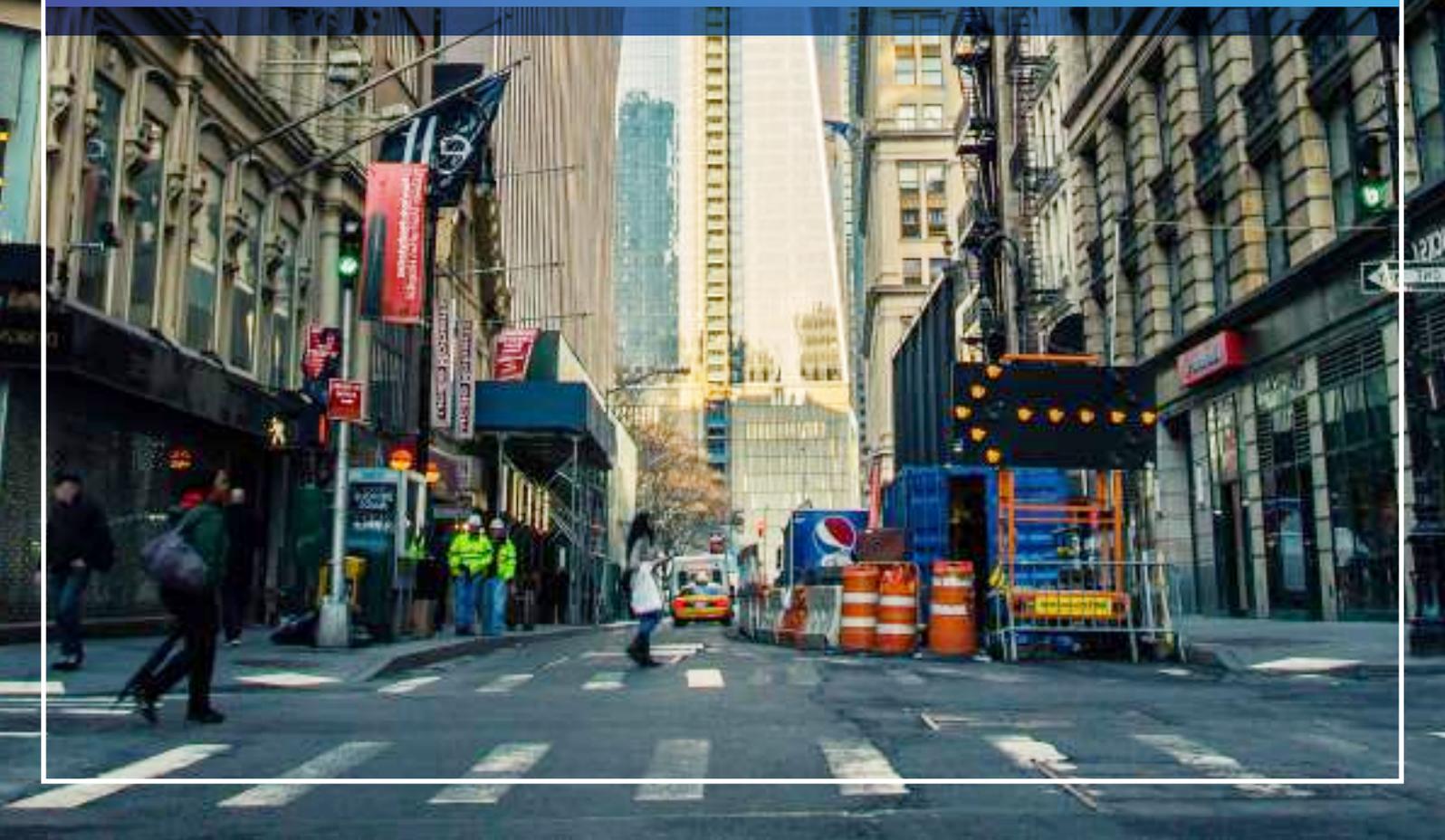




Signals

 SalesforLife®





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Focused, standardized prospecting is the key to growing your sales pipeline.

What Is A Signal & How Do You Use It To Prioritize Your Time?

There's a big problem in sales prospecting today.

It's not that sales professionals aren't prospecting. They're just not prospecting efficiently.

Sales managers expect their team to spend at least 50 percent of their time selling actively. But on average, salespeople only spend 23 percent of their total workweek prospecting and researching leads. Most of their time is spent writing emails, doing data entry, attending internal meetings, and scheduling calls—activities that can make them feel very productive, but don't actually generate revenue for their organization.

Focused, standardized prospecting is the key to growing your sales pipeline. By prioritizing contacts that have a higher likelihood of responding warmly to you, your team can increase their opportunities to win.

But how can your team identify which ones to prioritize from a never-ending sea of leads?

That's what this eBook will teach your team to do.

Spend more time on activities that have a higher likelihood of producing results.

There are certain events and insights that distinguish the most promising target accounts from the rest of the pack.

These events and insights are called Signals and they can help your team determine areas of opportunity and risk in your Total Addressable Market (TAM). This allows them to spend more time on activities that have a higher likelihood of producing results.

In this eBook, your team will learn about some of the most popular Signals used by the best revenue leaders around the world. These are divided into four main categories:



A word of caution before you proceed: Signals can do wonders for your sales pipeline, but your team must know how to recognize and accordingly act upon them. They aren't a one-size-fits-all solution to your team's prospecting woes—your team needs to leverage them in the right situation to attain the best results.

We hope this eBook gives you a huge advantage as you plan pipeline creation initiatives for your team. With Sales for Life's guidance, you can make account management and prospecting much easier and more fruitful.



What are Time Signals?

People joining and leaving accounts are the leading indicators of where priorities may lie. You see, people bring process and perspectives with them. Furthermore, joining a new company, department, cause, or organization is a byproduct of capital allocation. Thus, these types of Signals can show you where priorities may be or should be.

The key stakeholders joining or leaving your accounts will start, stop, or pause projects. Keeping this in mind allows us to be objective. Remember that for new stakeholders, the first half of a year is really important. In fact, our research shows that sales professionals are four times more likely to get meetings and discuss priorities with key stakeholders during the first two quarters. Finding, engaging, and educating the right people during this critical time frame will make a big difference.

There could also be departments that are either expanding or retracting. Therefore, you must monitor Signals that could reveal this data. For both scenarios, the opportunity will present itself to you.

Knowing and monitoring Time Signals allows your team to develop sales plays in advance. These specialized searches are powerful channels to gauge and track the movements in your accounts. Like all other Signal types, it will take time for you to read them easily. The sooner you start tracking them, the better.

Sales professionals are four times more likely to get meetings and discuss priorities with key stakeholders during the first two quarters.





Time Signal # 1: Stakeholders Joining Accounts

As unbelievable as it may sound, many salespeople simply aren't looking deep enough into their accounts to find the right people. We've observed this trend constantly.

When we ask salespeople about their primary ways to find stakeholders or contacts in accounts, they tell us that they use the phone and email to get in touch with people in accounts and determine who the key stakeholders are. A lot of salespeople use contact database tools, while some browse superficially on LinkedIn by just typing out the keywords they need.

There's nothing wrong with these approaches, except for the fact that they tend to take too long.

Your team shouldn't be spending a lot of effort just to get little data and poor results, especially since it's easy to set up a sustainable and long-term search Signal that works for them.

If you're looking for a broad and accurate list, almost nothing beats LinkedIn and similar tools; the profiles here are constantly updated by the users themselves, so you can be assured that you're getting accurate data.

According to a Gartner study, a B2B purchasing decision involves six to 10 decision-makers²; each with their own beliefs about your product or service. These groups of people are called "buying committees." Your team must know who these people are and aim to connect with and influence them.

Now, is your team familiar with everyone they should know in their target or named accounts?

Consider that the average person only stays in a job for two to four years. This means that people are leaving or joining your accounts faster than you may realize. Holding on to or just being aware of a few relationships is no longer sufficient for you as a modern seller.

Setting up the Stakeholder Search is a simple way to track influential people joining your target, named, or customer accounts. Being aware of these changes will make your team better prepared to have relevant business conversations with different people in your accounts.

If set up correctly, the Stakeholder Search will provide your team with really helpful information on a weekly basis, helping you understand whom to approach for conversations.

Time Signal # 2: Stakeholders Leaving Accounts

The next Signal shows when key stakeholders are leaving your target, named, or customer accounts. This is important to know and track because priorities can change when people leave. Thus, people leaving may show churn potential and introduce risk.

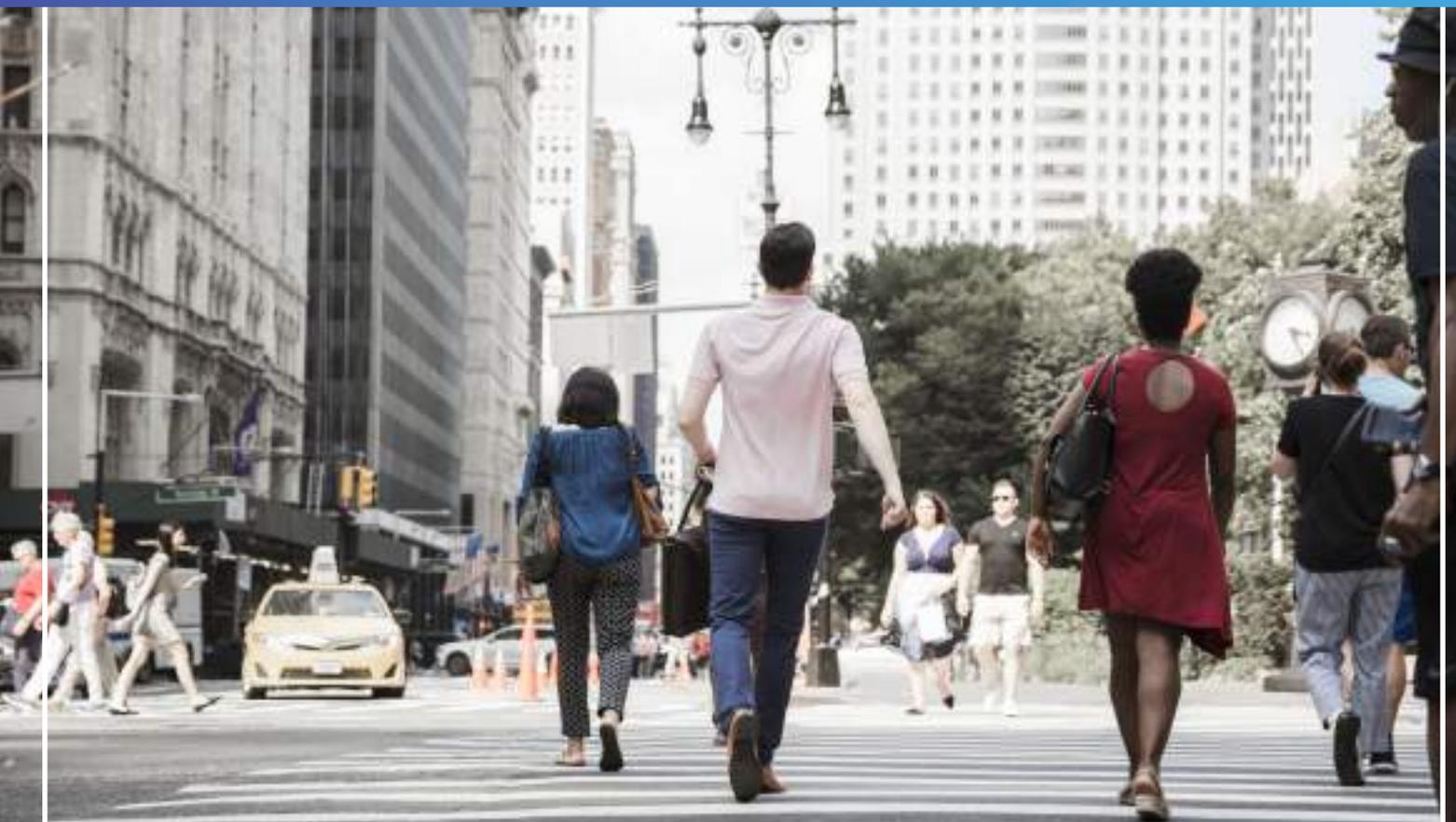
The best way to manage that risk is to keep track of it so you can develop and execute a plan with confidence. Several times, sellers only find out about churn when decisions have already been made. Recognizing the departure of stakeholders as a Signal allows you to do something about it.

Here are some questions you should ask yourself when a key stakeholder leaves your target, named, or customer account:

1. Who will replace these people?
2. What priorities will they bring?
3. What competitive intelligence that may shape their varied priorities can I glean from these people?

By setting up this search on LinkedIn, you can get actionable intelligence on people who are leaving your target, named, or customer accounts, and you can plan better for these scenarios. Saving the search ensures that your team will receive weekly reminders when people have just left your accounts.

Knowing if a stakeholder has left your account can make a difference in risk mitigation and churn prevention. Spend time setting up this Signal correctly.





Time Signal # 3: Departmental Growth or Reduction

One of the best ways to find opportunities and minimize risk is by checking if the departments within your customer accounts are in growth or reduction mode. Depending on your solution, you may benefit from their growth, reduction, or both.

Remember that people are constantly entering, moving around in, or leaving your target, named, or customer accounts. This movement, called human migration, is now happening at an unprecedented rate than at any other time in business. It's a leading indicator or Signal of where an organization's priorities will lie.

Your team can stay ahead of the curve by using LinkedIn Sales Navigator to regularly audit the movement in their accounts. Setting up this Signal helps you spot opportunities and mitigate risk, making it an important ally in building pipeline.

Whether you're interested in department growth or reduction, you need to be cognizant of the risks that human capital migration poses to your target, named, or customer accounts. As they say, sometimes there is opportunity in adversity.



Time Signal # 4: Job Posting

Monitoring job postings in your portfolio allow you to see Signals of growth development. Job postings show where hiring priorities are going to be, giving your team a much earlier indication of where to spend their time.

Your team can use LinkedIn to get this data. Combining this Signal with the “Stakeholders Joining Accounts” search we’ve discussed earlier is a smart way to:

- (1) Find insights on growth, and
- (2) Begin conversations with the right people who may be involved.

The Job Posting search will reveal which companies are hiring and are requiring help in acquiring talent. This way, your team will see how job postings and openings will grow the accounts that matter to them.

Remember, adding insights early will provide you with an opportunity to educate and highlight your expertise. While this Signal may not help you immediately, it will contribute to future pipeline growth by giving you advanced notice to prepare for growth conversations.



What are Relationship Signals?

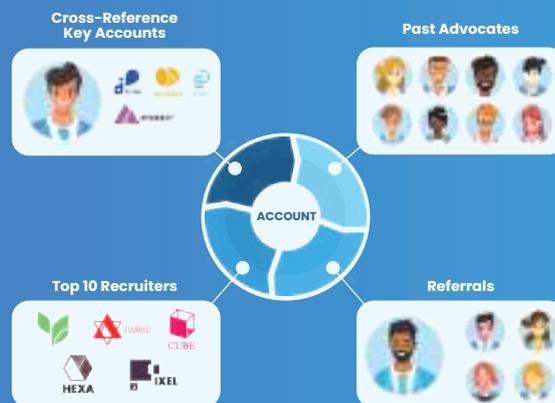
Take an account from your territory or list and place its company logo in the center of a sheet of paper. Draw a circle around the logo, and then ask yourself this fundamental question: "Who cares about them and their success story with you?"

The goal is to share this story with those who would be the most interested in it, and relationships are the foundation of this.

YOUR PERSONAL - SPHERE OF INFLUENCE



YOUR CUSTOMERS - SPHERE OF INFLUENCE



As an example, there are people with very fluid careers right now inside your company's customer base. So while you may say 'I know my customers,' what you might miss is that employees change their job every 24 to 48 months on average.³ Remember that this is an average, meaning that half of these people are moving jobs FASTER than this rate.

So while you may "know your customer," what you might not realize is that the decision-makers, champions, influencers, and power users of your solution are moving in and out of companies on a weekly basis. You may also be at risk as there might be people who may be more aligned with your competitors moving into your target or customer accounts.

Understand that relationships can transform your market. Your relationships can pose great opportunities for you if you know how to map them correctly and leverage this data. You must monitor this information for Signals as a way to create opportunities and reduce churn.



Relationship Signal # 1: School Alumni

One of the strongest Signals that sellers can leverage today is their school or academic background. These could be universities, colleges, technical colleges, military colleges, private colleges, or more. The principle here is that people are drawn to people who are just like themselves, and those who have gone to the same university or college are more likely to have similar interests and viewpoints.

By customizing LinkedIn filters to achieve this particular Signal search, your team can see a specific list of people with whom you share an academic connection. This way, you can reverse-engineer your school's alumni for any city or company in the world, and then do keyword searches for people who have specific functions within those companies.

These alumni can be an excellent resource of opportunities. They may be able to help you or introduce you to key stakeholders in your accounts, so don't hesitate to network with them.



Relationship Signal # 2: Past Advocates

Advocates are people who are, statistically, much more likely to advocate for you than random people that you may not know. These people are significantly more likely to engage with you because of at least one of these reasons:

- They have direct experience with your solution.
- They were involved indirectly in your solution's purchase decision.
- They know you or your company's name.

The Past Advocates Signal focuses on the people who were employed at accounts that are happy customers of your company's. They've since left and have gone into other accounts.

By setting up this Signal on LinkedIn, you can regularly receive a list of people who have left your happy customer accounts and are entering new accounts. This is actionable intelligence that can be used to create opportunities for conversation, making it particularly useful for teams that sell into open territories. If you set up your search results properly, you will soon start seeing fantastic Signals to help you build more pipeline.

The Past Advocate Signal presents an open and unlimited opportunity for you. Relationships and commonalities like these are the foundation of engagement opportunities, so your team needs to find these people and introduce themselves as a valuable resource. This way, your team will have a really high probability of activating conversations with these customers.



Relationship Signal # 3: The Cross-Reference Search

Like the Past Advocate Signal, the Cross Reference Search involves looking for people who have left your company's happy customer accounts and have since moved directly into named accounts.

Now, what's the difference between the two?

In the Past Advocates Signal, you are looking for people who have left happy customer accounts and have gone into any other account.

In the Cross-Reference Search Signal, you are looking for people who have left happy customer accounts and have since joined named accounts, which can either be target named accounts or actual customer named accounts.

As we've mentioned earlier, these people are significantly more likely to engage with your team because:

- They have direct experience with your solution,
- They were involved indirectly in your solution's purchase decision, or
- They know you or your company's name.

Remember, their former company has actual ties with yours. Relationships and commonalities like this are crucial to engagement opportunities, so your team needs to find these people and introduce themselves as a valuable resource. They'll have a very high probability of activating conversations with these customers.

Once your team has set up the Cross-Reference Search Signal on LinkedIn, they will start receiving actionable intelligence on people who have left your happy customer accounts and have since entered your target, named, or customer accounts. Save your search to get weekly email reminders about new search results, so you can stay updated on your target accounts.

Encourage your team to take advantage of the Cross Reference Search to create more opportunities.





Relationship Signal # 4: Your Customer Top 10 Recruitment

People migrating into your specific accounts is a strong Signal that should not be ignored—especially if they're leaving your or your company's happy customer accounts.

Some companies have huge hiring campaigns, and they know which types of companies they want to recruit from. When this Signal is set up on LinkedIn, your team will be able to see the top 10 companies that people from your target, named, or customer accounts are moving to. This allows them to create opportunities to initiate sales conversations.

This Signal allows you to better visualize the flow of people, helping you determine where to spend your time so you can follow and leverage relationships. While this Signal may not impact your team's immediate strategy, it will help you understand the migration patterns of people.



Relationship Signal # 5: The Referral Signal

According to a study conducted by the Sales Benchmark Index, 84 percent of B2B decision-makers get appointments using referrals, compared to just 1 to 3 percent for cold calling.⁴

This makes referrals an excellent Relationship Signal that you should track for stakeholders and key accounts that are named, target or customer-based.

Your team needs to think about how their known contacts can introduce them to other people. Using these warm introductions can give you leverage and accelerate your conversations, taking advantage of a concept known as ‘Social Proximity.’

The logic behind social proximity is quite simple. Each one of your existing relationships in customer accounts can probably introduce you to many others within their company. Your task is to first find those individuals, and then to use your existing contacts to determine if introductions can be made.

There are two situations where the Referral Search can prove useful to you:

1. In a customer account in which you have little or no relationships yet. Do you know anyone that knows someone in this account, perhaps a company colleague, a Partner, or a customer?
2. To see if someone you know in the account can introduce you to a person you'd like to meet.

Setting up this Search Signal on LinkedIn and acting on the results can drastically enhance your opportunities. When reaching out to people who might be able to refer you, don't hesitate to write a humble message and request a connection. Provide context, such as “I'm working with your company.” As long as you're polite and professional, you shouldn't meet a lot of resistance when connecting to people.



What Are Competitive Signals?

Competitive Signals are exactly what they sound like: They help track the presence of competitors and their influence on your target, named, or customer accounts. This will help you make more informed decisions about:

- Where to spend your time
- Which people and accounts you should spend time on
- Where your risks are and what to avoid
- Where additional resources and help from your team may be needed

There are many ways to capture Competitive Signals, but we'll teach you the handful that are proven to work when you need them.

Full disclosure: Not all Signals can be used all the time or even extensively, and Competitive Signals may be in that category for some people. However, these are Signals that you should learn to enhance your skills and career knowledge.



Now, consider the following scenarios as competitive risks:

- People migrating from competitors into your account.
- Past executives, influencers, and champions who are biased towards products and services they've used before or are comfortable with.

How will you assess the risk of your team spending time on this account? Is churn a possibility? If so, what are the Signals indicating that this account is an immediate danger to your portfolio?

These are some questions that you need to ask as you decipher these Signals and make decisions.



Competitive Signal # 1: Where Competitors Are Going

This Signal is similar to the customer migration Signal, wherein you learn where people from your current happy customer accounts are going. In this Signal, your team will conduct a similar search to determine where competitors are going.

Remember, when an employee from a competitor company joins one of your target or named accounts, they may bring existing biases towards certain products, services, or solutions. The purpose of this Signal is to help your team understand which accounts might be at risk and should probably be avoided.

Set up this search on LinkedIn to generate a list that will reveal the companies where people with the titles you sell to are going, allowing you to easily check for any accounts you're already targeting or are considering targeting. This way, your team can spend their time more efficiently on accounts that have a higher likelihood of generating actual conversations.

Competitive Signal # 2: Tracking Past Employees Of Competitors

This Signal will show you people who used to work at your competitors and are now directly employed within your target, named, or customer accounts. Now, why is this important to track?

As we've mentioned earlier, each person brings their own set of beliefs and biases into any role they join. In fact, they may even be hired to bring their unique perspective into their role. Thus, it's very important to be aware of former competitor employees who are now working in your target, named, or customer accounts, especially in the roles and titles that you work with.

We don't recommend disengaging immediately with an account because of this information, but at least this knowledge can help your team position themselves as needed.

You can set up this Signal on both the free version of LinkedIn and on LinkedIn Sales Navigator. You should end up with a list of people, all of which are former employees of your competitors. These people may be high-risk targets with a low probability of activation, or they simply may just be biased towards their old employer.

Sales or customer success professionals usually don't have access to these details, so this information should greatly help you discover risks and opportunities that you can now act on. By knowing this information in advance, you can position your message accordingly.



Competitive Signal # 3: Experience With Competitive Solutions

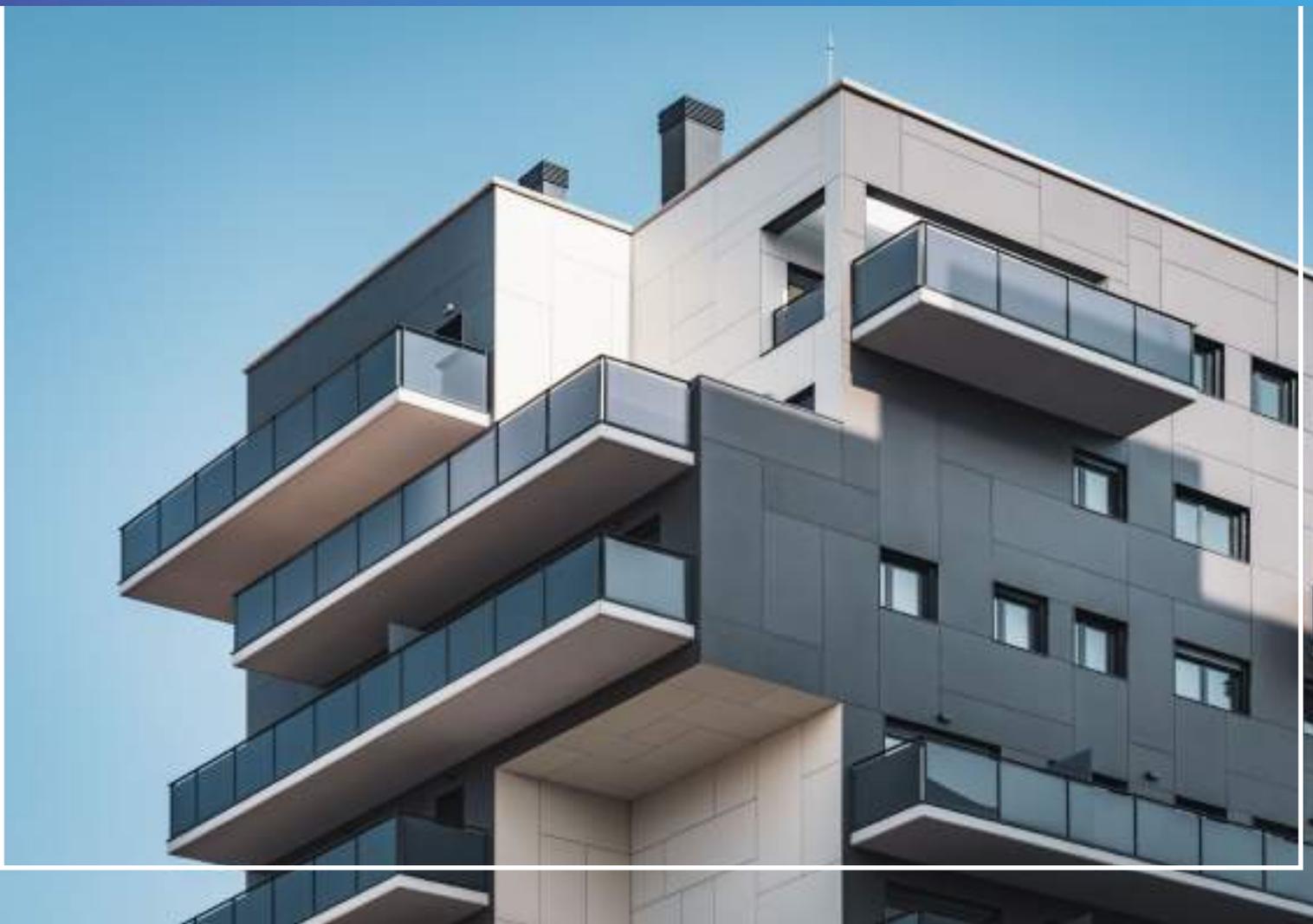
This Signal will provide a shortlist of the people in your target, named, or customer accounts that have competitor-related keywords on their LinkedIn profile pages.

By going deep into someone's experience-set and checking for competitive keywords, you will better understand their personal and professional priorities. This helps you determine how to position yourself in your messaging while aiding your ability to understand growth or risk potential.

You should now have a list of people in your accounts with specific skills, work experiences, interests, and more. This is valuable information that allows you to see which people in your accounts may be detractors or may simply have different perspectives.

This is an easy way to search for people in your portfolio accounts who might have experience or knowledge about your competitors. These people could be high-risk targets with a low probability of activation, or they simply could just be biased towards their existing skillset, knowledge, or certifications.

By knowing this information in advance, you can adjust your messaging accordingly.





What Are Buying Intent Signals?

Buying Intent Signals, also known as Purchasing Intent, simply equate to interest in the concept or topic. It's the degree to which someone is likely to buy now or in the future.

Based on The Chet Holmes Pyramid, only three to 10 percent of people are in the buying mood. Buying Intent Signals indicate if a buyer is still consuming information, is in the interested phase, or if they're ready to purchase. If you can successfully monitor these behavioral Signals, you can get a leg up on the competition in a powerful way.



There are several tools your team can use to understand someone's interest level. These types of tools allow you to track people's viewing and usage behavior. Here are two simple tools and their categories:

- **Multimedia presentation tools:** We recommend using a tool that lets you bundle several documents and links into a single page, making it a one-stop-shop for your content. There are several such tools available—your company may even already have invested in one. Even if you don't have access to this tool right now, it's still a good idea to study this Signal in advance.
- **Video:** Video allows you to communicate ideas with clarity and emotion. We recommend using a video tool that allows you to check if someone has seen the video you've sent them.

These tools not only allow you to present yourself and your learning materials more professionally but to also check if the intended recipients are paying attention. This helps you segment your leads' interest levels so you can better plan your time nurturing the most promising ones.

Of all the sales plays, buying intent may be the most exciting one. If you acquire the Signals that predict this behavior, you can give your business a significant advantage.



Buying Intent Signal # 1: Leverage Video As a Communication Medium

Once you set up video and begin practicing, you'll see good outcomes quickly. You'll find that people will be more receptive and perhaps even friendlier towards you—after all, it's nice to see a smiling face when most business communication is still text-only.

One of the best things you'll love about video tools is that they allow you to check analytics on who has watched your videos. This gives your sellers insight into who may or may not be interested in your messages.

THE POWER OF VIDEO



The people your team sends videos to can generally be placed in three categories when it comes to buying interest:

- They're going to be very interested and will watch your video, perhaps even more than once.
- They're not going to be interested at all. Even if you send them 10 videos, they simply wouldn't open them or communicate back to you.
- They're not going to reply to your email, InMail or text communication, but they will watch the video quietly in the background.

Reviewing your videos' analytics should help your team identify the interested leads and invest more time in them.

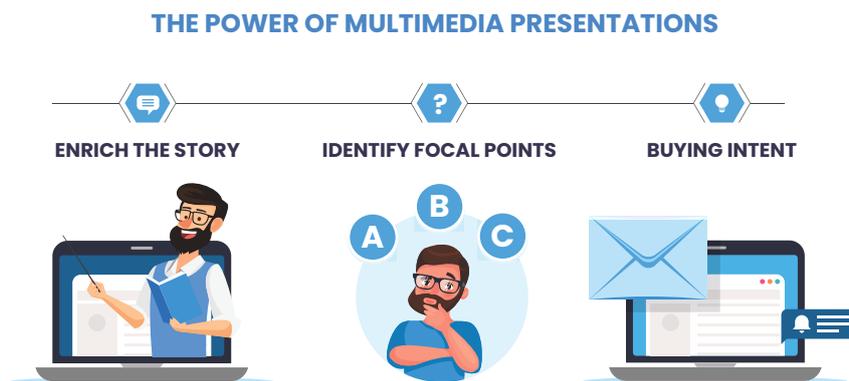
Now, if your videos are not being watched, that's a strong Signal as well. You may want to include a second buying intent strategy, which is to provide links to multimedia presentations. Don't feel bad about this—sometimes, it really takes a bit more effort to understand someone's interest level.

Buying Intent Signal # 2: Leverage Multimedia Presentations to Aggregate Learning Materials

Email is going to be a central way to communicate with your accounts. Now, let's make your communication better.

By using multimedia presentation tools that can also provide buying intent Signals, you can determine if the recipient has some level of interest in what you're sending.

Using multimedia presentation tools is simply advantageous for everyone involved.



First, the recipient benefits by getting a non-cluttered email. So, how is this an advantage?

The average email today contains three links and/or attachments. This may not sound like a lot, but it can frustrate an already busy customer. A multimedia presentation tool allows your team to send a single link that contains all of the key information you want to share.

Now, the advantage for your team, as modern sellers, is simple: You get access to your content's viewing and reading data. Imagine sending someone a whitepaper, a case study, or a presentation and knowing if they've viewed it, and for how long. That's powerful.

Remember how we talked about making decisions based on data? This is the data we're talking about. Understanding if someone is interested or not allows your team to make fast and calculated decisions on how to invest your time.

Generating buying intent Signals allows you to better serve people and determine where your time is best spent. Here are some best practices for multimedia presentation tools:

1. Always try to use it when sending emails to leads, especially if you'd like to know their interest level in something.
2. As much as possible, make sure the content pages you create can be reused and repurposed. Leverage broad concepts that many people in your accounts will find helpful. This will help you save time.
3. If, while reviewing your analytics, you notice that an interesting individual has viewed your content page, be tactful when approaching them with that information.

Conclusion

Selling is tough, more so in the modern, digital world. While there are a lot of methodologies and sales plays that you can follow, there's no one-size-fits-all formula that can guarantee a positive outcome, every time.

However, being aware of sales Signals allows your team to fill your sales pipeline with high-quality prospects, taking you one step closer to hitting your quota. Identifying these Signals puts the ball in your team's court by giving you the opportunity to influence your most promising leads.

But it's not enough to simply know what these Signals are. You have to integrate them into your sales process to maximize the benefits they can deliver.



The best revenue teams in the world have mastered this, allowing them to gain a massive advantage over their competitors.

By using Sales for Life's systematic, data-backed way to get insights about their target accounts, they were able to create more sales opportunities that helped them meet and at times surpass their quota.

We'd love to help your team achieve the same results. Book a meeting with us to start using Signals to your advantage.

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