

SIX INTENT-BASED MARKETING MYTHS: HYPE VS REALITY



Executive Summary

Intent-based marketing helps B2B organisations translate buyer signals into actionable insights to guide buying journeys. However, misconceptions about what intent data actually reveals can lead to misaligned outreach, wasted effort, and stalled deals.

Six common intent marketing myths undermine execution. Addressing them requires understanding how to:

Interpret B2B intent signals as indicators of buyer research rather than immediate purchase intent

Focus on aggregated buying group activity instead of individual prospects or presumed decision makers

Integrate intent insights with inbound, paid, and brand strategies to inform a broader GTM approach

Prioritise execution by translating signals into coordinated content, validation, and enablement

When applied correctly, B2B intent signals enable more effective engagement that accelerates buying decisions.

86% of B2B purchases stall during the buying process ([Forrester, 2024](#)). This can leave sales and marketing teams unsure where to focus their efforts. This issue can be attributed to complex buying groups, fragmented research paths, and consensus-driven decision making.

Intent-based marketing can be an effective solution to illuminate these dynamics, yet misunderstandings about the scope and limitations of intent data can result in misinformed strategic decisions. Understanding how to interpret buyer signals and avoid common misconceptions is key to turning stalled opportunities into engagement that moves deals forward.

What is intent-based marketing?

Intent-based marketing is a strategy that uses behavioural and research data to identify when organisations are actively exploring specific solutions, and aligns marketing and sales engagement with that activity. By analysing B2B intent data and aggregated intent signals from multiple stakeholders across the buying group, companies can prioritise accounts showing genuine B2B buying intent. This allows teams to deliver relevant content during the research process and engage prospects at the right stage of their buying journey.

What are buyer signals?

Buyer signals represent aggregated, behavioural indicators generated by members of the buying group as they conduct research. These B2B buyer intent data signals illuminate how buyers progress, which enables go-to-market (GTM) teams to support decision making rather than prematurely pursue prospects.

Understanding how to identify in-market B2B accounts using intent data requires correlating research activity across multiple stakeholders within the same organization.

Examples of buyer signals include:

- Content consumption patterns
- Website and product page visits
- Engagement with emails or campaigns
- Social media interactions
- Event participation
- Third-party research activity
- Search behaviour

[Explore the demand marketer's guide to intent activation](#)



How to apply intent-based marketing

Applying intent-based marketing requires proactively identifying and acting on the specific signals that indicate a buyer's readiness and priorities, rather than relying solely on generalised intent.

In practice, marketing teams rely on B2B intent data from multiple research sources to understand which accounts are actively exploring specific solutions.

Organisations can apply intent-based marketing through the following steps and processes:

- **Define buyer context:** Start with a clear understanding of buyers, including their objectives, constraints, internal dynamics, and decision making criteria. This context is essential for interpreting intent signals correctly
- **Track buying group research, not individual prospects:** Focus on aggregated research activity across entire buying groups rather than isolated actions such as form fills or downloads. According to [Voice of the Buyer 2026](#), B2B purchases involve an average of 11 stakeholders, researching solutions simultaneously across various channels
- **Engage during active research:** Align marketing and sales outreach on the moments when buyers are actively researching relevant topics, rather than relying on static campaign triggers
- **Account for modern buying dynamics:** Interpret intent within the current [buyer-led environment](#), where expanded buying groups, [multichannel research](#), and AI-accelerated discovery shape how decisions unfold
- **Monitor the early research phase:** Buyers conduct extensive research in the [dark funnel](#) before contacting vendors. Effective intent strategies identify topic exploration and research patterns during this early stage
- **Integrate multiple intent data sources:** Combine [first-party engagement data](#) with second- and third-party research signals from websites, analytics platforms, CRM systems, and digital media to create a comprehensive demand intelligence view, enabling GTM teams to identify emerging opportunities and prioritise accounts based on true buying intent

FROM BUYER SIGNALS TO CONFIDENT PURCHASE DECISIONS

Step 1: Discover intent

Identify early research activity across multiple channels and stakeholders



Step 2: Aggregate buyer signals

Combine first-, second-, and third-party intent data to see account-level patterns



86%

of B2B purchases
stall mid-journey

Step 3: Interpret signals

Distinguish meaningful buying momentum from isolated activity

Intent signals =
exploration, not
automatic readiness



Step 4: Align engagement

Target content, proof points, and outreach based on where buyers are in their journey

Focus on account-
level activity, not
individual leads



Step 5: Enable decisions

Support coordinated buying group evaluation to accelerate decisions and reduce stalled deals

What are the most common intent-based marketing myths?

Intent-based marketing is a powerful and important part of any [demand strategy](#). However, its impact depends on how well organisations distinguish between isolated activity and meaningful buyer progression. To access the true value of intent-based marketing, it is necessary to understand some of the most prevalent misconceptions around intent data and how to use it.

Below are six common myths pertaining to intent-based marketing.

1 Intent translates into bottom-of-funnel leads

One of the most common misconceptions about intent-based marketing is that intent data directly signals purchase readiness. In reality, most intent activity reflects early- and mid-stage research conducted by [buying groups](#) seeking to validate options, not initiate vendor engagement.

As a result, intent marketing is largely focused on early research activity that signals exploration rather than confirmed B2B buying intent.

61% of B2B buyer research occurs before any contact is made with the vendor, with buying groups often forming preferences before activity is detected ([6sense, 2025](#)). This research occurs across peer communities, review platforms, AI-assisted search, and third-party content, well beyond vendor-owned channels. In fact, 94% of buyers now use AI and LLMs alongside peer and industry inputs to inform their decisions ([6sense, 2025](#)).

Intent data is more accurately interpreted as a buyer signal input rather than a prospect trigger. This is why B2B intent data should be interpreted at the account level, where signals from multiple stakeholders reveal coordinated evaluation. Individual actions, such as content consumption or keyword searches, lack meaning when they are reviewed in isolation. It is only when signals accumulate across multiple stakeholders within an account that they begin to indicate genuine evaluation momentum.

Treating intent as synonymous with bottom-of-funnel readiness risks premature outreach. Buying group members enter the journey at different stages and have distinct validation needs. Over-activating on early signals can erode trust and reinforce buyer resistance.

When applied correctly, buyer signals help marketing and sales teams prioritise accounts for [enablement strategies](#), aligning content, proof points, and visibility with where buyers are in their journey. Intent does not close deals; orchestrated enablement does.

"When most buyer research happens before vendors are ever contacted, the most valuable use of intent data is earning presence earlier, and not accelerating outreach. Intent signals are indicators of exploration, not invitations to engage. Teams that internalise this distinction shift from reactive pursuit to orchestrated enablement, building visibility and credibility precisely where buyers are already conducting research."



Alexander Kesler
Founder & CEO, INFUSE



[Discover the dangers of only focusing on bottom-of-funnel leads](#)



2 Intent scoring identifies buyer intent

Intent scoring is often positioned as a definitive method for identifying buyer readiness. In practice, static scoring models struggle to reflect the fluid realities of buying groups.

Traditional scoring approaches frequently rely on [firmographic](#) and demographic attributes such as job titles, seniority, or company size. These indicators have become increasingly unreliable as roles blur, decision authority decentralises, and AI democratises access to information.

More critically, scoring individual actions fails to capture buying group dynamics. Isolated actions rarely reveal meaningful B2B buyer intent data unless they are evaluated alongside signals from other stakeholders in the account.

[Voice of the Buyer 2026](#) shows that buying decisions are no longer driven by single champions, so true B2B buying intent only becomes visible when multiple stakeholders engage around similar solution themes.

Effective intent activation requires multi-signal correlation rather than arbitrary weighting. Aggregating signals across platforms, such as review site engagement, peer discussions, content consumption, and technographic changes, allows GTM teams to identify patterns that indicate coordinated evaluation.

AI-powered correlation models increasingly support this process by detecting when combinations of signals align, such as review activity coinciding with increased community engagement. This approach reduces false positives and shifts intent scoring from subjective judgement to evidence-based prioritization.

Scoring intent remains valuable, but only when embedded within a broader buyer signal framework designed to reflect real buying behaviour.

UNLOCK THE FULL VALUE OF INTENT DATA WITH INFUSE

Our demand intelligence platform helps you align sales and marketing outreach with where buyers are in their journey. Turn early research activity into actionable engagement that accelerates pipeline.

[Speak with a demand expert](#)



3 Intent-based marketing is superior to inbound and paid search marketing

Intent-based marketing is often framed as a replacement for inbound or paid search strategies. In reality, these approaches serve complementary roles within a [buyer-led GTM model](#).

Inbound marketing remains essential for [discoverability](#). Brand visibility during anonymous research directly influences buyer shortlist inclusion, particularly as AI-assisted search plays an increasingly prominent role in the traditional awareness stages. This is where high-value inbound content establishes credibility and supports autonomous evaluation.

Paid search and targeted media play an important role in reinforcing presence across key discovery moments. When aligned with buyer signal insights, these channels ensure relevance without disrupting buyer autonomy.

Within this framework, intent data does not outperform inbound or paid search; it enhances them. Intent marketing acts as the [buyer intelligence layer](#), guiding where and when visibility matters most.

Buyer signals inform where visibility gaps exist and which content resonates with specific stakeholder concerns. Together, these strategies enable consistent engagement across the buying journey rather than isolated lead capture.

Organisations that integrate intent insights with inbound, paid, and organic strategies are better positioned to support buyer confidence throughout evaluation.

[Explore the differences between omnichannel and multichannel marketing](#)



4 Intent-based marketing data saves time

Intent data is frequently portrayed as a shortcut to efficiency. However, speed without precision undermines trust.

The challenge is that B2B intent data is often high in volume, requiring teams to filter meaningful signals from background activity.

Second- and third-party data sources generate vast volumes of activity, much of which lacks contextual relevance. Analysing, validating, and correlating this data requires operational discipline and cross-functional alignment.

Buyer-led organisations invest time upfront to build signal frameworks that prioritise relevance over volume. By focusing on aggregated buyer signals rather than isolated events, teams reduce wasted outreach and shorten time-to-value.

When supported by automation and AI-driven analytics, buyer signal activation accelerates response without sacrificing accuracy. The time saved is not in data collection, but in eliminating misaligned engagement.

5 Intent data guarantees success

Perhaps the most damaging myth is that intent data alone ensures campaign success. Data does not create demand. Rather, results come from execution.

Even high volumes of B2B buyer intent data cannot replace the need for strong positioning, validation, and credible proof.

[INFUSE Voice of the Buyer 2026](#) reveals that 48% of buyers report being only somewhat satisfied with current vendors, reflecting persistent scepticism and a readiness to switch. This reality becomes even clearer when combined with the fact that 80% of buyers regret their purchase decision overall ([INFUSE Voice of the Buyer 2026](#)).

Intent insights should therefore be paired with trust-building proof, technical validation, and consistent delivery in order to convert buyer interest into confident, informed purchasing decisions.

Intent data highlights opportunity, but it does not resolve buyer risk. Success depends on how effectively organisations translate buyer signals into [enablement](#), such as relevant content, credible proof points, and clear differentiation aligned to buying group needs.

Rather than viewing intent as a guarantee, organisations should treat it as one input within a disciplined [buyer-led GTM strategy](#) focused on creating buyer confidence.

[Learn how to drive ROI with demand intelligence](#)



6 Intent data reveals who is buying

Another persistent misconception is that intent tools identify the individuals responsible for making purchasing decisions. In reality, intent data reveals that buying activity exists, not who holds decision authority.

Large buying groups have fragmented entry points and no single authority figure guiding the entire process. Different participants enter the journey at different stages, contributing evaluation input based on their role in the organization.

[INFUSE Voice of the Buyer 2026](#) further highlights that purchasing decisions are increasingly consensus-driven, with evaluators, technical validators, and economic buyers participating throughout the process. These roles have research behaviour that often unfolds across [different channels](#) and timeframes.

Intent signals, therefore, highlight progression patterns rather than power structures. Topic engagement, review activity, and research intensity can indicate that an account is evaluating solutions, but they cannot reliably surface the individual responsible for final approval.

Treating intent as a shortcut to identifying the final economic decision maker reinforces misalignment. When outreach targets presumed decision makers based solely on activity signals, it often fails to account for the broader buying group dynamics driving the evaluation.

Instead, intent data is most effective when used to identify coordinated research across accounts, enabling marketing and sales teams to support the entire buying group with relevant content, validation, and visibility. Understanding that intent reveals activity rather than authority helps reduce misdirected engagement and lowers the risk of stalled or no-decision outcomes.

"Intent data reveals buying activity, not decision authority. With large buying groups needing consensus, targeting presumed decision makers based on activity signals alone will continue to generate misaligned outreach and stalled deals. GTM teams should align content, proof points, and visibility to the full buying group, not just the most active contact. Coordinated account-level enablement is what transforms intent signals into buying confidence."



Victoria Albert
CMO, INFUSE



[Explore 6 steps to engaging defensive buying groups](#)



How should organisations rethink intent for a buyer-led reality?

Intent-based marketing is certainly not obsolete, but it must evolve. Shifting its focus from chasing prospects to interpreting buyer signals, [illuminating the dark funnel](#), and enabling decision making across complex buying groups is key to making a greater impact.

Ultimately, [GTM teams](#) should regard intent marketing not primarily as a tool for generating leads, but as a mechanism for facilitating informed and confident purchasing decisions.

Intent data is most powerful when it is used to guide visibility, content alignment, and build trust. When interpreted correctly, B2B intent data helps organisations prioritise the accounts showing the strongest buying momentum. Organisations that establish presence early, correlate signals intelligently, and orchestrate buyer enablement will outperform those relying on isolated metrics.

Rather than a holy grail, intent is a compass. Its value lies in how precisely it is applied.

Key takeaways

Understanding intent data can help GTM teams make more informed and strategic decisions throughout the buyer's journey.

01

INTENT REFLECTS RESEARCH, NOT READINESS

Organisations should treat intent insights as indicators of exploration rather than immediate purchase intent.

02

BUYING GROUPS, NOT INDIVIDUALS, DRIVE DECISIONS

B2B purchases involve multiple stakeholders researching in parallel. Effective strategies focus on account-level activity and coordinated engagement across the entire buying group.

03

INTENT WORKS BEST AS PART OF A BROADER GTM STRATEGY

Inbound, paid media, and brand visibility remain critical. Intent insights should guide where and when engagement matters most, rather than replacing other [demand generation](#) channels.

04

EXECUTION DETERMINES IMPACT

B2B intent signals highlight evaluation momentum, but outcomes depend on how effectively teams execute on those signals.

ACTIVATE BUYER SIGNALS AND TRANSFORM INTENT DATA INTO RESULTS

INFUSE helps B2B teams prioritise accounts, orchestrate coordinated engagement, and enable confident buying decisions across complex buying groups. Use insights to guide content, proof points, and outreach that drive pipeline and revenue growth.

[Speak with a demand expert](#)



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

How do companies use intent data to improve their marketing strategies?

Companies use B2B intent data to identify patterns of intent signals across buying groups, helping marketers prioritise accounts that are actively researching relevant topics. This allows teams to align content, media, and outreach with genuine B2B buying intent, improving visibility and engagement during early research stages.

How does intent marketing influence B2B sales strategies?

Intent marketing helps sales teams focus on accounts showing aggregated B2B buyer intent data rather than [isolated lead activity](#). By identifying coordinated research behaviour across stakeholders, sales can prioritise conversations with accounts that demonstrate meaningful B2B buying intent, improving timing and relevance.

How can I effectively use intent signals to improve outbound sales?

To improve [outbound performance](#), sales teams should analyse multiple B2B intent signals across accounts to understand when buying groups are actively evaluating solutions. Learning how to identify in-market accounts using intent data allows outreach to focus on accounts with rising engagement momentum rather than cold prospects.

Can INFUSE help me with intent-based marketing?

Through strategic [demand generation programmes](#), INFUSE can help you collect, analyze, and activate intent data to identify in-market accounts and guide targeted GTM strategies.

[Book your custom strategy consultation](#)





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