

# Tell Them What They Want To Hear:

Optimizing the BtoB Web Site With  
Account-Based Targeted Content



It has been 20 years since people began actively using the Internet in commerce, and it is fair to say that as the technology of the Internet has evolved, how people engage with it has changed as well. Even in the face of that shift, the BtoB web site continues to function as little more than a complex brochure for most companies. There must be a better way for BtoB web sites to serve their visitors.

The speed, accessibility and interaction points of online communication have gone through enormous changes. Now it is time to look at how we leverage these changes, and the changing behaviors of online buyers to improve the use of web site content in engaging more meaningfully with web visitors. Marketers need to leverage what they know to tell prospects, suspects and customers the elements of the corporate story and product offerings most relevant to them.

This E-book will analyze the importance of web site content in engaging site visitors, from the first touch through every stage of the buyer's journey, and how content can be used to provide a more relevant experience for the unique needs of the BtoB buyer as they are moved through the buy cycle and ultimately contribute to bigger goals, like increased conversions, deal velocity, revenue and more profit.

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Why does better engagement and increased conversion matter? The obvious answer is that the combination of the two lead to more pipeline activity and more revenue at the end of that process. But the reality is that engagement is the key to developing and maintaining any relationship with your prospects or your customers. Static sites that don't speak quickly, intelligently and with relevance to the audience will lose the attention of the visitor and fail in the core purpose for which they exist. The following content will highlight exactly how web site content fits into this picture as the foundation of building engagement and ultimately driving revenue.

## Chapter 1: Web Site Conversion Optimization: Getting More People to Do What You Want

**BtoB in the Old Days:** Back in 1991 when the Internet was opened up to commercial activity, most BtoB sales were still conducted in person, on the golf course, in the office or at the

bar. No one had a smart phone, and connecting with a social network meant actually having a conversation with trusted friends and colleagues. The utility of the Internet was that companies could have a web site that provided an overview of what they did and what was offered as a way to validate the conversations with a prospect in person. Ultimately the web site was an electronic brochure about the company, because it provided a means to prove that what was already said in person was real.



Indeed for most of the last 20 years, the BtoB site experience has been little more than the evolution of an increasingly interactive brochure. Something that could be pointed to in justifying a business decision that had been made independent of

the information being provided, and that was almost entirely focused on conveying a corporate message. As business offerings became more diverse and complex, more and more content was added to these online brochures. The resulting web site tends to be a collection of every thought and message the marketing team has ever wanted to convey.

### It's Not Your Parents' Internet Anymore

The BtoB web site is no longer a secondary support to the personal sale. It is now a critical component in every transaction; not a single sale takes place without some visit to the web site. The BtoB web site represents a front

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- Jay Gaines,  
Service Director, SiriusDecisions, Inc.

door, and no sale is completed without multiple visits from suspects and prospects.

The web site has become an interaction point in initial qualification, research, support and in a myriad other touch points, in addition to validation. In a BtoB sale, people interact with a company web site throughout the buying process, which makes it critical to provide content relevant to what they need when they are there. The challenge is in balancing the need for diverse content and simplifying the web experience for individual visitors.

Marketers have spent the last 20 years creating technologies that allow them to use the Internet as a more effective selling tool. Organizations now have the ability to observe

individual behaviors and glean incredible insights about the buyer from the actions of that very buyer. On a personal level, marketers can customize the purchase experience based on known history, similarly situated individuals and the active real-time engagement pattern of the web site visitor. It's clear how incredibly effective this kind of personalization can be in BtoC sales.

Buyers today are more sophisticated and are doing more of their own research and authentication before they come to the web site to raise their hand and say they are interested. The world has sped up and marketers can't expect to nurture a buyer relationship through 18 holes of golf when the buyer is entering the sales pipeline 70% later than just a few years ago.

Termed "Buyer 2.0," the next wave of BtoB buying behavior is driven by the streamlined access to information — without assistance from a salesperson. "Buyers are more informed and seek information independent of sales," according to research conducted by SiriusDecisions, Inc. "Buyers have access to overwhelming amounts of information, but seek intelligence they can trust to support their decision making process. How sales people want to sell has little impact on how buyers are choosing to buy."

Marketers have the ability to conduct more active engagement with the people visiting their web sites because they know so much more about who these visitors are today, and those people arrive better informed and better equipped to absorb relevant information if and when it is offered.

“70% of buyers have indicated that a vendor's web site was the most influential channel in making the purchase decision.”

- DemandGen Report

"BtoB marketers find themselves more challenged than ever in connecting with the modern buyer — i.e., Buyer 2.0 — at the right place and the right time in the buying cycle," noted Adam Needles, Chief Strategy Officer at LeftBrian DGA. "BtoB marketers also find it challenging to scale marketing operations that drive perpetual, one-to-one engagement, acquisition and nurturing of prospective buyers. Complicating things, technology is both problem and solution in this equation — i.e., technology is in part to blame for our challenges, as web 2.0 has resulted in a more empowered buyer — but it's also a key piece of the new equation via marketing automation and consumer relationship management technology."

## Capitalizing on How Far We Have Come

BtoB organizations know so much more today than they did even five years ago, both as buyers and as sellers. Companies know that engaging directly with a site visitor based on who they are and what they want is significantly more effective than inundating them with messages about the company and forcing them to independently find information relevant to their needs. This is the premise of buyer focused marketing, and is the key to web site conversion optimization:

understanding exactly who a visitor is and immediately providing them with targeted content that is relevant based on what they need.

BtoB is now positioned, after having had years of experience in watching what works for effectively engaging site visitors, to build technologies that take advantage of this wisdom and that are designed for the specific realities of the complex sale. BtoB isn't trying to sell a t-shirt to a 28-year-old in Boston and they shouldn't act like they are. What marketers should do is take advantage of the fact that they can now identify the company and industry of the individual visiting the site and speak to the specific needs of that industry, or even better the needs of the individual company based on their existing relationship with a company. This is about making the web site experience personal for the audience, and relevant based on their needs.

The way in which prospects interact with a web site has matured beyond being wowed by a glossy brochure and business related entertainment. Now is the time for the web site itself to mature. "Optimization" means to make the best or most effective use of; web conversion optimization is simply taking the available tools and the knowledge of site visitors to convert the web site from a static, single-message platform to an active, engaging medium for moving more of those visitors from anonymity to conversion to revenue.

## Chapter 2: Focus on Personalizing Content for the BtoB Web Site Visitor

In BtoB marketing today there is a substantial disconnect between driving traffic to a web site and then interacting with those visitors once they arrive. Through online advertising, SEO, SEM, marketing automation and targeted integrated campaigns, marketers have flooded their web sites with visitors, only a fraction of which are high-value prospects that are likely to convert and buy. Buyers are coming to web sites better educated, with less time to spend searching for relevant content and with an extremely short attention span. The focus



*Most BtoB web sites render generic messaging to resonate with a wide array of verticals. This strategy inhibits marketers' ability to target visitors with content information relevant to their needs and objectives.*

has to shift from delivering a generic information portal that requires multiple visitor clicks to find relevant information, to a dynamically responsive platform that presents pertinent content at the first touch.

“Our research shows that often only 20-30% of BtoB web traffic is coming from companies that would be categorized as ‘on-target.’ It’s vital to make sure your most valuable traffic sees the content and offers that are most relevant to them,” noted David Steinore, Director of Information Architecture at Demandbase.

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## Generic vs. Optimized

Web site conversion optimization for BtoB marketing is built on a foundation of relevant, targeted content that immediately engages the visitor by responding to their account-based needs.

## Lessons from BtoC

The brilliance of online BtoC sales is that they realized early on the importance of personalization. By delivering content based on relevant search terms (red running shoe search in Google presents a homepage of red running shoe choices when you click through to Foot Locker), or building a profile through cookies, prior visits, and shopping history meant that it was easy to guess what content was most likely to result in a sale on any particular visit.



- ✓ Blanket approach - “One size fits most”
- ✓ Web site mirrors a generic brochure
- ✓ Hope user will self-identify
- ✓ Does not provide targeted content



- ✓ Industry-specific content
- ✓ White paper offer focused on manufacturing use case
- ✓ Targeted podcast offer
- ✓ Relevant case study offer

The problem with applying the BtoC model directly for BtoB is multipart:

- A conversion and a sale are not the same thing;
- The buying cycle is significantly longer and more complex, and often requires human interaction;
- Search is rarely focused on a specific product; and
- BtoB does not sell to individuals, they sell to accounts.

As a result, many of the attempts to translate the success of the BtoC model have been underwhelming. BtoB can take the best of the intelligence gleaned from BtoC to create a more relevant, engaged buying experience focused on the needs of the account-based buyer by personalizing to the specific requirements of that company.

## Understanding the Account Identity

In the law a corporation is seen as a unique entity having its own identity. This, too, is how BtoB marketing needs to be looking at (and talking to) their business prospects. At least until we identify their individual identity and interests and begin nurturing them with an automated lead nurture program. The inability to deliver content and messages most relevant to a web visitor's account identity has led to the one-size-fits-all approach to BtoB web design previously discussed.


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Optimized, customer-focused web sites provide existing customers with the right content offers, messaging and access to the people and resources that will keep them as customers.



In personalizing the web experience to an individual buyer, it is important to look at the specific demographics that would influence buying behaviors: title, role, function, placement in pipeline, etc. Similarly when selling to an account, marketers need to understand the key attributes that define each account including: industry, revenue, size, location and more. This company-centric data provides insight into the messaging and offers that are most likely to result in a conversion. The problem has been that conventional methods of identifying site visitors focused on the individual rather than the account.

Demographics of BtoB buyers can be helpful for marketers to accelerate them through the sales cycle. By paying close attention to which offers prospects respond to and sending them similar targeted content, can help marketers evaluate content consumption to determine their place in the buying cycle.


Cookies have been the most common means of identifying site visitors, but they only work for return visitors, or when a visitor has followed a predetermined path to get to the site (such as a link provided in an email). In BtoB there are fewer return visits, so customizing content based on those few possibilities becomes cumbersome, costly and largely ineffective. The web experience needs to be optimized from the very first visit in order to have the greatest impact. When tracking an identified visitor through a marketing automation system, a cookie is only effective if the email recipient clicks through a specified path, and companies are limited in the type of customized content they can provide. If the visitors

Firmographics are the characteristics of an organization used to segment markets in market research. What demographics are to people, firmographics are to organizations. Firmographic details about an account include information like industry, annual revenue, employee count, address and more.

come to the site through any other means, all connection to their identity is lost and customization is impossible.

Legally the use of cookies may become increasingly difficult as they are now at the forefront of national privacy debates regarding online marketing. HR 654, the “Do Not Track Me Online” Act, introduced in February, would authorize the FTC to require marketers to provide a clear opt-out for all online tracking. The effect of the legislation would be to nullify any value cookies provide by once again limiting the data marketers can gather to that which is directly offered.

Cookies can be a tremendously effective tool to help BtoB marketers track individual web site behavior for previously identified web visitors, but if the goal is to convert more first time visitors, then content personalization based on account identifiers is necessary.



Public IP address information has increasingly been considered an alternative to cookie-based data gathering, but the value of the details provided is frequently no better than what you get through cookies. Companies offering content targeting through a reverse IP lookup can provide no more than what has been registered publicly. Often this information is divergent from the common information used in marketing and that companies would want to use in targeting a message to a prospect. For example, it would sound ridiculous to send a message saying “Hello, International Business Machines, Inc.” when everyone refers to the company as IBM. In addition, public IP information fails to provide marketing data such as industry, revenue or company size. This is the actionable firmographic information that can enable BtoB companies to effectively target content to a formerly anonymous web site visitor based on the company they work for, and Public IP information doesn’t provide it.

Effectively targeting content to an account has to be based on the unique business attributes of that account: common name, industry, annual revenue, the number of employees at the company and where they are located. This is personalization based on business identity and it allows you to speak to what matters to that visitor: how a solution can help companies in verticals like theirs, solve problems they face, and get better results.

“The ability for a company to know, in advance, when a target account from its sales and marketing database is about to visit its web site and to take action in a real-time manner to maximize the value of that visit has, until now, been nothing more than a marketer's pipedream.”

– Jeff Zabin, Chief and Research Director,  
Gleanstar, author of bestseller Precision Marketing

## Chapter 3:

### Identify, Engage, Convert!

Building backwards, it is easy to see that increased conversions come from engaged visitors, and it is easier to engage visitors if they are known.

Identification is the first step to building web site content that is relevant to the target audience, will engage them as a prospect and will move them toward conversion faster. And what we already know is that identity in BtoB starts with account identification, not the individual ID.

It's clear from the IP address that the site visitor is coming from Oracle. If companies also know the key firmographic information about Oracle, they can build an account-based picture of the prospect and are able to deliver information that companies like Oracle will find most relevant and engaging.

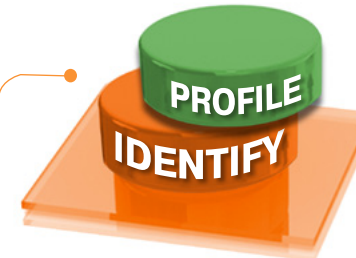
Firmographic-based buyer profiles based on the account-based attributes of existing customers can help marketers categorize web content and offers, focusing on what different types and sizes of companies respond to. Knowing what customers respond to helps companies identify the right mix of content and offers to share with the high-value prospects that belong to the same profile. In the same way, having the ability to understand where and with whom marketers have been less successful enables organizations to modify messaging to increase favorable future outcomes.

Once marketers understand who a visitor is, and where they fit in the profile of target customers, companies can optimize content offerings to deliver the most relevant message for their stage of the buying cycle. Knowing that Oracle is an enterprise level software company means that a targeted homepage message about the success of similar companies is much more likely to engage the visitor from Oracle than a generic message.

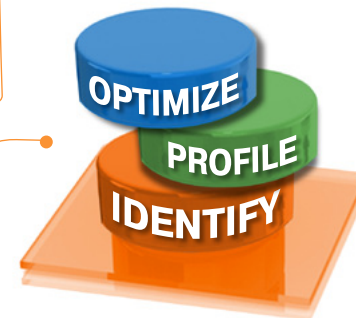


**Example:**  
Company: **ORACLE**

**Attributes:**  
Industry: Software & Technology  
Revenue: \$32 Billion  
Size: 105,000 Employees  
Location: Redwood City, CA 94065



**Account Status: Targeted Account**  
Enterprise Software  
>10,000 employees



**Content Strategy: Targeted Account**

- Targeted content (whitepaper)
- Sales notification
- Chat target
- Account-specific messaging



## Chapter 4: Putting it into Action

Everyone has heard the old adage in business, “the customer is always right.” Keep the focus on the customer, respond to what they need and ensure that engagement with the brand or product is easily accessible. This is the main takeaway of the web content analysis in this paper. Identify the prospect and present relevant content to engage them, provide the information they need and thereby increase the likelihood of

conversion. “The ability for a company to know, in advance, when a target account from its sales and marketing database is about to visit its web site and to take action in a real-time manner to maximize the value of that visit has, until now, been nothing more than a marketer’s pipedream,” noted Jeff Zabim, Chief and Research Director, Gleanster and Author of the bestseller *Precision Marketing*.

Let’s look at an example where a BtoB company leverages technology to maximize the value of their web site content:

### ArcSight

ArcSight is a global provider of security and compliance management solutions. The company typically serves a variety of different verticals that all have their own unique needs for security and compliance. As a sophisticated marketing organization, ArcSight was actively using marketing automation as well as analytics programs that allowed the company to drive and monitor site traffic. What ArcSight needed was a way to enhance the effectiveness of these tools to generate more leads and increase conversions. The company realized that it had great content to speak to the unique visitors landing on the site, but few of those visitors actually made it to where the content lived, there were too many clicks required and they were seeing a high bounce rate.

The company engaged marketing technology company [Demandbase](#) to identify and segment visitors coming to their web site by industry, providing insight that would enable them to customize the homepage content, in real time. The Demandbase Real Time Identification Service for Web Content allowed ArcSight to deliver unique and targeted content focused on the most relevant vertical. Telecom companies saw a message focused on the security and compliance

# ArcSight

requirements specific to the telecommunications industry; healthcare companies saw a message specific to the compliance needs of healthcare. By putting the right content in front of the right people at the right time, ArcSight was able to drive increased engagement and optimize their entire funnel.

By leveraging Demandbase's Real Time Identification Service, ArcSight dramatically increased engagement and conversions from their existing site traffic. The homepage screens delivered with customized content saw a 200% increase in click-through rate versus pages delivering generic content. ArcSight enhanced forms using Real-Time Identification Service data to shorten the number of fields and in turn, saw a 300% increase in conversion. In speaking directly to site visitors based on industry with content that was relevant to the industry needs ArcSight significantly improved conversion rates and increased the number of accounts in their funnel.





## Conclusion

In two decades of using the Internet as a marketing tool, marketers have learned an enormous amount about buyer behavior and how best to engage visitors online. Marketers know that speaking directly to the needs of visitors is much more effective than providing generic messages and hoping they will take the time to find what they need.

With BtoB in particular, marketers need to take advantage of understanding buyer behavior from the perspective of speaking to an account, not an individual. Marketers must work to understand the needs and behaviors of the account as a unique visitor. The ability to immediately deliver content that speaks to the unique needs of mid-size financial services companies, or enterprise healthcare companies, or start-up technology firms means that organizations greatly increase visitor engagement in those first few seconds and are able to capitalize on the resources invested to drive that traffic to the site and to optimize the entire web site experience from the first page load.

Content is how marketers speak to and engage with web site visitors. Failing to make that content relevant to the specific needs of visitors means that companies are wasting time, and likely money, by ineffectively converting web site traffic. Today technology can empower organizations with a complete picture of the account visiting a site: their name, industry, employee count, how much revenue they generate, etc. The logical thing to do with that information is to adapt the content strategy to speak directly, uniquely and intelligently to that account.

[Start today with a free web site audit:](#) Demandbase will evaluate your web site for account-based content customization, enabling marketers to provide a more intimate and effective web experience for BtoB prospects and customers.

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## About Demandbase

Demandbase is a technology company that enables BtoB marketers to improve marketing conversions and turn web traffic into sales. Delivered on demand, Demandbase's SaaS solutions leverage its proprietary Business Resolution Platform, combining real-time identification of the companies visiting a web site with a new breed of BtoB web analytics, measurement, and integration tools to make every customer or prospect interaction more effective, and significantly increase conversion rates. Demandbase works as a standalone service or integrated with other sales and marketing technologies to give them new intelligence, enabling companies to align marketing and sales strategies and improve overall campaign performance. Founded in 2006 and in use at more than 1,000 companies, Demandbase is headquartered in San Francisco, California, and funded by Adobe Systems (NASDAQ:ADBE), Altos Ventures and Sigma Partners.



## About DemandGen Report

DemandGen Report is a targeted e-media publication spotlighting the strategies and solutions that help companies better align their sales and marketing organizations, and ultimately, drive growth. A key component of the publication's editorial focuses on the sales and marketing automation tools that enable companies to better measure and manage their multi-channel demand generation efforts.

