

EBOOK

Win More Deals by Targeting Buying Groups

Shift Your Approach for B2B Sales Success

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Why It's Getting Harder to Close — *and What to Do About It*

We don't have to tell you that it's getting more and more difficult to get your buyers to pick up the phone or answer an email. Sales cycles are getting longer and more complex, so getting to the right people at the right time with a personally relevant message is crucial. In the changing buyers' journey, it's apparent that understanding their needs and environment is paramount to shaping messaging that resonates.

To get the best ROI on dollars spent, you need deep insights into how those interests match up with what is being sold.



As buying journeys have shifted to being almost entirely online and self-guided, buyers say¹ they want companies to show them content that is relevant to them.

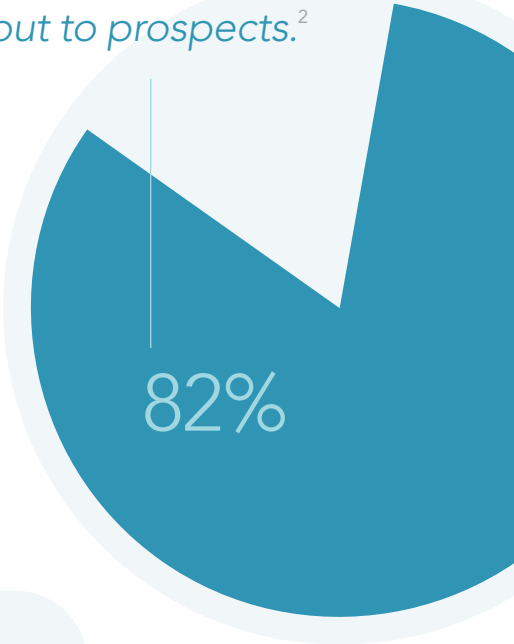
With these demands, 82% of top sellers said in the LinkedIn State of Sales 2022² report that they feel they have to conduct research “all the time” before reaching out to prospects. That takes time and effort when a lot of sellers are already juggling their resources.

A recent survey by Sales Hacker³ also shows the increasing complexity involved in current sales efforts, in part driven by the sheer number of new tools sellers are being asked to use. That survey found a correlation between the number of sales tools and longer sales cycles, driving home the need for efficient processes and smart use of salestech.

Addressing the Buyer-Sales Gap

Something to keep in mind is that buyers want to do their own research. Today, they have access to more information than ever. This makes it easier for them to independently research a potential purchase before they start a conversation with a vendor, but sellers have less access and fewer opportunities to influence their decisions.

Top performers are thriving due to their research: 82% of top performers say they perform research “all the time” before reaching out to prospects.²



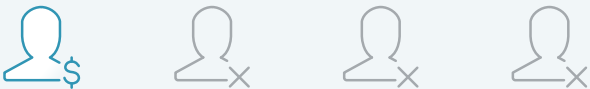
2021

43%



In 2021, 43% of buyers reported consulting vendor sales representatives.

2022



In 2022, the percentage dropped to just one out of four buyers.⁴

Shift Your Focus to Buying Groups

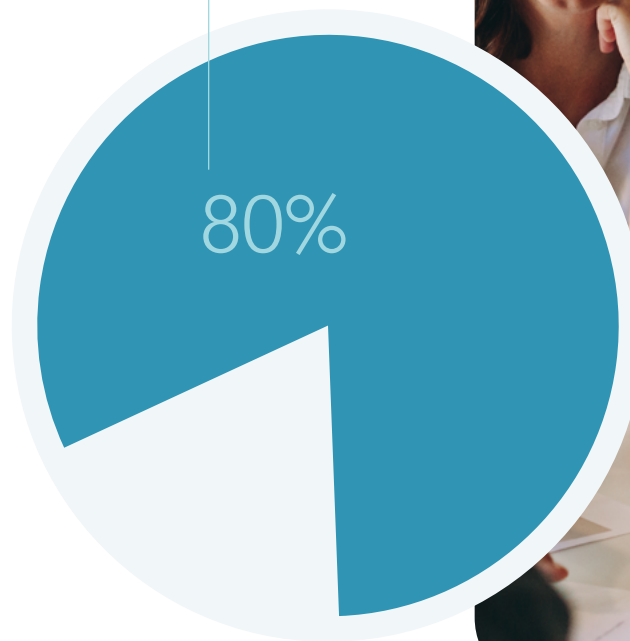
The bottom line is that sellers must deeply understand how those making up the decision-making and buying process are dynamically evolving — and how their approach needs to match this evolution — to win deals.

Sales teams in B2B organizations traditionally focused their efforts on prospecting, finding, and developing leads that indicate the promise of customer wins. As such, they often pursued individual leads in the demand process to capture scores at the account, solution, or opportunity levels, with the idea that one person will make the ultimate buying decision. Teams developed sophisticated programs attuned to individual lead scoring and qualification.

Forrester's 2021 B2B Buying Survey confirmed that more than 80% of B2B buyers had to involve groups of stakeholders in their most recent purchase.⁵

Yet recent trends show that one person rarely makes all the key buying decisions, unless they're a small or solo business, according to Forrester Research. "Forrester's 2021 B2B Buying Survey confirmed that more than 80% of B2B buyers had to involve groups of stakeholders in their most recent purchase."⁵

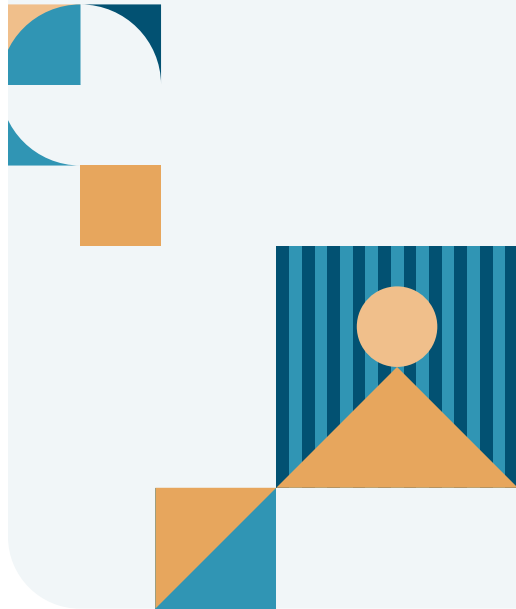
Rather, purchasing decisions within mid-sized to large enterprises result from groups working together on differing solutions. Figuring out who sits on those buying groups and reaching out to them with compelling, value-driven pitches can make all the difference in the world in closing deals.



Where to Start

The first step in setting up your sales approach is to understand how your target company approaches a potential purchase and who might be involved.

Who, exactly, are you trying to reach?



There's More Than One Decision Maker

Interactions with the entire buying group, which could include roles as diverse as IT, finance, or marketing, depending on what you're selling, can give a better and more accurate pulse on a company's appetite to purchase and what it might take to close the deal.

In response to this shift to buying groups, successful sales teams are leaping into action to build sales strategies involving multiple buyer personas and to identify **champions**, **influencers**, and others who wield purchasing power. Understanding the intricacies of roles within a B2B organization and how they coalesce into buying groups boosts the odds of a more successful outcome.

With the realization that comprehensive buyer groups, not one individual, typically represent the best targets for customer wins, you can rethink your selling strategy to get the right B2B data to connect to the right people — and make them an offer they can't refuse.

Who's Involved in a Buying Group?

Once you know who you are trying to reach, understanding as much about them as possible can only help you in your approach. But it takes more than guesswork to find the people in a buying group. It takes a thoughtful, data-driven approach.

For B2B sales teams, making the shift from targeting individual leads to a buyer group requiring a transformation of processes. An initial step could be to dig deep into your ideal customer profile and develop personas for the companies and people most likely to play a role in a purchase.

It's also important to gather data that helps you understand what your ideal customer needs and wants at both an individual and organizational level.

The two types of personas you'll want to have at your fingertips are:



BUYER PERSONA

— a representation of the customer, usually defined by their role at a company, whom you want to target built on a foundation of data and research. It gives you a picture of your customer, what they care about, what they need, and what motivates them, as well as how they want to approach a purchase across stages of their buying journey.



COMPANY PERSONA

— similar to a buyer persona, but at a company level and detailing information about the kinds of companies you want to target.

Use Personas to Guide Your Strategy

Say your buying group is made up of a Chief Marketing Officer, Chief Technology Officer, and a Chief Financial Officer, having buyer personas for each of them that give you a solid glimpse into how, when, and why they make decisions about a purchase will help you know:

01

When to reach out

02

How to craft your message to speak to them in a meaningful way

Build Out Personas for Your Buying Group

According to Gartner®, “crafting an enterprise persona also gives powerful information to build relationships with the buying group and influence their decisions.”⁶

There are six characteristics you might consider developing an enterprise persona: _____

FIRMOGRAPHIC: Include basic parameters related to the business’s location, industry, and size, such as the geography, Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) or North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code for industry and the number of employees in relevant departments.

TECHNOGRAPHIC: Include parameters on the types of (relevant) technologies a business uses.

PSYCHOGRAPHICS: Include parameters about how an organization thinks and makes decisions about new purchases, such as the capacity for risk-taking (innovators, early adopters, or laggards) and the size of their buying groups.

BUSINESS SITUATION: Include parameters on what an organization’s needs and desires are, such as concerns with scaling the business or limited in-house IT experience.

BUSINESS MODEL: Include parameters on how an organization operates, say, pricing model, ecosystem model, etc.

RESOURCES: Include budget-related parameters, such as price sensitivity and total cost of ownership.

Identify Buying Group Members

Now that you have your personas in hand, you're better positioned to find the people within your target accounts who might be involved in purchasing decisions. The next step is to dig into their buying behaviors.

Gartner discovered four distinct B2B enterprise customer profiles with varying buying behaviors and approaches to the change surrounding a purchase decision, according to its report, "[Boost B2B Demand Generation Using Enterprise Personas.](#)"



The four types of organizations are:⁷



TRADITIONALISTS are organizations with fixed structures and systems that avoid risk and change.



FENCE-SITTERS are organizations that fail to commit to a strong culture or direction.



ADVENTURERS are organizations whose openness to risk and change exceeds their practical readiness.



TRANSFORMERS are organizations whose appetite for change is backed by firm resource commitments.

To improve customer acquisition and retention, Gartner recommends:⁷

- Use the defining characteristics of Gartner's four enterprise change readiness profiles to identify which profile best fits each of your target accounts.
- Optimize demand generation effectiveness by applying a mix of content and guided selling tools designed to help each customer profile feel more prepared for change, given their distinct organizational dynamics.
- Boost the resonance of customer engagement by partnering with sales to design tailored multichannel campaigns and playbooks for each of the customer profiles in your target market.

The way to figure out which of these profiles your target company might fit, of course, lies in your data. You can use your own data to glean insights, or you can use third-party data to understand how companies are structured, what their growth trajectory and spend capacity are, and what kinds of moves or purchases they've made recently.

You may be able to acquire that data to bring into your own tools or access it through a sales intelligence tool like [D&B Hoovers™](#), which provides in-depth company intelligence on hundreds of millions of active global companies.

Let Intent Signals Be Your Guide



With the swirl of noise surrounding the people in your buying groups as they contemplate a purchase, it's important for sellers to know how to strike when the iron is hot. Reach out too early and you'll be forgotten. Do it too late and someone else will land the deal.

The good news is that a data-driven approach helps here, too. Your prospects show signals and actions when they're in a purchasing mindset that can act as guides in your approach if you can access and understand them.

Get Your Hands on Intent Data

A key element of buying signals is recognition of intent data which gives clarity to sales teams on a buyer's interest and journey.

For many, intent data can be classified into two groups: first-party and third-party data, which allow sales teams to see a full picture of a potential customer account activity

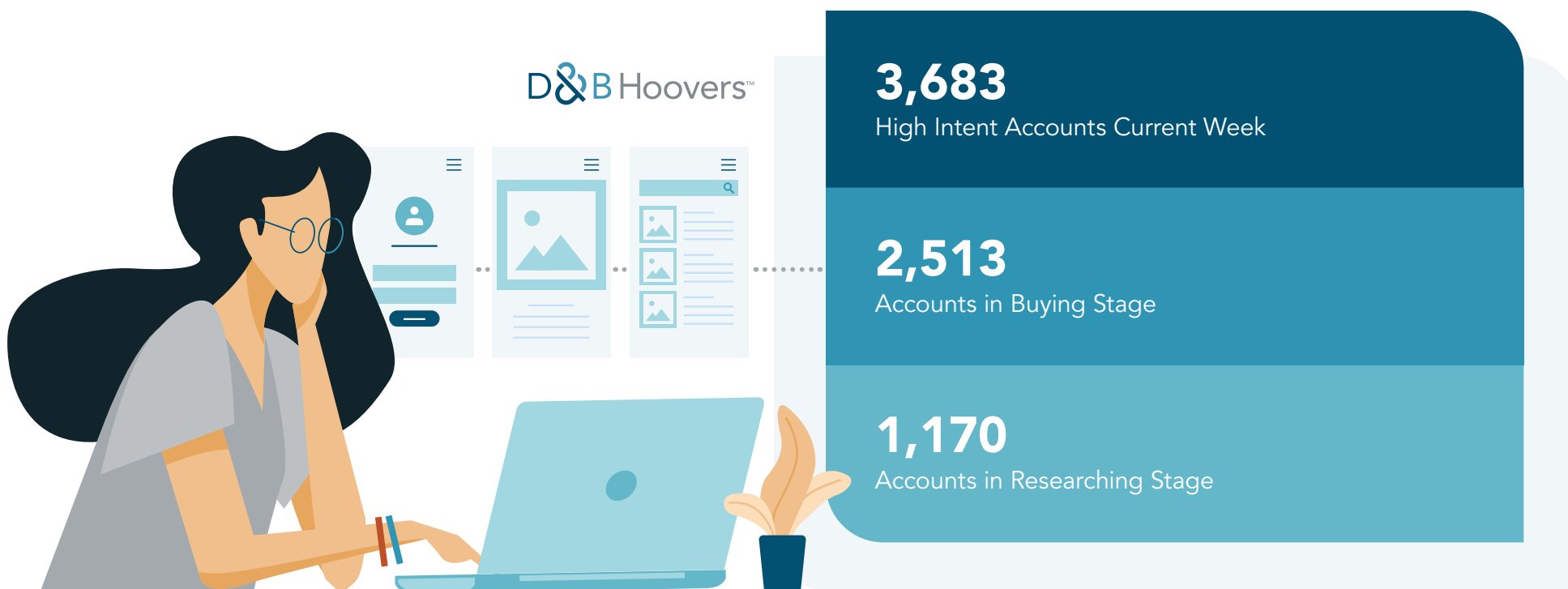
Again, you may be able to find buyer intent insights in your own customer data, such as who is visiting your website and what content they consume. A tool like D&B Visitor Intelligence, which is now available in [D&B Hoovers](#), can help you identify the **companies** visiting your website.

First-party intent data is typically accessible within your company's tools and systems and can include data from social media listening tools, website

traffic, internal systems. Examples include data vendors, who ingest data from a multitude of sources and then typically use AI or machine learning to generate insights.

A common type of data is captured when your ideal customer is searching for terms that indicate they're in the market for what you offer. You also can keep tabs on when they're searching for **competitors' offerings**. A solution like Bombora Intent Data, available in [D&B Hoovers](#), can help up your game when it comes to understanding buyer intent.

For example, in [D&B Hoovers](#), users can set up dynamic lists with a combination of account and intent data to identify in-market accounts that fit their ICP. The list is then displayed on the sales rep's desktop.



Tailor Messages to Your Personas

With a sales strategy to pursue a buying group, teams can now craft messages aimed at different roles within the group with data-informed campaigns.

When you're thinking about personalizing your sales messages for members of your buying group, it can be useful to have data like the latest news about your target company or market trend and analyst reports to create specific and relevant messages that resonate. A sales research tool like [D&B Hoovers](#) can provide dynamic updates to help drive your conversations.



Next Steps

It's clear that the B2B sales landscape has changed. As teams transform prospecting models from the pursuit of individual leads to buyer groups, those using signals from a variety of data sources can better qualify demand within these groups.

Through this process you can save time and resources to be more productive, accessing the right contact and company data that is up-to-date and points you to the right people in buying groups.

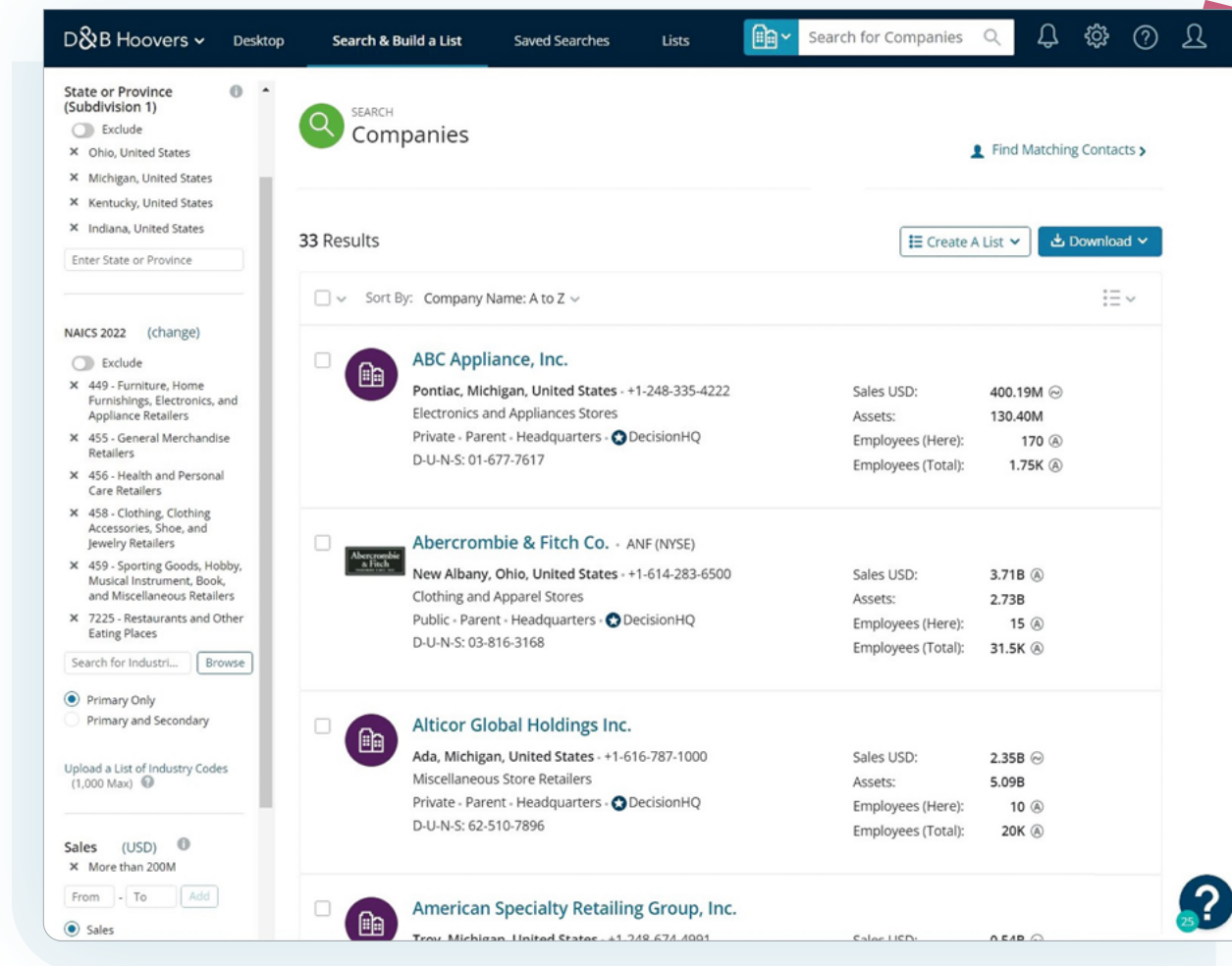
You can now monitor customer characteristics and intent data to develop models to pursue these buyer groups in carefully targeted programs. In this environment you will be able to access, filter, and manage this data to create campaigns as needed.

Following guidelines for detecting buyer group signals and understanding the makeup of groups through their characteristics is the first step. With this knowledge, you can take advantage of decision-maker contacts, real-time account data, and rich insights to uncover new opportunities and reach the right buyers faster to close more deals.



Find Decision Makers Faster with D&B Hoovers™

Robust search capabilities and in-depth account intelligence make it easy to quickly identify the right prospects.



The screenshot displays the D&B Hoovers search interface. On the left, there are filters for 'State or Province (Subdivision 1)' with options to exclude Ohio, Michigan, Kentucky, and Indiana. Below this is a 'NAICS 2022' section with various retail categories like Furniture, Electronics, and General Merchandise. At the bottom left, there are filters for 'Sales (USD)' and 'Primary Only'. The main search bar at the top says 'Search for Companies'. The search results show 33 results, sorted by 'Company Name: A to Z'. The first three results are:

Company	Location	Phone	Sales USD	Assets	Employees (Here)	Employees (Total)
ABC Appliance, Inc.	Pontiac, Michigan, United States	+1-248-335-4222	400.19M	130.40M	170	1.75K
Abercrombie & Fitch Co.	New Albany, Ohio, United States	+1-614-283-6500	3.71B	2.73B	15	31.5K
Alticor Global Holdings Inc.	Ada, Michigan, United States	+1-616-787-1000	2.35B	5.09B	10	20K



D&B Hoovers enables sales teams to pair up-to-date company data and relevant decision makers with rich insights from first-party and third-party data. This lets them get the full picture so that they can close faster and more often. With this knowledge, teams uncover new opportunities and reach the right buyers faster to close more deals.

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¹ Dun & Bradstreet: 7 Steps to Improve ROI with Personalized Engagement

² LinkedIn: LinkedIn State of Sales 2022

³ Sales Hacker: Sales Hacker State of the Sales Tech Stack 2023

⁴ Trust Radius — 2022 B2B Buying Disconnect: The Age of the Self-Serve Buyer

⁵ Forrester Research: Goodbye MQLs, Hello Opportunities (Gated)

⁶ Gartner: How to Generate More Qualified B2B Leads: Strategies, Tips and Tools

⁷ Gartner: Boost B2B Demand Generation Using Enterprise Personas

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