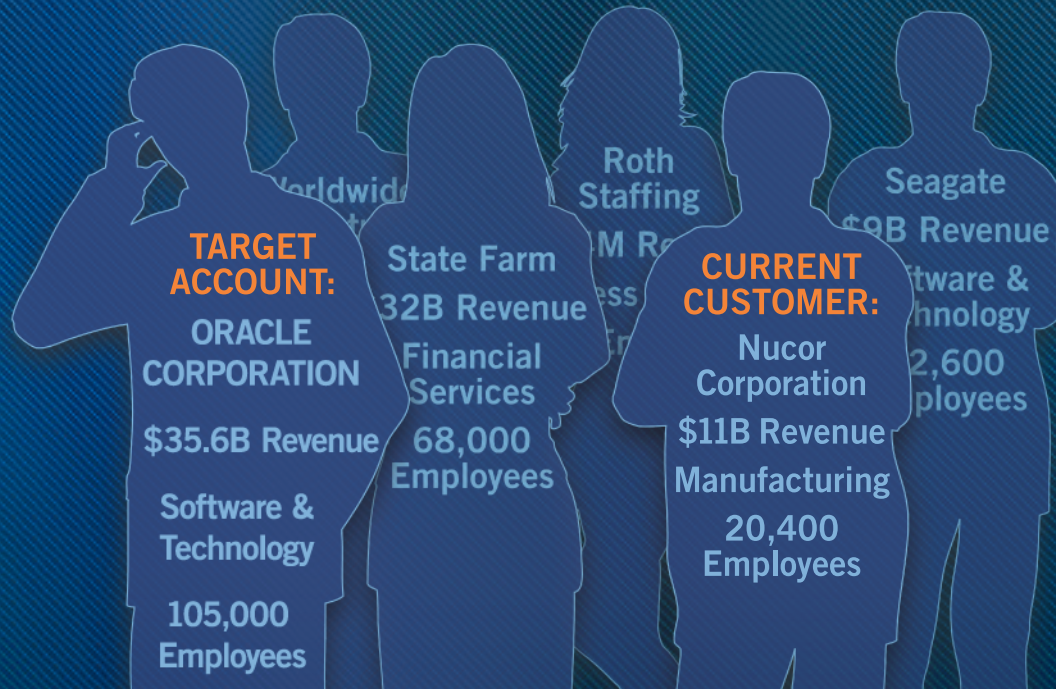


Elusive Buyer 2.0:

How Marketers Move Them from Anonymity to Revenue

By Ardath Albee



Executive Summary

Buyer 2.0 is the informed customer. They spend most of their buying process independently searching for and accessing information to learn more about the potential impact of their priorities and how to best go about addressing them. For B2B vendors to successfully attract and engage these buyers, new approaches, thinking and technology must be applied. Experiences must be consistently valuable and timely. It may surprise you to know that the corporate website, once considered a resource of last resort, is now rated as a critical component of the decision-making process by your buyers.

The biggest difference is that Buyer 2.0 has become savvy, standoffish and selective. He or she is looking for intelligence that's trustworthy from credible sources to help them take next steps with confidence. This compounds the challenges being faced by marketers today. It's no longer enough to get your content found by the right people. Marketers must now engage Buyer 2.0 for the entirety of the buying process—yes, even providing an assist when sales is invited to the party.

This eBook provides a framework for designing a strategy to engage this new buyer's preferences beginning when they're anonymous, building engagement and driving momentum to help sales increase the 21% of time that buyers allocate to conversations with them today.

The topics explored that support this process development include:

- How to increase visibility into Buyer 2.0
- Why every impression counts – from beginning to end
- How to use buyer knowledge to scale the power of personalization
- What “*Moneyball*” theory is and how it applies to account-based marketing
- Sales enablement methods that complete the marketing-to-sales process

When all is said and done, it's all about revenue. By taking an approach that focuses marketing strategy clearly on the needs and concerns of buyers—as well as overall business objectives—marketers can truly impact their company's revenue performance.

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

DemandGen Report

Depending on the source, lead management can increase revenues substantially:

- **5–10% according to Gartner**
- **10% according to IDC**
- **416% increase in closed deals according to Sirius Decisions**

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B2B Marketers Only Get One Chance to Make a First Impression

Research has shown that B2B buyers self-educate during close to 70% of their buying experience, invalidating the process salespeople have relied on in the past to build relationships from the start. This empowered buyer, aka Buyer 2.0, is taking longer to decide to identify themselves to vendors, often waiting until after creating their shortlist for final purchase consideration. Many B2B marketers are finding themselves in new territory when tasked with the responsibility to ensure their company is on that shortlist. When first impressions are being made without the ability for marketers to know what's working for whom versus what's not, opportunities are lost.

This is where the power of technology can provide transformative capabilities. As marketers have worked hard to improve the company website, their work has not gone unnoticed by buyers. The 2011 survey by ITSMA, How Buyers Consume Information, learned that solution provider websites have moved to the top slot for buyers, dropping peers (number 1 since 2007) down to 9th place. From a marketer's perspective, a [survey conducted by Demandbase and Focus.com](#) in 2011 found that the company website was the number one online source of new leads, second overall only to personal referrals.

Unfortunately, the same study found that 80% of respondents report the corporate website is not performing to its maximum lead generation potential. This is likely due to the lack of insight available to marketers to understand and interpret website visitor activity in a productive manner. With the increase in digital marketing displacing other traditional forms of offline marketing, the skills and tools needed to make this shift have not yet become the norm for marketers.

This needs to change—and change quickly—if companies want to establish the credibility and trust needed to motivate the “hand raising” that increases pipeline velocity and inserts salespeople into valid conversations. Research from IDC found that 56% of time during the buying process is spent searching for or engaging with content. This is a huge opportunity, but if you don't know who your buyers are—or at least what they're interested in—it's very hard to influence engagement levels and purchase intent.



80% of respondents report the corporate website is not performing to its maximum lead generation potential

Demandbase 2011 National
Website Demand Generation Study

Anonymous Website Visitor Tracking Is a Start

A number of marketing automation solutions provide anonymous website visitor tracking. Through reverse IP lookup, this information helps marketers understand the companies visiting their websites. The intention is for marketers to utilize this information to increase content relevance and also to append the data to a contact profile when the person completes a form. What this information does provide is context for determining which businesses are interested, but not engaging or converting.

When marketers can go back to look at origination source for website visits, gauge expectations based on the company represented, which leads to clues about why engagement with a specific page was abandoned, they can refine their messaging, content, and offers based on the identification of patterns and trends.

The real limitation that's not addressed with anonymous website visitor information capabilities in marketing automation systems is that it's only available after the fact. Historical perspectives are great, but hindsight won't necessarily make your company a preferred source for buyers in search of education, evidence and expertise if their first impression wasn't memorable. There is a bigger opportunity to consider.

Real-time Knowledge Trumps Historical Perspective

As the adage goes, you only get one shot at making a first impression. Historical perspective can provide insights to help marketers increase the relevance of their website content for future visitors, but their opportunity to make the best first impression on yesterday's website visitors is gone. If marketers know more about their buyers in real-time, it becomes possible to serve them content they perceive as highly relevant.

What's needed to automatically respond to real-time information is technology that facilitates the opportunity to know who's arriving at your company website before they land on the welcome mat. With the ability to identify the company and industry of the visitor (i.e., Firmographics), the website can automatically deliver the most relevant content and resources based on segmentation.

Segmentation: The New Black for Marketing

Segmentation is often identified as one of the biggest challenges for marketers. But, I'd argue that it's one of the most important processes for marketers to perfect. Grouping a marketing database by roles and industries is generally pretty easy with marketing automation—once you know who they are. But, consider the difference it would make if marketers have the ability to segment anonymous visitors in real time based on their industry or company size as they visit your website.

For example, imagine the difference in a first impression if the visitor arrives on the website to find a demo, case study, several articles, and a special report all focused on his industry and addressing the issues he faces from a relevant perspective.

Buyers are busy. They have short attention spans. The effort they need to expend to find information that meets their needs must be minimized to make a lasting first impression that brings them back. Remember that, since they have yet to identify themselves, the strength and quality of the website's content and presentation must be vivid enough to motivate return engagement.

Buyer 2.0 Values Privacy but Will Opt-in for Value

The upshot for B2B marketers is that Buyer 2.0's desire for anonymity is not likely to diminish unless they see the value for identifying themselves earlier. Technology that enables real-time segmentation can transform a marketer's ability to make a good first impression. But, without the right content, carefully crafted to engage them through the sharing of valuable information they seek, it won't produce the best results. The truly inspiring opportunity is that with the right content and proactive technology capabilities, shortening time to identification is probable. This is the first step that's needed to enable marketers to impact the buying experience from the start—rather than trying to catch up at the end when it might be too late.



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.

*—David Steinore
Director of Information Architecture,
Demandbase*



Watch the replay to learn best practices for analytics and segmentation.

Knowledge is Power When Nurturing Buyers

Lead nurturing is often confused with drip email campaigns or even the intention of staying “top of mind” with prospects so that when the time to purchase arises, your firm makes the short list. Andre Pino, during his time with Forrester Research, got closer with a [definition](#) he shared on his blog, “*Lead nurturing is a process by which leads are tracked and developed into sales-qualified leads.*” Andre’s definition—and those commonly understood for drip email and “top of mind” campaigns—indicate that a lead must be known and in a company’s database in order to be nurtured. With regard to today’s distributed online and social buying environment, I disagree.

When designing lead nurturing programs, it’s important to address how the traits exhibited by Buyer 2.0 have changed the rules for engagement. I define lead nurturing as:

“The process of engaging prospects by providing the information and dialogue they need at each stage of their buying process to position your company as the best choice to help them achieve their business objectives.”

Three points to take away from the definition:

1. Nurturing is not confined to tracking, databases, or email
2. Nurturing is not limited to decision makers
3. Nurturing must shape the dialogue across the buying experience

As B2B marketers, we must consider that buyers will engage with us via multiple channels and, as pointed out in the article I wrote recently on first impressions, buyers are self-educating and waiting much longer to self-identify, or opt into your database. If you don’t broaden your view of nurturing, your marketing programs will fail to produce the results marketers are now being held accountable to produce.



Every Impression Counts

Lead nurturing moves beyond first impressions to capitalize on every impression made to build a viable relationship with a prospect that transforms them into a customer. Consistently making the best impression depend upon the ability of your content to:

- Provide the “anchor” idea for the best way to solve the problem
- Deliver a consistent experience regardless of channel
- Pull prospects to your company’s web properties from other channels
- Accelerate engagement over time that motivates prospects to take action
- Stimulate conversations between prospects, peers, and colleagues

Ultimately, during a B2B complex sale, there is more than one person involved in making a decision. Marketers who limit themselves to a focus on decision makers do so at their own peril. [Research by IDG Connect](#) finds that the number of influencers involved in a purchase decision has increased by 20 percent. The issue marketers need to address is that the needs and perspectives of these influencers on the buying committee will vary from those of the decision maker.

From end user to peripheral departmental impact, the solution under consideration will not affect all stakeholders in the same way. Their perceptions of risk will differ, as will those related to value. Marketing content and interactions must address each influencer’s concerns sufficiently, or risk losing the ability to gain the consensus that necessitates a sales conversation as the next logical step with your company.

From Individual to Account – What triggers the shift for marketers?

The existence of buying committees changes the game for B2B marketers. Instead of persuading one person—the role of consumer marketers—we must persuade from 3 to 21 people, depending on which research applies to your situation. This is where technology plays an ever-increasing role in marketing-to-sales effectiveness.

Marketing analytics have been making steady progress from an overall aggregate view to an individual one. But, when selling to companies, it’s important to understand the behavior of all of the contacts associated with the account in line with its characteristics, or firmographics.

The number of influencers involved
in a purchase decision has increased
by 20%

IDG Connect

Here's an example of a trigger to shift from individual to account focus:

An anonymous website visitor lands on your homepage. Because you have the technology to identify the firmographics of the visitor, your website automatically displays relevant, industry-related content.

The visitor clicks on a link reads a thought leadership article and clicks an embedded hyperlink to a gated content offer. Once again, because you already know the firmographics of the visitor, the form presented is short—asking only for essential information—making it easy for the visitor to choose to convert and gain access to the offer.

Over the next week, the score of the new contact begins to increase, showing higher activity as he returns to your website to proactively access more of your content.

Additional anonymous visits from the same company are identified the next week.

By analyzing the activity, you learn that four additional visits from that company have accessed similar topical content, but have not filled out a form to access a gated offer.

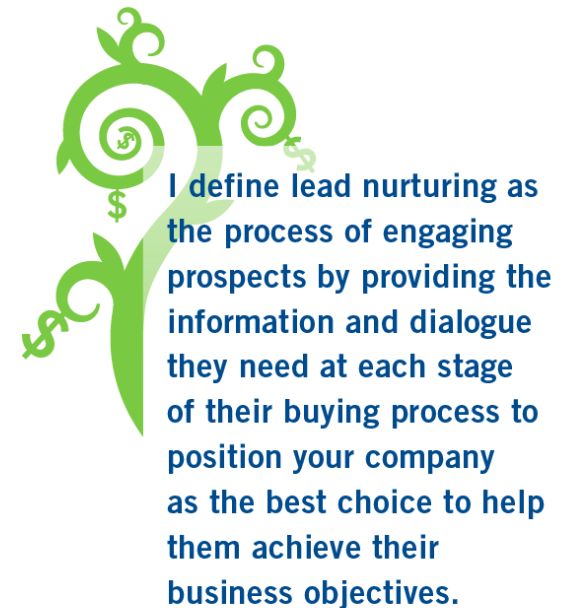
You send an email to the contact you know about with another relevant content offer and an invitation to share it with colleagues. The content offer is a white paper discussing the overall impact of your solution on various stakeholder interests.

The link leads to a form which can be shortened to name, email, and title because you already have the company's firmographic information and know that it's in the sweet spot of your ideal customer profile.

Several of the contact's colleagues fill out the form and access the white paper. Now you know interest is real and how to define it based on roles and responsibilities of the various contacts.

Highly personalized content can now be provided to nurture the new additions to your database and a notification can be sent to sales to follow-up.

Marketing automation systems get you close, but additional technology that can enhance anonymous visitor information can provide a competitive advantage in knowing just when



*—Ardath Albee
CEO
Marketing Interactions, Inc.*

you have the attention of an account—not just an individual. When aggregated attention happens, it's time to make a move.

Clean Data Makes All the Difference

Data is inarguably one of the obstacles marketers must overcome to improve personalization of content delivery that hits the relevance mark. CSO Insights has been following database accuracy for years. One trend they discovered during their 2011 Lead Management Optimization survey is that, “prospect data accuracy is more of a challenge and is deteriorating.” When asked about their organization’s ability to effectively use database capabilities to drive highly targeted and relevant lead generation campaigns, only about 30% of respondents said they did a good job. Less than one third of respondents reported prospect data accuracy higher than 75 percent.

With buyers shying away from identifying themselves to vendors, entering incorrect data, and otherwise avoiding direct contact, technology that can append or correct the information in a marketing automation system database should be a tool of choice.

The ability to know as much as possible about website visitors provides the capability to nurture them effectively before a form is ever filled out. Prospects don’t have to be in your database to be nurtured. If they do, you’re starting from a disadvantage and will have difficulty unseating the vendors that have been able to form a relationship earlier in the process.

Knowledge is Nurturing Power

The more you know about your prospects—inside or outside your database—the bigger the opportunity to provide relevant content offers. With content designed to motivate “next steps” activity, it’s no longer necessary to confine the concept of lead nurturing to your database. Technology is available to provide competitive advantage that levels the playing field for marketers’ intent on engaging the standoffish Buyer 2.0. The more you know about them, the more effective your marketing programs can become. What marketers need is visibility enhanced by technology, a focus on personalized interactions, and an integrated content marketing strategy that generates a magnetic pull for prospects who match your ideal account profile.

“Prospect data accuracy is more of a challenge and is deteriorating.”

CSO Insights

Personalization is the B2B Marketing Power Play

A common goal in B2B marketing is to reach and engage specific individuals defined as decision makers. However, because most purchases are made by a team, the buying process has changed and marketers need to broaden their approaches in response to reach this group of decision makers. The buying committee for a considered purchase is not a new concept, yet marketers appear to have tunnel vision about who they target with lead generation and nurturing programs.

A survey conducted last month by Demandbase found that 68% of the marketers who responded indicated they had a complete understanding of their target markets (report coming soon). I have to tell you that set me back a bit, since my experience with many companies is that this is not true. They may know who they're trying to sell to, but their understanding of those buyers is far from complete.

Backing up my perspective is another sneak peek at the survey results that finds the top marketing concern is targeting the right people at the right company. This should not be the top concern if a complete understanding of target markets exists.

Connecting the dots between these two issues is imperative if marketers are to be effective in increasing their level of persuasion across the buying committee. The opportunity is to institute an account-based marketing approach that looks beyond a single decision maker.

Account-based marketing is an approach that targets all members of the buying committee with the personalized information they need to motivate action, eliminate obstacles, and reach a consensus that results in a purchase decision.

Done correctly, the results from account-based marketing can include:

- *Well-informed buyers*
- *Fewer objections*
- *Higher perceived value for the solution*
- *Shorter buying cycles*
- *Lower instances of no decision being made*



Purposeful Personalization

Personalization has been a marketing buzzword for a number of years, but it has yet to be realized as a strategic influence during the B2B buying experience. To become a marketing power play, personalization must get far beyond inserting name, title, or company into email messages or focusing on industry. To wield influence with personalization, marketers must design content to address the priorities and concerns of each member of the buying committee as they relate to the intended purchase.

An example scenario for a buying committee could be:

Fred, in product development, is championing the purchase of a project management solution to promote collaboration within global teams in order to shorten time to market.

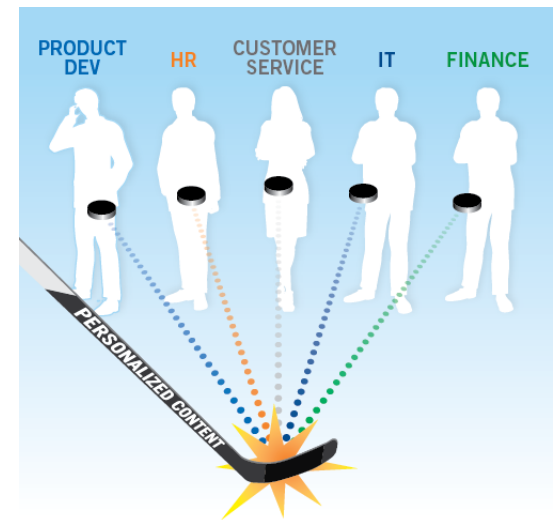
Diane, in human resources, is worried about training and user adoption issues that could limit the ROI of the solution Fred prefers.

Sally, in customer service, has concerns about how this will impact the ability of her staff to support product launches by creating another silo of product information with limited accessibility for her team due to a lack of integration options.

Harry, in IT, isn't convinced that the security provided by the solution is comprehensive enough to ensure data protection of the company's intellectual property used during product design.

Mark, in finance, thinks the total cost of ownership is too high given the concerns of the other members of the buying committee.

Whether real or perceived, leaving issues such as these unaddressed can derail the deal. More importantly, if your marketing is focused on only one of these individuals, your chance of helping each of them overcome their individual objections is not likely. In contrast, an account-based focus skews the odds in your favor by taking the entire account's needs into consideration.



Automated Personalization Drives Conversions

Just imagine if you had the ability to present information that Fred, Diane, Sally, Harry and Mark want upon their arrival on your website as anonymous visitors. The idea of creating what is in essence a “zero click” experience is not wishful thinking. The technology that enables it exists today. The ability to remove the effort it usually takes to find relevant content will boost your company’s credibility and serve to convince more of your anonymous visitors to convert. General content will not be perceived as valuable enough to pay for with the exchange of contact information for access.

According to Marketing Experiments, utilizing the first seconds of a website visit to help people clarify where they are, determine what they can do and why they should is the orientation needed to optimize conversions. Serving up the right content upon arrival is the key to gaining conversions. And, once the visitor has converted, the personalization can get even better.

For example, with account-based marketing, you have the opportunity to customize forms to collect information that helps you improve how you match content to visitors. Because you can establish the firmographic information for the account, you don’t need to collect it again, allowing you to keep your forms short and simple to complete—while gaining more usable insights to improve and extend the dialogue used to engage the person at the same time.

Personalization Promotes Conversations

We’ve all experienced buyers pushing their inclusion of salespeople toward the end of the purchasing process—after they believe they know enough to put your solution on their short list. The trick to getting there faster—and consistently—is to provide information that fuels conversations between the members of the buying committee or account. Armed with your ideas from content that has been developed to allay each of their concerns, your company is actually “in the room” as conversations take place. Getting salespeople invited into the conversation will occur faster if your company’s ideas are already in use.

Personalized content is the ultimate expression of relevance. Content flows that weave together those priorities and share the story about how each one is resolved—even contributing to the success of the other committee members—nurtures the entire account in a holistic manner, not just a single decision maker. Never forget that a decision maker in a considered purchase is not making that decision alone. By designing content focused on

addressing the varying priorities of the members of the buying committee from an account perspective, personalization becomes the marketing power play.

In order to execute this power play reliably and with repeatable results, marketers must also revisit the way in which they're defining and prioritizing the accounts they promote to sales for pursuit. Every potential account may not be the best acquisition choice in relation to business goals. Applying "Moneyball" theory just may be what tilts competitive advantage in your company's favor.

How to "Moneyball" Your Named-Account List to Win Better Business

B2B companies have been defining their markets with the same types of characteristics for years. Although the means for pursuit have shifted, the basis for it has not. We tend to approach market definition based on surface details such as size, industry, and revenues. Assessing those details is a great filter to start with, but what if we're missing something pivotal? What if the way we prioritize which accounts to pursue is no longer relevant to our business objectives?

Moneyball is the story of how Billy Beane, General Manager of the Oakland Athletics baseball team overcame budget limitations by focusing on only one statistic for player recruitment—on-base percentage. His approach caused a lot of controversy with his more traditional scouts who were focused on surface characteristics such as style of play, batting average, steals, and speed. Billy stuck to his plan and the result was a 20 game winning streak in 2002 that still holds the record in the American League.

If we cast marketers as the general managers of the team, then it's up to them to fill the roster with the right players, or accounts. When defining target markets, it's natural to look at our existing customers and try to model our pursuit after the characteristics they exhibit. But there's a lot more riding below the surface that we shouldn't overlook.

For example, let's say your highest-revenue customer is represented by a Fortune 500 telecommunications company. Based on looks alone, that company might be the all-star,

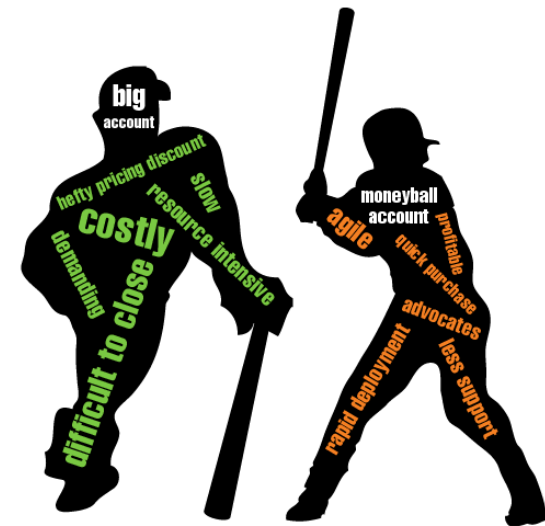


the Jason Giambi, but as you dig deeper, you learn that this company took nearly four years to close and had two salespeople dedicated to full-time pursuit of the deal. Closing this account also required the concession of a hefty pricing discount. Supporting this customer costs your company the equivalent of three full-time employees.

Getting to Your “On-Base Percentage”

Those big accounts are nice to have in your customer portfolio, but replicating them is time and resource intensive—as well as costly. With fewer salespeople making quota, more players involved, and buying cycle time lengthening, perhaps the criteria for prioritizing account pursuit should shift. Unfortunately, in B2B marketing, it’s unlikely that only one statistic will define your best markets. But, by taking a deeper dive into customer characteristics, marketers can focus on five that will help them find hidden potential worthy of an “at bat” with sales.

Billy Beane’s goal was to win more baseball games with limited resources. Yours is to identify and cultivate accounts that will bring more value to your company. If you were to evaluate your customers by answering the questions below, what patterns would you find?



Which customers decided to purchase in the shortest timeframe?

Which customers had the shortest time to deployment?

Which customers master the use of your solution, requiring less support?

Which customers paid full price to gain the value you provide?

Which customers have become company advocates?

From the customer lists you’ve compiled in response to each question, how many of them are on more than one list? How many customers are on all five of the lists?

Of the customers on more than one list, which roles or contacts actively participated in making the decision? If you match these roles up to the accounts your company is pursuing, how many of them show evidence of similar active participation? Given what you've learned through this analysis, do you see more opportunities for personalized content that can drive higher engagement in these accounts?

When you look at the overlay of customers across the lists, which combination will deliver the most impact on your company's business objectives? For example, is a shorter time to decision with a full purchase price the best value for your company? Or, would shorter time to deployment and an advocate willing to be featured in a case study and make customer referrals provide more impact on long-term objectives?

Marketers who are building the account "roster" for the development of a customer "team" have the ability to create much more impact to overall company objectives than they may have thought possible in the past. It takes a directed approach and an analysis of meaningful data to derive a plan and, more importantly, to trust in your choices enough to follow them through.

Persistence Creates the Tipping Point

Even against tremendous pressure, the resistance of his head coach, the discontent of his scouts and the skepticism of the executive office, Billy Beane stuck to his plan. He breathed it and he believed in it. He even went so far as to trade players his coach favored who didn't have the right on-base percentage in order to keep them out of the lineup. Eventually, the team coalesced and started winning games. The team became unstoppable for a record-breaking number of games. Afterward, other teams began adopting this method and many teams now count statistical analysts among their core staff.

The same must be true for marketing strategy—especially during a complex sale. If you're going to change your strategy for only a fraction of the buy cycle, then don't bother because it won't have enough time to work. If, on the other hand, you're going to commit to the definition of a sales-ready account based on the criteria identified after strategic analysis, then you have a chance to truly shift your win ratio. Not just in the number of deals won, but in the broader impacts across the company based on the statistics that align best with your company's overall corporate objectives.

IDC research shows that it takes an average of 19 months to create a new B2B customer and includes multiple touches.

There's a big difference between focusing on how many clicks and views your content can pull, versus generating those clicks and views from the "on-base" accounts you've targeted due to their probability of delivering the most value to your company. What you need is the technology to measure and monitor these quality transactions from a named-account basis, rather than measuring activity in the aggregate.

Identifying which accounts to pursue and then focusing all your energy on attracting, engaging and converting them with highly personalized content and interactions is a much better strategy than pursuing just any lead or prospect that could become your customer. Strategic customer acquisition can impact the top line as well as the bottom by positioning your company to win better business.

Replacing Your All-Star

The telecom mentioned in the earlier example is your Jason Giambi, the all star. The "irreplaceable" player. Billy Beane knew that when he lost Jason Giambi, he couldn't replace him with one player so he didn't try. He did it with three. By applying *Moneyball* theory to your named-account list, marketers can help the sales team discover hidden gems that can be acquired in a fraction of the time, support and cost of "Giambi Telecom." Not only will your company become more sustainable, but adjusting your criteria for named-account pursuit could help you break revenue records your competitors can't touch. The next task at hand is to ensure that your sales team has exactly what they need to make the most of every "at bat."

From Marketing to Sales: Enabling the Strategic Pursuit of Named Accounts

One of the responsibilities that marketers must master as they develop lead management processes is how to best determine which accounts are transitioned to salespeople for pursuit. For this transition to promote the best outcome there must be a qualified account definition in place that has been agreed to by both marketing and sales.

However, as you've no doubt experienced, buyer 2.0 isn't quite as easy to assess as he has been in the past. Buyer 2.0 is elusive, preferring to steal bases as he proceeds through the buying process rather than hit a solid run to first base where you can clearly identify him and proceed to coach him around the bases to conversion as he crosses home plate.

As was discussed in the previous section, pursuing a B2B complex sale with a strategic account-based approach can arm marketers with the ability to identify and prioritize accounts based on indicators that they are most likely to become ideal customers. But that's not enough.

Due to the aloofness of buyers, the "visible" sales cycle is shortening allowing salespeople much less time to establish a relationship and influence the deal. To provide the assist, marketers need to prioritize the accounts with the best potential, as well as to help salespeople step into the conversation as if they've been there all along.

From "Traditional Scout" to Strategic Pursuit

Reducing reliance on assumptions can be a big transition for salespeople who have the "traditional scout" mentality. In *Moneyball*, physical attributes, flash and style were replaced by hard data and one significant statistic. It will be hard for salespeople to give up on the all-star player accounts to focus on accounts that may not appear as lucrative on an individual basis. This being said, once they see an improved close rate with a shorter timeframe, they can be swayed.

Consider how your sales force chooses the leads and accounts they pursue today. It's likely that there's a lot of folklore involved in their selection process, including:

- The experience of the VP of Sales
- Similarities to past deals
- Standard demographics
- Anecdotal evidence and assumptions
- The right answers to the wrong questions
- The perceived importance of the brand

In the past, salespeople didn't have much choice but to rely on their knowledge and networks to help them assess the potential of accounts. If it didn't "swing" like the player they were used to drafting, then the time allocated to pursuit fizzled quickly. Intuition and past experience is no longer good enough to produce the best results in today's swiftly evolving market environment.

The insights available via interactive dialogues supported by technology allow companies to integrate data from individual leads into accounts as well as to slice and dice it in many different ways. By determining the commonalities shared by your most lucrative customers, account prioritization can take on new importance in helping salespeople to achieve quota and contribute noticeably to additional business objectives.

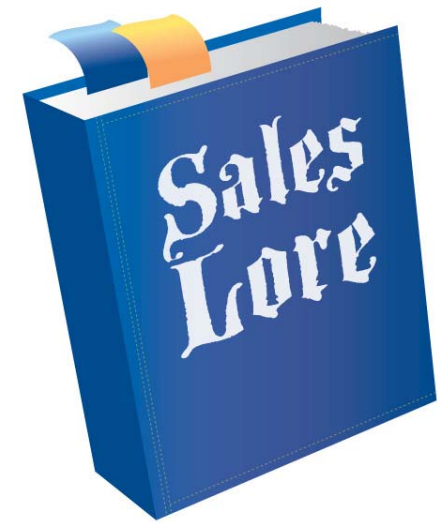
"Draft Day"— Strategic Account Escalation

In B2B demand generation, draft day is not as much an event as a concept. With the advent of lead monitoring and scoring, leads and accounts can be "drafted" when appropriate and sent to sales for pursuit. Success is dependent on the strategy behind the draft and the criteria used for escalation.

Marketers have an incredible freedom that many salespeople do not. Salespeople risk alienating potential accounts if they try to engage all of the buying committee members individually. Marketing communications can be targeted to a variety of personas within an account. Each relevant content offer can be designed to help the persona solve the problem in relation to their perspective, as well as to find common ground with other members of the buying committee.

The more data available that can serve to define the characteristics of an account, the better marketers can arm their salespeople with background information they can use to keep the deal progressing for all parties involved in the decision.

Consider which commonalities are shared between your most profitable customers that could be used to create advantages for your salespeople. Based on whatever you sell, this could include:



- **Technology Systems**

Consider which of your customers use the same ERP, Analytics, CRM, BI, unified communications, or other business systems. If you notice that there's a pattern showing a majority of your most successful customers use the same system, find out if there's a direct correlation to the use of your solution and consider including that as a criterion for escalation.

- **Account Contacts**

If after reviewing past customer acquisitions, you notice that the same business units are involved in making the decision, accounts that include active participation from those types of contacts (personas) may be farther along in the purchasing process and warrant sales follow-up.

- **Defined Need**

What's the primary reason your most successful customers buy your solution? There can be many reasons to buy a solution (e.g. increase efficiencies, drive ROI, reduce costs, or improve performance). Are specific accounts engaging with content related to solving that problem? Or, perhaps they've answered a progressive profiling question that indicates their need definition.

- **Increased Activity**

One lead or contact viewing multiple pages—including product-specific pages—doesn't represent the same opportunity that activity conducted by multiple contacts from the same company does. Additionally, consider the level of participation. Committing to and attending a one-hour webinar and asking questions and spending enough time on web pages to actually read them or watch the entire video makes a big difference in gauging buying stage. By assessing the aggregate activity of the account, rather than the individual, prioritization and escalation to sales can be orchestrated with optimal timing.

3 Ways Marketing Can Support the Sales Handoff

Once criteria has been established for how accounts will be identified for handoff to sales, marketers have a brilliant opportunity to aid in creating a transition designed to keep deal momentum moving.

Marketing Assists include:

- 1. Advantage Criteria Playbooks:** Once you've determined which criteria to use for escalation and why it creates an advantage, document it with examples of how salespeople can use it to progress the deal. Obviously you'll want to gain agreement from sales for the criteria, but only select salespeople will be involved. Each criterion is useless unless all salespeople understand why it's important to the achievement of their goals—as well as those of the business.
- 2. Content Cliff Notes:** Salespeople are not going to read marketing content. This being said, they will read a summary of the key points and the questions the content was designed to answer for specific personas. Providing key messaging along with suggestions for additional collateral and case studies that the salesperson can offer to extend a specific dialogue—along with email copy or templates—can be very useful. The reason most marketing content is never used is that salespeople don't see the value or relevance.
- 3. Account Activity History Summaries:** Many marketing automation systems will transfer activity histories to the CRM system at the time of transition. Even so, salespeople armed with an understanding of what that history means from an account perspective will be better prepared to step into the relationship with information perceived to add value. This may require a bit of manual preparation, but automation can only take a B2B sale so far. Marketers have a keen understanding of their content strategies and how they are designed to promote engagement and interaction within accounts.
Helping salespeople quickly identify which contacts have engaged with similar content can be indicative of members of the buying committee who have already reached a consensus. With a good idea of who's the best champion, the salesperson can formulate a winning strategy for pursuit.



Sales Enablement is Critical for Strategic Account Acquisition

Buyer 2.0 is blurring the traditional lines that used to separate marketing and sales. With marketing needing to step up and engage accounts throughout the buying process, this also means they must share the insights and knowledge they accrue with sales. Based on the data now available across every stage of buyer engagement, new processes and approaches can be developed to align more closely with buyers who purposefully delay the entry of salespeople into the game. Most importantly, the data now allows us to define viable opportunities at a more granular level. By identifying the best accounts for pursuit—not just the all-stars—marketing and sales can work together seamlessly to provide a better buyer experience that results in more wins for both sides.

From Anonymity to Revenue

During the course of this eBook, you've been presented with a framework for a comprehensive strategy you can design to improve your lead management processes from curiosity to customer. The importance of each of the components cannot be overstated. From first impression to value-added sales conversation, the ability to increase customer conversions and address overall business objectives will improve the share of influence marketers can have in relation to their company's success.

Technology is a critical factor in the execution of marketing strategy—especially in relation to elusive Buyer 2.0. In fact, [Gartner analyst Laura McLellan](#) recently predicted that by 2017, CMOs will spend more on IT than their counterpart CIOs. It's truly an evolutionary time for B2B marketing, and the opportunities to become proven contributors to business objectives—rather than fluff and unicorns—are available to marketers who look beyond the tactics of just keeping up to the creation of strategies that serve to create and sustain quantifiable impact to revenue generation.

Make the best first impression, nurture beyond your database, personalize precisely, evaluate the criterion for account pursuit and help sales provide more value. Pretty soon elusive Buyer 2.0 will be knocking on your door – rather than the other way around.

About the Author and Sponsor



Ardath Albee, CEO of her firm Marketing Interactions, Inc., applies 25 years of business management and marketing experience to help B2B companies with complex sales create eMarketing strategies that use contagious content to turn prospects into buyers. Ardath authors the popular [Marketing Interactions blog](#) and is a frequent industry speaker. Her book, *eMarketing Strategies for the Complex Sale* was published by McGraw-Hill. Ardath was recently selected as one of the 50 Most Influential People in Sales Lead Management for 2011.

Please visit her [Website](#) and follow her on [Twitter](#).

DEMANDBASE

Demandbase is a technology company that enables B2B marketers to improve conversions through personalization and measurement. Demandbase's solutions leverage its proprietary Business Resolution Platform, including Real-Time identification of the formerly anonymous companies visiting a web site, and unique analytics to make customer or prospect interactions more effective, resulting in increased conversion rates and lower cost of sales. Demandbase works as a standalone service or integrated with other sales and marketing technologies to give them new intelligence about their web visitors, and improve overall campaign performance. Founded in 2006, Demandbase is headquartered in San Francisco, California. For more information, please visit www.demandbase.com

Outtakes: Brainstorming “Moneyball” Theory

A lot goes into creating strategic content. In my work with Demandbase, I was asked to create content that would help marketers understand how technology that enables them to engage anonymous website visitors more readily, convert them into contacts and then focus on how marketing from an account perspective can transform their results.

We thought it might be interesting to share with you how the “Moneyball” theory for account-based marketing was developed. Plus, we just plain loved the creative email exchange that lead to the final result.

The Big Idea

Jason Stewart, Director of Marketing for Demandbase sparked the idea with this suggestion, via email:

Ardath,

I was just meeting with Shari, and was wondering what you thought of the following as a possible topic for your next article:

How to "Moneyball" Your Named Account List: X Things To Consider when Building Out An Account-Based Marketing Approach

The thinking is, just like with the book and movie Moneyball, there are things we consider to be important when building out the list of companies we want to acquire as customers which may, in actuality, not be the most likely indicator that these companies will ever actually become a customer.

For example, if your very best customer is a financial services company and they have had tremendous success with your products or services (vocal supporter on the speaking circuit, agrees to be quoted in press releases, case study is a work of art, name brand everyone knows, etc) that doesn't always mean you should go after more of the same.

What if:

- The financial services segment is only a very small part of your overall customer base, and you have many more customers in healthcare and manufacturing?
- That customer took 4 times as long to close as your other customers

In "Moneyball" they talk about the old-fashioned baseball scouts who relied more on the surface characteristics of their prospects to make their decisions. Who is the fastest, who has the right kind of body, right kind of arm, etc. They relied on these things because they didn't always have the statistics to bolster their opinions. They have the statistics now, or at least they have a better understanding of which statistics are important and as a result, they have changed the way they select players.

We need to take a similar approach to picking the companies we are going to pursue. And we now have the ability to dissect more of the data we have about them to see what they have in common. The recommendation is to take a closer look at the numbers and statistics to find the provable, common characteristics of your customers and rely less on the "flashy" components of your existing customer list.

What is worth more? 5 small named accounts that close in 30 days and are easily supported, or one big name that closes in 300 days and demanded a cut rate and sucked up all my resources in pre-sales and post-sales support?

Just a thought, feel free to call me to discuss...

Jason

Fascinated, but Too Literal

Well, anyone who knows me knows I love to play with new ideas for strategic approaches. There was also a bit of serendipity since I had just seen the movie two days prior to Jason's email. My response:

Hi Jason,

I just saw Moneyball on Sunday – haven't read the book – but I was fascinated by the story. I think this could be fun. And moving from Power Play to Moneyball would work when it folds into the eBook.

The other thing in addition to what you say below that I got from Moneyball is that you have to stick to your guns to get it to pay off. It seemed to me that there was a kind of tipping point which is the same in marketing. It takes a while – especially if your sale is more complex. And many marketers don't stick with it, deciding to change themes after a quarter or toss one strategy for another, thereby forfeiting any progress they may have made. Against all the naysayers, Billy stayed "all in" with Pete's idea. This being said, the Oakland A's lost the championship even though they won 20 straight games to set a record that still holds in the American League.

I agree that we can show people how to look at their accounts differently, but how do we convince them that it will pay off when the theory didn't hold up in the story? Or am I over thinking it?

Thanks!

Ardath

Consider the Possibilities

Jason gets me to think about the approach, rather than the overall goal of winning the championship:

To me, the theory totally paid off. If the only measure of success is a World Series Championship then they failed. But on a whole, using a different strategy to compete with the "big boys" that have more resources and bigger budgets was the key. To me that is successful.

To be able to consistently be included in the process, whatever the process may be. To get the call to participate in an RFP, to become more of a known quantity to the companies that matter through selectively focusing budget on the CORRECT accounts.

In the long run, there are always going to be accounts you will not win because your opponent had too much money to spend on "talent." But if you consistently win enough accounts (games) year over year then you are a powerhouse all on your own, right? I think it could work ... and I LOVE your angle on having to remain committed to the process in order for it to succeed.

Jason

Now I'm On Board

I'm getting really excited now. This is something I deal with in client projects all the time. Not always the availability of resources, but applying them for the best outcomes, commitment and developing a process to assist with changing how they market. Not to mention that leveling the playing field is always a challenge I can't resist. So, the question in my mind was how to use *Moneyball* as a cool way to get people to think about looking at their account prioritization differently that could help them win deals that were better for the company overall, not just deals that closed.

Then Jason planted this seed:

But what are the statistics to monitor? The "overlooked" statistics? There are things that are important that aren't always easily measured, or at least replicable without a lot of heavy research on the front end ...like for Demandbase we constantly perform well with companies that use a specific marketing automation platform. Better than companies that use another vendor. That doesn't mean we can't sell to the others, just that our "on-base percentage" is higher with this one.

But there should be some stats you can look at. To me, time to close is one. The shorter the journey to closed/won, the more companies like that I want to sell to.

So is there one statistic that is the "on base percentage" of the B2B sale? And how can it be applied to an account-based strategy?

Can't wait to see what your draft, this is something that could get some really good attention.

Jason

More Expansion to the Idea

There's just something intoxicating and addictive about brainstorming that helps ideas to evolve and new angles to emerge.

Good questions, Jason. I'll have to think about it.

But just brainstorming – it's all about providing content that answers the right questions so that members of the buying committee (account) can help the others get "on base." You want "bases loaded" when you pass an opportunity to sales. Getting that still comes back to how you market to your accounts based on how well you know the players' "stats" and how they can work in your favor. So, if you can morph from a "decision maker" focus to an account/team focus, then you can

change the game. You change the game by getting your ideas into account conversations that get them to decision faster.

Making decisions is about confidence of the buying committee/account that they're making the best choice to achieve the objective. Or it's about politics. Or both. Companies have to win on all three of those combinations.

So for Billy it was all about getting on base – even if the player had to be walked. The odds increased in their favor if they could get players on base, not try to make flashy plays. This reminds me of how many marketers aim to have their content go viral rather than produce qualified leads. That is an ego thing, not a business focus. Or how they think a download is equivalent to a qualified lead and pass them to sales too soon.

So what if a base is actually a buying stage? You can measure transitions/velocity across the pipe.

The other thing I'm thinking about is that if marketing loads the bases, then sales has to hit a grand slam. So how do you up the odds on that? I'm thinking the next piece should be sales enablement to complete the journey...

Ardath

And More...

Love where it is going, but to me (and maybe this is because I am more marketer than salesperson) the bases as buying stages is harder for me to process.

I was thinking more in the context of "draft day," but instead of picking players we are deciding which accounts to pursue, deciding which types of accounts to "draft." Salespeople are like the old school scouts, looking for the "baseball bodies" or flashy accounts that everybody wants. But when you crunch the numbers what you really

need are more of these smaller accounts that are the hidden gems, closing faster with less resources, going live faster with your products, always open to case studies or publicity because they are hungry for publicity too and there are advocates there who want to look good so they can improve their profiles too.

Marketing drafts the accounts (front office/GM), but you're right, Sales is like the team manager. They decide how to handle the accounts once they get put into play.

Jason

Now the Writing Begins

And with that, I'm off to do more research and thinking and write the content. This brainstorming resulted in the last two sections of the eBook. Jason and I thought it might be helpful, and even fun, to share the experience we had brainstorming a new way to present an account-based marketing-to-sales approach. Brainstorming and collaboration are critical to the creation of marketing content and new takes on traditional ideas. Sure, I could have written the piece myself, but I think it's all the better due to Jason's ideas that kept pushing me to expand how I thought about the application of Moneyball to account-based marketing. And the truth is, it works. I use this process with clients although I'd never quite thought about it in these terms before.