by setting the context differently – we're looking at the indications of behavior first and buying second. We need to study the data, look for insights and then make recommendations (to ourselves, or others), act and move on. We need to think in terms of constantly improving our chances of winning and using intent data more thoughtfully will fulfill this goal.



What are some of the data points we can use to shape our thinking and help us better align with the buyer and their journey? Here is an example from a Verto client, with three areas of focus:

1. POSITIONS & JOB TITLES – WHAT CAN WE LEARN FOR THE PERSONAS WE ARE TARGETING?

In this example, our client is finding that Positions with the word “Director” in their title are the most active. Why does this matter? It matters because “Directors” make buying decisions and recommendations using a different landscape of ideas and motivations than more senior leaders. You need to direct your message and content accordingly.



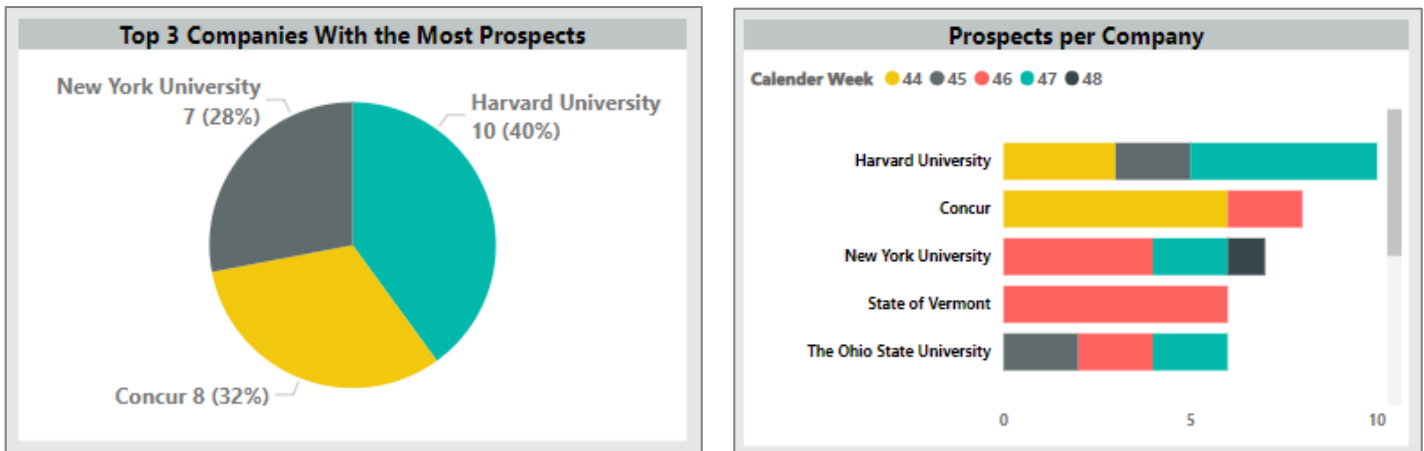
Directors are responsible for managing organizational functions. While they implement projects to help achieve a company's goals, they tend to focus on timelines, objectives, and metrics. They need to achieve specific results within certain timeframes with the assets they have readily available. Finally, they look to make improvements over comparative timelines like months, quarters, and years. *They buy for different reasons* and you need to market and prospect to them accordingly.



“One way of connecting your message to your contact is to think of them in their typical *buying zones*... it helps to identify what is important to people in different levels and buying zones of an organization so your message resonates with them.” – Bill Wallace, Revenue Storm

2. WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE MOST ACTIVE COMPANIES?

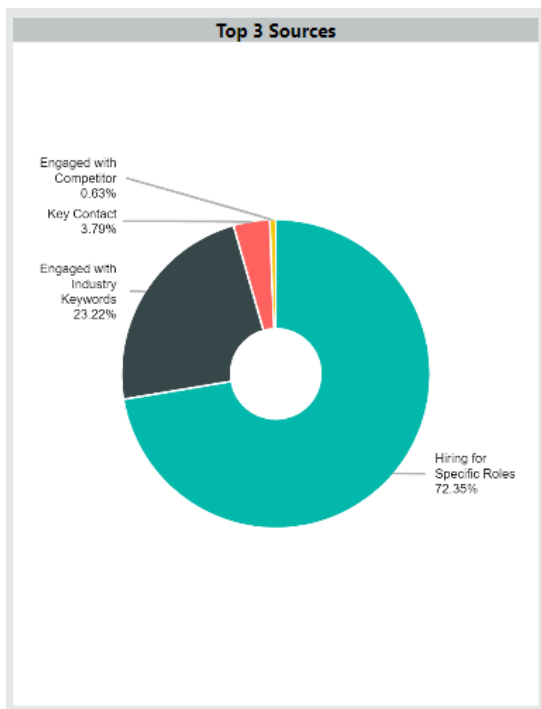
One would think that more people displaying more activity over a consistent time period within a company, would indicate a higher level of “interest” by that company, compared to a small number or one person in a company. This is what we can show here, as you see below:



In this example our client is finding the top three organizations have up to ten active prospects over the preceding three to four weeks. That client might look to focus more efforts on those accounts, by broadening their contact base, and directing other marketing and business development efforts that way.

3. WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE SUBJECTS A TARGET PERSONA IS LOOKING AT

We use five broad subjects or “Sources” to categorize the areas that a prospect is searching in or engaging with digitally. They are: Engaging with Competitors, Attending Industry Conferences, Engaged with Industry Keywords, Engaged with Industry News and Growing a Dept/Hiring a Role



In this use case the most frequently occurring “Source” is Hiring for Specific Roles. In other words, the company is hiring. As we drill deeper into the data, we can gain insights on what types of roles they are looking to fill. Why does this matter? It matters because there are several inferences you can make around hiring activities. One would be that of change (probably growth) so that would be positive change. The other would be the alignment of your solution (products and services) that could be used **INSTEAD** of hiring, or even helping those new hires succeed once they are hired. Understanding context helps you direct your efforts and align your communication more effectively.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Prospecting and business development are more effective when you leverage buyer (behavioral) intent data. We generally advise that our clients reflect on how best to use this data and think in terms of “behavior” not just “buyer”.

As you can see from the use case examples, this data can be used to provide guidance regarding the right personas, what they are interested in and where they are looking. You can then better align your activities and content to deliver the maximum value at the optimal time.

This approach will help you make more revenue, by being more effective at prospecting and lead conversion, and simultaneously enable you to save money on SEO, SEM, media spend and content production.



MINDING THE GAPS IN B2B SALES AND MARKETING INVOLVES FINDING THEM FIRST

VERTO

We're Verto, the only agency that understands B2B sales AND marketing. We think that Lead generation, digital marketing, and sales enablement should work together, be simpler, cost less, and produce more. We'll show you how to make that happen.

www.vertoadvisors.com