

EBOOK

Smarter B2B Prospecting

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Better Prospecting Starts Here

Look. You're a sales pro. You don't need to be told how competitive the current sales environment is or that all-digital buyer journeys are the new normal. You *live* it.



What you do need is a better, more efficient way to **find**, **reach**, and **engage** your buyers in this new all-digital world. One that doesn't require the massive effort of sifting through mountains of data to get to the quality prospects. One that helps you get right to the business of landing deals.

We're here to help.

We'll offer actionable insights about how you can target your prospects with confidence at the right times to capture their attention and close more deals. Discover practical ways to prioritize prospecting activity, so that you can be sure your team is being efficient and maximizing selling time.

Plus, learn how understanding buyer intent can help you get to your most likely buyers, faster.



How the Best Sellers Stay Ahead

It's actually pretty simple.
The sellers who are most effective are the ones who know:



Who to target (both companies and people)



When to contact them (need, readiness to purchase, even time of day)



What they care about (to connect your offer to their need)

But how do you become part of the top tier of sellers?

Let's get started with the first point – understanding who your best buyers are.

Who to Target?

Blasting out spray-and-pray emails is a waste of your scarce time in today's selling environment. For any sales pro regardless of job title, knowing who to target is where you start gaining effectiveness and efficiency in your prospecting.

Whether you're focused locally or globally, chances are there are more companies you could sell to than hours in your day. So, using that time effectively is crucial. And the first step toward that is to know:

- **Which companies are most likely to need what you're selling**
- **Which person – or people – in that company to target with your outreach**

That second point is especially important as more and more people at companies become involved in buying decisions and the selling process is just more extensive. You need to know how to reach the people who make the decisions and the people who influence them. You also need to know what messages will resonate, but you'll get more insights about that later.



WHO TO TARGET?

1. Know Your Ideal Customer

The first step in targeting your prospects is to build an ideal customer profile.

As you build your ideal customer profile, you might think about factors like “we know we solve this use case” for the startup so you know you’d want to target companies like that. You might create a sophisticated set of segmented user personas for more mature organizations, with a variety of “familiar” segmentation approaches in between, based on organization size or industry.

If you have an ideal customer profile, being able to match your prospect list to that profile is an obvious first step in prioritizing your time. If you need to generate your own prospects, tools like [D&B Hoovers](#) that automate lists of companies that match your profile – and keep that list updated – are indispensable.

What is an Ideal Customer Profile?

A description of the company that’s the right fit for what you’re selling, including key details.

Those may include items like:

- Revenue
- Business size
- Industry
- Location
- Solutions they use

Maybe you need some help in defining that ideal customer profile, especially if you need to go beyond the basics of segmenting around company size or industry. Solutions that visualize your current customer base can help take time out of the process by automating much of the analysis, giving you a view into an ideal profile of your existing customers

along several parameters – even showing differences in that profile by segment.

Going a step further, identifying “look-alike” companies that match your ideal profile gives you a set of targets that are more likely to be receptive, so are worth prioritizing.

EXAMPLE: Ideal Customer Profile for a sustainable high-end office furniture company



>\$100M revenue



Growing



Relocation and/or
opening new offices



>50% employees are
office workers



High Tech and
BioMedical segments



Corporate initiatives
around environment

2. Understand Company Relationships & Hierarchies

With or without an ideal customer profile, another approach to help you prioritize is to consider relationships between companies. Company hierarchies, or “family trees,” are often a great way to rank your prospect list.

If you have sold your product or service to a company that has a parent, and/or has subsidiaries, those companies could also be ideal matches for what you’re selling. You even have a built-in reference customer for them. Unfortunately, understanding family tree connections is not always straightforward as names are not always the same and locations can be wide-ranging. Further, when a company has many branches or subsidiaries, one in particular may take the lead in purchasing decisions.

But a provider of data and insights can help. Analytics can help you identify the main decision-maker, giving you great insight on where to focus your time.

Another way to look at relationships that can help you prioritize prospects is to look at your customers’ competitors. If you solved a problem for one company, it is likely their competitors have a similar problem. Again, a [data and insights provider](#) can make identification of competitors and other like companies possible.



Be careful in talking to that competitive company as it’s hard at the start of an engagement to know if they would view a mention of their competitor as your customer as a good or bad thing. It might motivate them to hear what you have to say, or it could back-fire and close the door.

WHO TO TARGET?

3. Let Analytics Drive Your Tactics

Going beyond an ideal customer profile, and related companies, there are other ways to prioritize, helped greatly by tools that bring analytics and automation to your fingertips.

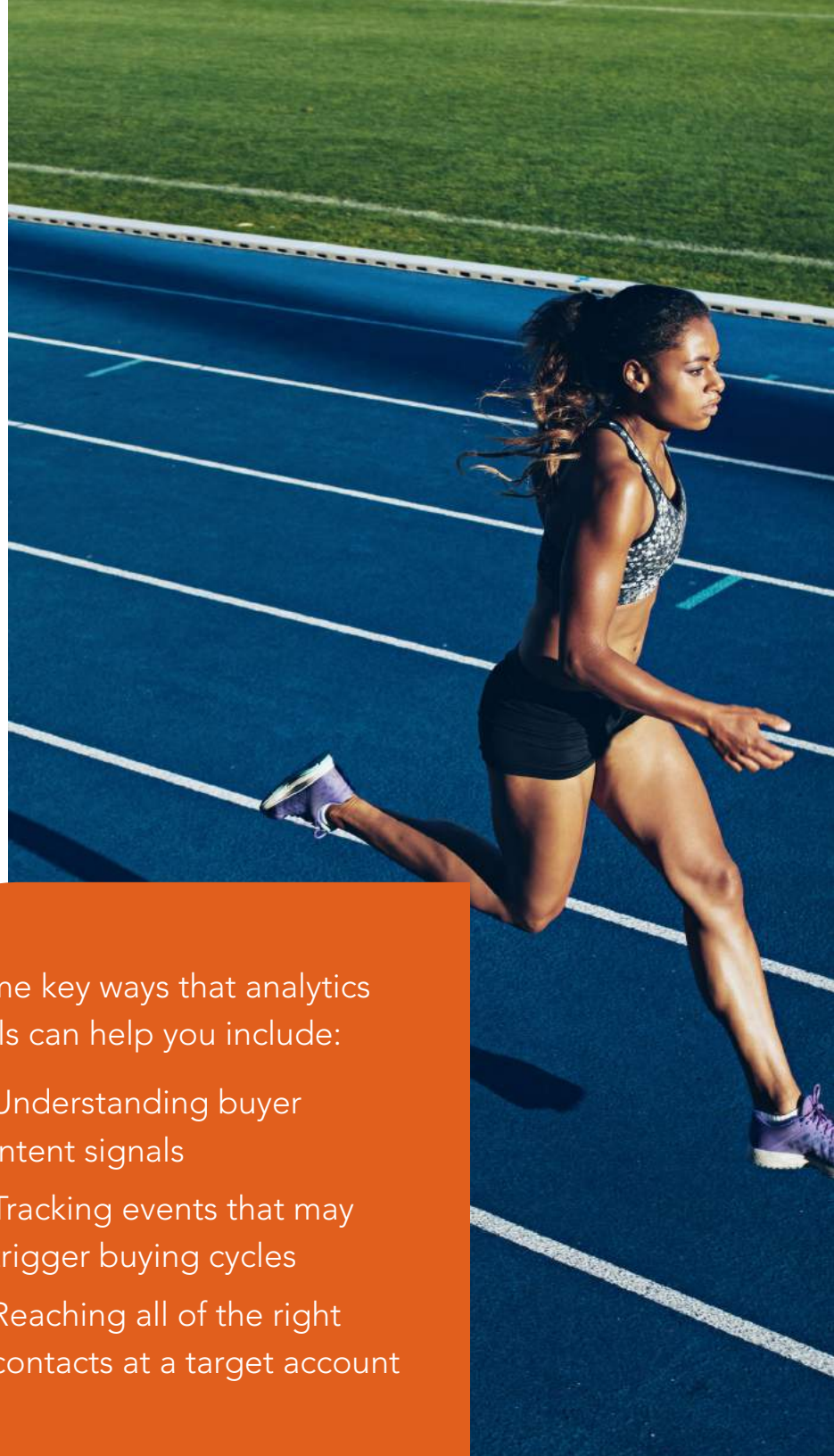
UNDERSTANDING BUYER INTENT

Analytics performed on your current customer base can help you identify your target account's 'propensity to buy'. With this knowledge, you can focus in on buyers that are in the right frame of mind instead of wasting time on companies or people who aren't ready to open their wallets.

A [good sales tool](#) with analytics capabilities can put this kind of intent-driven approach within reach of sales pros at virtually any size company. When a prospecting tool integrates with other tools in your sales tech stack, you can save even more time in finding prospects and activating sales plays.

Some key ways that analytics tools can help you include:

- Understanding buyer intent signals
- Tracking events that may trigger buying cycles
- Reaching all of the right contacts at a target account



TRACKING TRIGGER EVENTS

Another piece of the prospecting analytics puzzle is getting timely data and insights on events that trigger your target account's need to purchase a new solution – like an acquisition or merger that means a small company is now a large one and needs a solution that scales.

Being able to identify when these events happen is another great way to recognize market potential. But you need to know quickly or a competitor may beat you to the opportunity.

FINDING BUYING GROUPS

The basic thing a prospecting tool should give you is a universe of relevant contacts. But you can't rely on just one contact at

a target account these days. You often need to cast a net wider than just that one marketing lead.

From the buyer's perspective, B2B purchase decisions can be complex, involving up to multiple decision-makers, especially as you target larger accounts. So, you'll want to be sure you are connecting with as many buyers as possible, with the right message for each.

Tools that not only provide contact information but can also show the relationship of the contact to others in the company are indispensable for this purpose.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN AN ANALYTICS TOOL

Having the most insight is paramount to success. An effective analytics and data package can enable your team to:

- **Have a clear understanding of a company's financial decisions**
- **Find which companies are getting larger or down-sizing**
- **Gain insight into the likelihood that a company will be associated with specific financial activities**
- **Qualify genuine opportunities more quickly**
- **Zero in on specific locations that possess buying power**

Get Better Prospecting Insights

D&B Hoovers helps you find likely buyers from a universe of millions of potential global contacts, including information about decision-makers, company details, and when they're in-market for what you're selling.

[Request a demo](#)

When to Contact?

The buying triggers and intent signals mentioned in the previous section can also help you identify when to reach out to a particular company.



WHEN TO CONTACT?

1. How Buying Signals Tell You to Reach Out – Now

EXAMPLES of buying signals are events or activities such as:



New product launch



New management

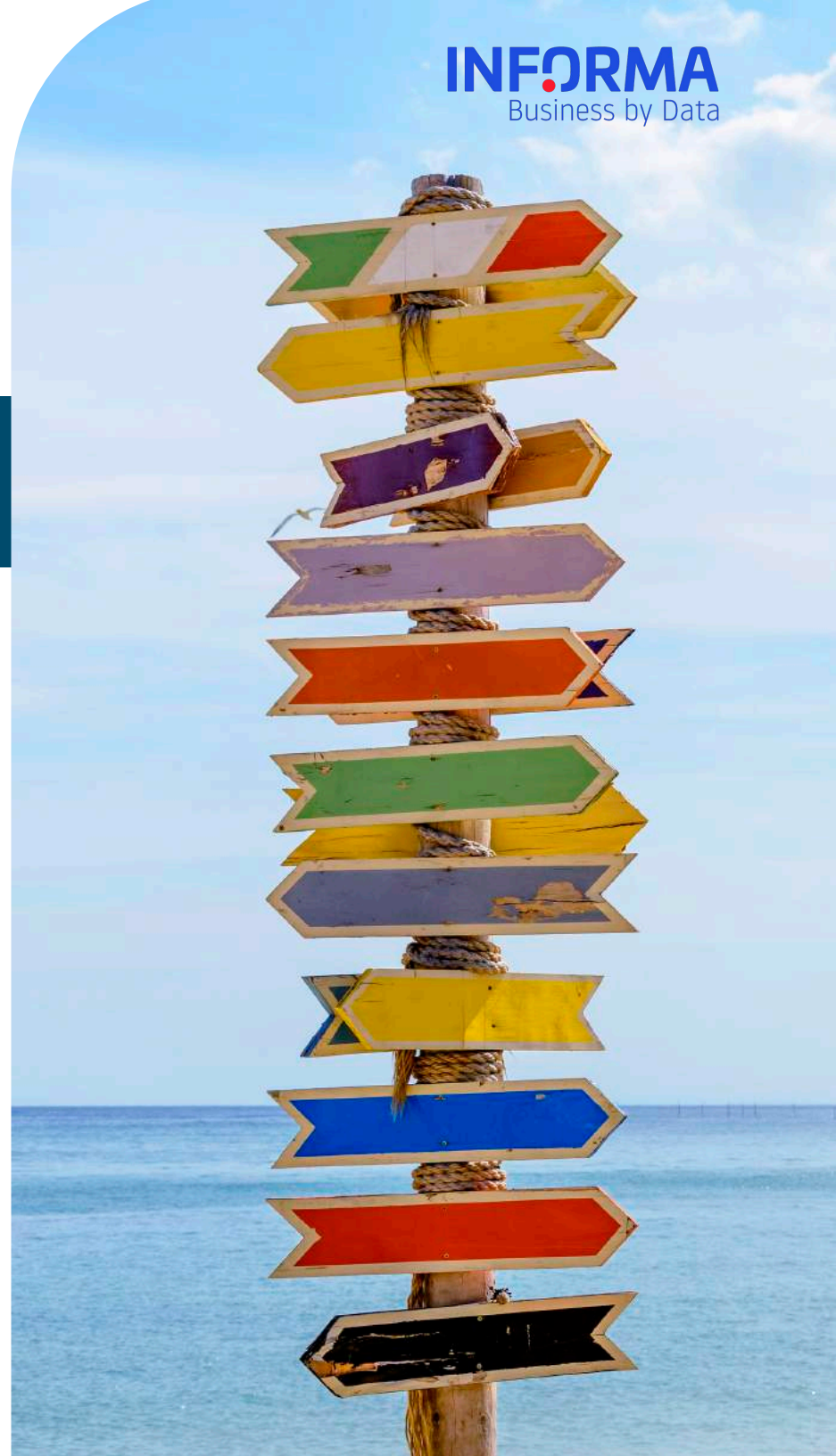


Office openings
(or closings)



Merger/acquisition

Once the event that signals a need for your offer happens, it's important to get in the door quickly. Even better, if you can be alerted of news that indicates something might happen, or is about to happen, you also have a better chance of beating your competition to the punch by connecting with that company and starting to add value.

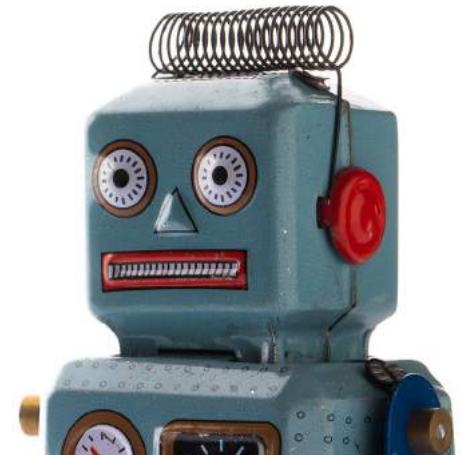




Buying Signals Worth Knowing:

- Executive-level personnel changes
- Industry recognition
- Large contract wins
- Hiring initiatives
- Newly formed joint ventures or partnerships, mergers & acquisitions
- The opening or expanding of facilities
- Product launches
- Public mention of capital investments

This sounds somewhat manual and time-consuming. Potentially it is. Tools that understand triggers that relate to your particular situation, and then use modern techniques to scan web and news sources to present you with relevant triggers automate this process, so are essential in helping you to catch the right prospect at the right time.



Robust Intent Signals with D&B Hoovers

With D&B Hoovers + Buyer Intent (D&B Custom, Pre-defined, and Bombora), you can buy or build intent models to reach your in-market buyers first. Select from a universe of thousands of Dun & Bradstreet or Bombora keywords and get a personalized weekly report.

WHEN TO CONTACT?

2. Knowing When Buyers are Ready

While a view on propensity to buy mentioned above gives insight into who is more likely to buy, intent data shines a light on who is likely to purchase now. Taking advantage of intent data is a powerful way to focus your selling efforts on those prospects showing an intent to purchase.

Intent data is often most useful when pre-integrated into a tool that delivers additional analysis and prioritization or integrated directly into your existing marketing systems and CRM.

Getting really practical, what day and what time you should contact your leads is something you should definitely take into account. For example, if you're automating a sales email, you don't want to send it at a time when your buyer is likely to overlook it – or when they will read it, want to reach out, but no one is staffing your response team.

A few tips from research done by Inside Sales:

It's important to be able to respond to web-generated leads quickly

Wednesdays and Thursdays seem to be better days to make contact

Better times of day to reach out are 4 to 6 p.m.

What Do Your Buyers Care About?

A fundamental principal of good selling: it's not about you. It's about tapping into what the customer wants, needs, and feels. It's about empathy and resonance.



Simply put, you have to understand what your buyers care about so that you're offering the right solution to their needs and challenges. And you have to do it before your competitors.

According to Forrester, 74% of deals are awarded to the seller who is the first to provide value and insight. But so often, these first impressions go awry. So how do you make a good first impression?

WHAT DO YOUR BUYERS CARE ABOUT?

1. Know What's Happening in Their World

The starting point for communicating value is to understand the company you are approaching – their industry, their particular situation at the current time, and their stated initiatives. Much of this information is publicly available, But with a tool that searches for you and then feeds you insights, you can take a lot of the manual labor out of this.

Tools that provide summary reports on key industries are another great way to kick start your knowledge. A combination of industry insight and prospect company knowledge are essential so you can both position your solution in the most relevant manner to the prospect and do so in a way that comes across as genuine, not 'boilerplate'.

74%

of deals are awarded to the seller who is first to provide value and insight.

"To Win Against Increasing Competition, Equip Your Salespeople With A Deeper Understanding Of Your Buyers" – Forrester

WHAT DO YOUR BUYERS CARE ABOUT?

2. Use Your Insights Into Relationships & Hierarchies

Going back to the concept of hierarchies, if you have a customer with related companies, you should already have relevant insights not only about them, but how they are using – and benefiting from – your solution. This is prospecting gold. Make use of these insights in your conversations with ‘family tree’ members to rapidly shorten your sales cycle.

WHAT DO YOUR BUYERS CARE ABOUT?

3. Craft Your Message With Audience in Mind

First, personalize. This is the key to a digital buyer’s heart – and wallet. Don’t blast generic, cookie-cutter messages to your target accounts that demonstrate you just didn’t do the research. As an example, one seller offering office cleaning services sent a prospecting email to a remote worker in a location where their company doesn’t have an office. It was a waste of everyone’s time.

A better approach is to use data to find out more about that contact and what’s relevant to them, then send a message that will catch their eye and prompt them to want more.

This is where you can take your ideal customer profile and dig deeper by creating target personas: data-driven examples of the kind of people you’re likely to sell to. For example, if you’re selling cybersecurity technology, your persona might be someone like “Chief Information Officer” or “IT Manager.”



Useful Elements of a Persona

- Their business goals and challenges
- What they’re concerned about
- What they think, feel, and do
- How they approach the buying process at each journey stage
- What content will best reach them at each stage

Understanding your buyer persona will enable you to understand how your buyer is likely to move through their journey and how you can create messages that resonate to accelerate the cycle.

WHAT DO YOUR BUYERS CARE ABOUT?

4. Choose the Right Channels

Once you have the right message, think about how you make contact. The method that you use to reach out with your well-crafted, hyper-relevant message will primarily be influenced by the seniority and typical personality of individuals with whom you're trying to start a conversation.

It's important to remember that even in the context of a complex B2B sale, you're developing relationships with people who have their own preferences for how to be approached. Those will change over time, but the relevancy and timing of your message will always be what's important.

For instance, social selling has become one of the most popular ways to reach new prospects and the results speak for themselves. According to Forrester, which recently conducted a study that identified the top three benefits of social selling, sellers are seeing, a 45% increase in being able to stay connected with buyers throughout the sales cycle, and a 41% rise in win rates and increased seller productivity.¹

¹"Social Selling: A New B2B Imperative", Forrester

However, if you've been on the receiving end of non-relevant, boilerplate messages sent to your social media accounts, then you know first-hand that every time a seller does that, the tactic itself loses a little value.



WHAT DO YOUR BUYERS CARE ABOUT?

5. It's All About the Data

Make data and insights your secret advantage! That's it. That's the real nugget to take away from this. That's our TED talk. When it comes to getting from prospecting to closed deal, the numbers point to the benefits of better data. With the right data — and tools that leverage data — guiding your account planning and sales initiatives, your team can more effectively target companies by their:

- **Spending levels**
- **Potential and likelihood of growth**
- **Participation in the type of activities that place them in a purchasing mindset**

Countless statistics and citations have shown that using better information leads to more efficient and productive sales efforts, delivering precision and performance when it comes to the alignment of your sales and marketing efforts. According to SiriusDecisions, companies that proactively maintain their sales and marketing database can realize 66% higher conversions to revenue compared to those that do not.



66%

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“The Impact of Bad Data on Demand Creation”, SiriusDecisions

Here are some questions to ask yourself to determine if your organization is using data most effectively to fuel more precise and successful prospecting:



If your lead capture involves form fills (and most do), are you offering pre-populated form fills to make the process easier for your prospect?



Are you a 'power data user,' displaying sales intelligence directly in your CRM? This practice really amps sales productivity.



If you are using attributes of existing customers to determine ideal customer profiles or plan territories, are you sure all of that information is correct? If not, you could be drawing false conclusions.



When using your own in-house data about companies and contacts when prospecting, how confident are you that it is correct and current so that you are not wasting time chasing contacts who have left the company?



How confident are you that you are keeping CRM data current? This is a notorious pain point for sales organizations.

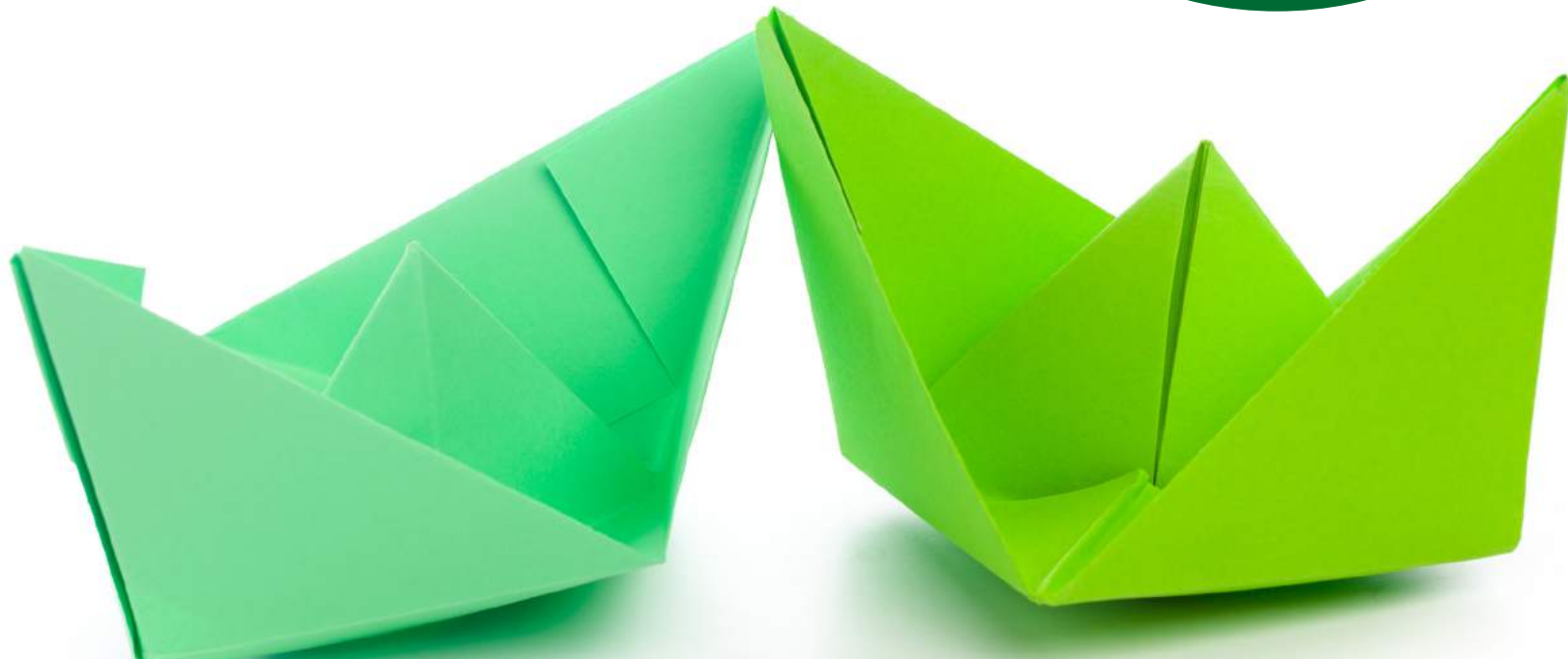
If after answering the above questions, you are not fully confident in your organization's approach to data, a data cleansing project may be in order to maximize the effectiveness of your sales team.

ALIGN YOUR TEAMS – AND DATA

You'll be able to implement all of the tips you've just read far more smoothly if you get alignment between all of the relevant teams at your organization: marketing, operations, customer support. Closing a deal isn't just on the shoulder of sellers – it's a team effort and requires an end-to-end experience that inspires and delights your buyers.

Here's an example
from Getty Images.

Getty wanted to streamline their front-end sales, marketing, and customer support processes. Their joint effort between Finance, Technology, Sales and Marketing departments started with a data cleansing project to break down silos to everyone's benefit.



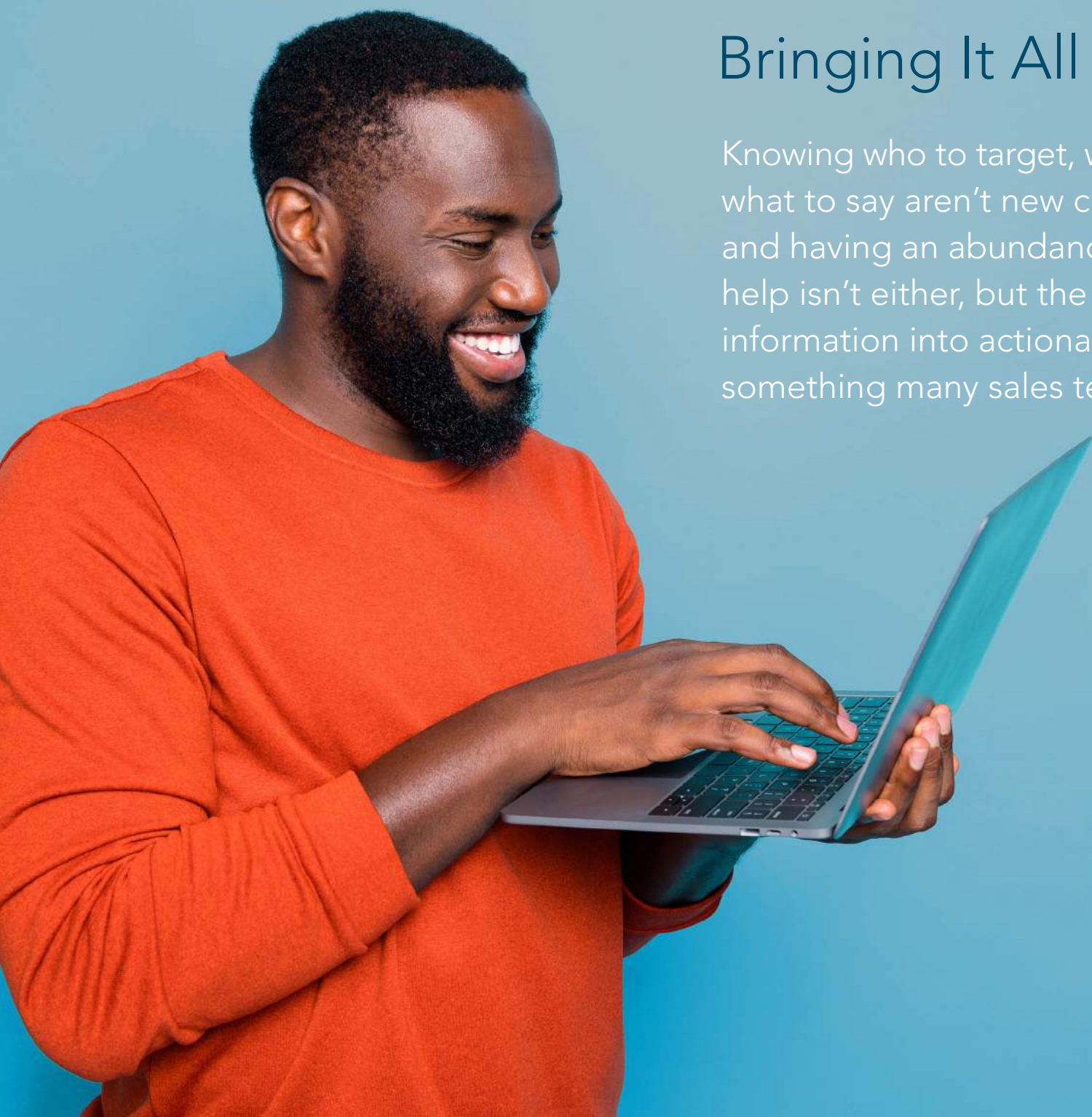
VISUALIZE FOR A 360-DEGREE VIEW OF BUYERS

Use a visualization tool to really optimize performance and enable profiling and segmentation. The best tools enable a combination of internal and external data to see current customer attributes and success indicators. Once you know these attributes, good solutions quickly help you identify the best target accounts by leveraging:

- **Visualizations**
- **Firmographic attributes (e.g. company size, location, industry)**
- **Technographic (i.e. technology usage) attributes**
- **Digital visitor activity data**
- **Analytic models**

These 360-degree views of targets provide a rich approach that leverages insights to increase the likelihood of sales success. Targets should then be paired with additional external data to find look-alike companies – those that share similar attributes leading to successful sales.

Using visualization and search capabilities helps to consolidate data and at the same time ensure its accuracy across platforms, teams, and channels giving your team more confidence while selling.



Bringing It All Together

Knowing who to target, when to reach out, and what to say aren't new challenges for sellers, and having an abundance of information to help isn't either, but the ability to quickly turn information into actionable knowledge is still something many sales team struggle with.

Arming your team with the ability to efficiently recognize buying signals, intent or profile matches in a timely manner is how your team's productivity improves. Confidently asking better questions based on an understanding of the prospect's business, leads to an authentic dialogue, and relationship building leads to better close rates. Utilizing data, insights and purpose-built tools makes each salesperson efficient, effective and ultimately, successful.

Here are some ways we can help you get started:



See how you can quickly find the right decision-makers with a free trial of D&B Hoovers

[Request a Demo](#)



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Business by Data

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