

D Score

The Digital Lens for Understanding SMBs



Now that All SMBs are Digital...

This White Paper advocates a digital-centric lens for use by enterprises that sell to SMBs. This lens looks at the digital essence of the SMB, to give the enterprise service provider a much deeper understanding of the SMB's needs and behaviors. Based on AI-driven data science, this lens is called D Score.

BuzzBoard has designed D Score to be indicative of an individual company's business performance as determined by the strength of its digital presence, overall technology consumption, cybersecurity vulnerabilities, advertising spend, etc. The average cumulation of individual businesses' D Scores allows it to act as a standardized tool to benchmark the digital maturity of individual SMBs across categories, markets, and geographies.

Used by enterprises worldwide, D Score has demonstrated significant value in virtually all operational and strategic use cases. D Score is provided by BuzzBoard, the only marketing enablement provider that specializes in SMBs.

This is one of a series of White Papers on next-gen marketing technologies.

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Executive Summary

This White Paper presents a breakthrough tool for enterprises that market and sell to SMBs. **The tool is D Score**, a new metric to view the SMB through a digital lens.

Here's an overview of what **D Score** means, and how enterprises can apply it.

- **D Score views the SMB as inherently digital.** Digital processes and assets are seen as the essence of the SMB.
- **D Score** is expressed as a number on a scale of 0-100.
- Because **D Score has both strategic and operational benefits throughout an enterprise**, this White Paper is important to CEOs and COOs, as well as C-level managers such as CMOs, CROs, CIOs, CPOs, and their reports.
- D Score is a new, universal benchmark. It's applicable to all SMBs in all contexts (including real-time communications). **D Score can be used to compare SMBs that would otherwise be considered "apples and oranges"** due to differences in business category or headcount.
- At the same time, **D Score can be customized (both the input data and algorithms) to the needs of a specific enterprise.** It can incorporate any of thousands of data elements, including behavioral data, into its AI-driven engine.
- **D Score is driven by robust AI and ML.** D Score is built with data science. It works at super-scale yet is easy and intuitive to use. D Score is a sophisticated metric, generated with extensive proprietary data and algorithms.

- **D Score has important applications across all marketing and sales activities including post-sale customer support.** D Score makes key activities and analyses more robust: Determine TAM (Total Addressable Market); Drive market segmentation and positioning; Predict the Long Term Value of segments; Track and analyze market trends.
- **D Score is easy to implement.** It readily incorporates into existing platforms and procedures, including CRMs and other marketing automation systems.
- **D Score can also be run in parallel to existing scoring systems,** to make marketing and sales communications highly personalized to the individual SMB customer.

*BuzzBoard is the only marketing enablement services provider that specializes in SMBs. BuzzBoard has a massive proprietary database of over 20 million records on SMBs in the US, and another 10 million in other countries. This database supports **D Score** and is accessible by BuzzBoard clients worldwide.*

Every SMB is a Digital Business

How SMBs are Inherently Digital



Every SMB is a Digital Business

Many enterprises that sell to SMBs (even some SMBs themselves) don't yet appreciate this. In the last few years though, it has become clear to us that digital processes and capabilities define all SMBs – even when this reality is not explicitly understood.

In particular, digital processes and capabilities drive an SMB's qualification and overall trajectory as a customer for enterprises and digital marketing agencies.

We believe that “digital” permeates every element of an SMB’s life, and drives SMB growth and success. Digital also determines the place of the SMB in the broader business ecosystem, and the SMB’s ability to leverage key functions and infrastructure for its own growth.

Therefore, digital technology and capabilities aren’t just “tools” or “platforms”. They’re the essential forces that help the SMB muster and organize its resources and go to market.

**There is no such thing
anymore as a
“Non-Digital SMB”.**

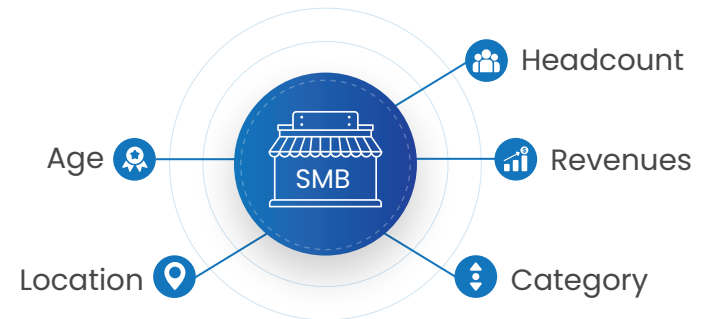
*Of course, this same truth also applies to larger businesses and non-business enterprises. In this paper, we focus on the **SMB market**, although our perspective is broadly applicable.*

Needed: A New Lens to Capture the SMB's Digital Essence

Basic Firmographics Have Lost Their Relevance

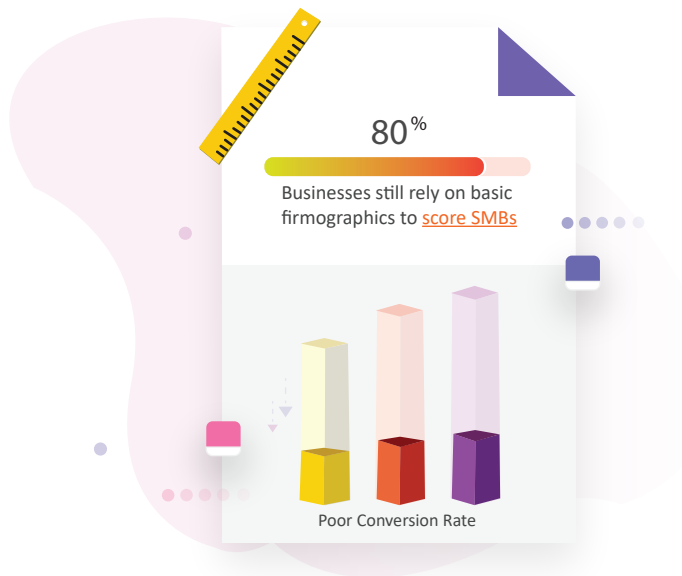
Enterprises that sell into the SMB market constantly use scoring or similar parsing metrics to determine market segments, sort SMB customers into these segments, and assign each a priority. This is only natural, given the huge number of SMBs in the sales funnel.

These rule-based metrics employ objective factors, notably firmographics. **Common firmographics used to parse SMBs include:**



In our experience, roughly 80% of enterprises selling to SMBs are still using scoring metrics based on these basic firmographics. Unfortunately, in the digital era, these metrics are increasingly irrelevant for sorting and prioritizing SMB customers. We have seen from the experience of our enterprise customers that **a market segmentation approach built on basic firmographics is a recipe for failure.**

A Prospecting Pitfall



In particular, Headcount is rapidly losing its value as a parameter for market segmentation. Headcount isn't a universal measure that can be used to evaluate the qualifications of SMBs or different groups of SMBs:

- Headcount can be significantly impacted by the deployment of technology within the SMB. Furthermore, depending on the context (SMB, market, product being sold) a higher headcount doesn't necessarily equate to being a more qualified customer.
- Typical headcounts vary hugely by vertical. Five employees may be a lot for a flower shop but not for an auto body shop.
- The trend towards part-time, outsourced, and "gig" workers further dilutes the value of Headcount as a parsing metric.

Parsing and Scoring SMBs

The most popular use of scoring metrics is to “lead score” SMB customers. The **lead score** assigned to an SMB puts it in a bracket that gets differentiated treatment throughout the whole chain of Marketing & Sales activities. The score also influences post-sale activities, including onboarding, customer service, upselling, etc.

The incoming stream of SMB prospects at the beginning of the sales funnel is typically chaotic and amorphous. There are several reasons for this, including the diverse sources of SMB leads, as well as fragmentary or inaccurate information – all that's available on many SMBs.

While one-dimensional firmographics may help add structure to this stream, they completely fail to capture the digital lifecycle stage of SMBs – which we believe is the most important SMB characteristic of all.

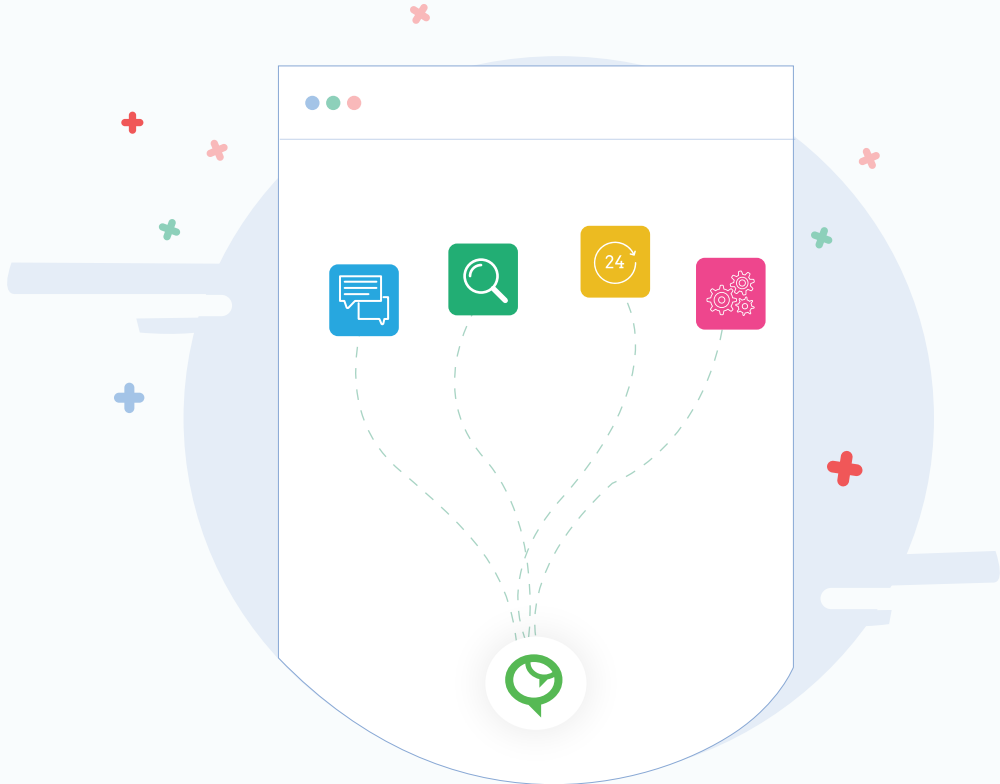
One-dimensional firmographics (even when used in various combinations) lead to a cascade of process failures down the line:

- Identifying the ICP (Ideal Customer Profile)
- Segmenting the market
- Managing marketing communications and lead assignment
- Determining the TAM (Total Addressable Market)
- Supporting ABM (Account Based Marketing)

In sum, a new metric is needed for sorting and filtering SMBs.

Ideally, this metric could be applied across verticals, business sizes, and markets. It would be more accurate than firmographics in assessing the SMB as a prospect. We believe this metric is a **digital-centric lens**, one that is more wholistic and reflective of the digital essence of SMBs.

BuzzBoard has spent years perfecting this digital-centric lens. The results are now ready to present to our audience of enterprise service providers.

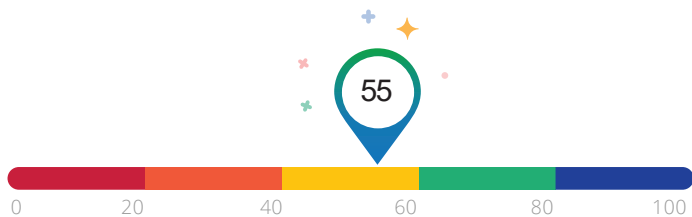


D Score: The New Lens on SMBs

We call the new metric the

D Score

for “Digital Score”.



D Score is a number on a 1-100 scale that indicates the SMB’s digital life stage progression. **The D Score captures the digital essence of an SMB.**

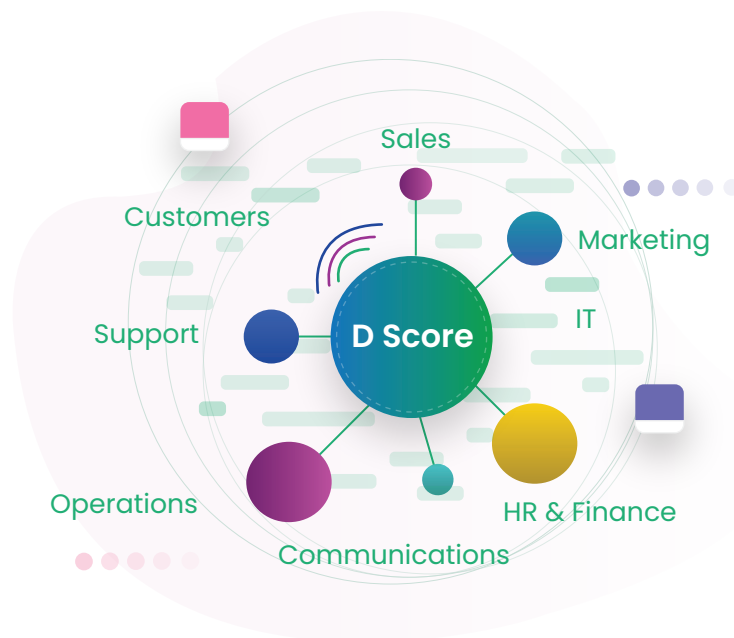
A Universal Metric

The **D Score** is generated by BuzzBoard’s proprietary data and algorithms.

Our digital-centric point of view results from extensive experience in segmenting and assessing SMBs by their needs and behavior, including their attractiveness as a prospect and likelihood to generate a positive business outcome.

D Score captures every dimension of an SMB's needs and life, as seen through a digital lens. **D Score** is actually a reimagined version of our BuzzScore metric that we've been evolving for over 7 years while it has been successfully used by our enterprise customers.

Multitude of Signals Used to Generate D Score



D Score draws on literally thousands of Signals for each SMB – typically focusing on the top 100+ – the most powerful ones. Other Signals are retained in a data lake for future use.

BuzzBoard's Proprietary Data

The data that drives the **D Score** is derived from conditions or characteristics our automated bots discover about SMBs. These data elements are called Signals. We now capture over 6,000 Signals per SMB, from over 20 million SMBs in the US and another 10 million outside the U.S. These data elements are refreshed on a 30-day cycle.

The Signals come from numerous sources, one of which is our Pixel Analyzer bot. The Pixel Analyzer searches each pixel in an SMB's digital footprint and identifies relationships to other products and platforms – both within and outside the SMB.

BuzzBoard's Proprietary Algorithms

We then curate this massive list of Signals, to uncover those that are most powerful in explaining an SMB action (generally a sale). Each Signal is tested for its predictive strength. At the same time, we test various weights for the Signals, in order to build our algorithms.

We typically boil down the full data set to 100+ individual primary Signals. Once Signals and their weights have been determined, the algorithms are tested and optimized.

The weighted Signals are then combined into a robust set of algorithms that generate the **D Score**.

Constructing the **D Score** algorithms leverages both human experience and AI-driven analysis. Numerous combinations of Signals and weights are tested on the enterprise's own data before the final configuration is determined. Once constructed, the data and algorithms are maintained on a regular schedule.

D Score is applicable in every SMB category, for every type of product or service. **It works particularly well at identifying early adopters of a specific technology.** Accordingly, the first large-scale users of **D Score** have been SaaS, media and technology-driven service providers.



D Score is also well suited to identifying SMBs that are growth-oriented, as our experience has shown a strong correlation between technology implementation and growth.

D Score Customization

The universal **D Score** can also be customized to the context of a specific enterprise and its products or services. In a customized implementation, **D Score** may incorporate or be used in conjunction with other filters, such as filters that check for specific technology groups.

For example, an enterprise selling automated chat bots to SMBs may want to know if an SMB is already running a non-automated chat function, or text communications that could be improved with a chat bot.

Tests for these characteristics can be added to the D Score, to get a cluster of filters that are tailored to the specific needs of the enterprise.

In each customized implementation, we build the D Score algorithm in close collaboration with our enterprise customer, in order to incorporate their expertise and intuition.



D Score and AI

D Score Fully Leverages AI and Machine Learning

Actually, **D Score** couldn't exist without AI and ML. **D Score** requires a great amount of data and deep analysis.

D Score is built for continual improvement as additional data becomes available from actual experiences – an inherent characteristic to AI-based models.

D score is designed to be a true representation of a business's evolution. A single number that can help benchmark a business within its category and at the same time provide insights into a business's growth arc.

The **D score** has been designed as a dynamic entity that relies on ML/AI to consume, analyze and reflect changes in a business's lifecycle. While our in-house algorithm generates the **D score** for new business, as we collect more intelligence the ML/AI capability kicks in and does the heavy lifting from that point onward.

What Does D Score Mean For My Enterprise?

Operational Uses of D Score

The **D Score** is a universal benchmark metric that has both operational and strategic uses for the enterprise service provider selling to SMBs.

These D Score use cases include:



Marketing & Demand Gen



Sales



Post-Sales Service



Fulfillment & Other

Marketing & Demand Gen

- Assess market potential and revenue projections more accurately
- Define distinct segments for different product/service offerings
- Enable more relevant targeting and campaign design
- Maintaining CRM and funnel hygiene

Sales

- Generating **D Scores** for incoming phone calls in real-time
- Benchmarking and routing leads to a salesperson experienced with the SMB's digital life stage
- Generating personalized sales materials (for "Personalization 2.0"*)

*See "Data and Insights: The New Foundation for Relationships with SMBs", white paper published by BuzzBoard Oct. 2018.

Post-Sales Service

- Tailoring SMB onboarding of the enterprise's products or services
- Driving service and communications with SMB customers (real-time routing of service requests; generating contextual content)
- Identifying up-sell, cross-sell, and winback opportunities

Fulfillment & Other

- Tailoring fulfillment of digital services for the SMB customer (e.g. ecommerce products and services)
- Inputting into other marketing and sales modules (such as BuzzBoard's **Product Recommendation Engine** that optimally aligns SMB needs with the enterprise's products and services)

Strategic Uses of D Score

D Score can be used to:

- Determine TAM (Total Addressable Market)
- Drive market segmentation and positioning
- Predict the Long Term Value of segments or individual SMBs
- Support due diligence activities
- Track and analyze market trends

*The newest way our clients are using D Score is to evaluate risks and opportunities for SMBs due to **COVID-19**. This evaluation uses a combination of filters: D Score; category; location; market traction; systems flexibility and robustness.*

The Bottom Line is that D Score Changes Everything

- **D Score** changes how both the enterprise service provider and its SMB customers think about the SMB's needs, and the SMB's competitive position in their chosen niche.
- **D Score** changes how all the other sales and marketing processes within the enterprise handle the SMB customer.
- **D Score**, because of its ability to update in real time, dramatically impacts the whole relationship between the enterprise service provider and its SMB customers: **Everything from sales approach to product recommendations to communications and content.** Even informal dialog between the enterprise and SMBs at conferences, trade shows, and socializing are positively impacted.

D Score

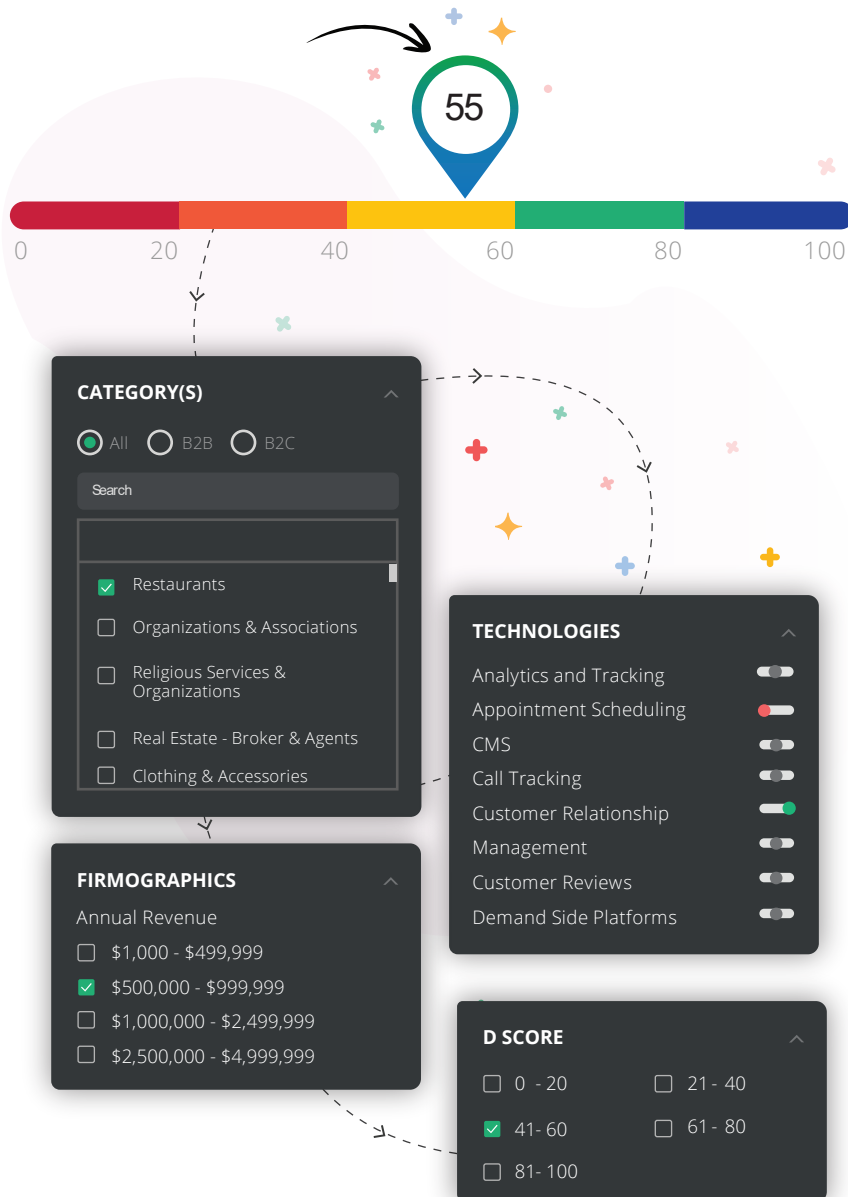
The New Standard

We believe **D Score** will become the best filter for identifying and prioritizing SMB prospects. It will be widely understood and utilized. In this regard, we expect it will take its place among other ubiquitous scoring systems like the NPS, D&B score, or the consumer oriented FICO score.

*To be clear. SMBs with higher **D Scores** aren't necessarily the best prospects. The ideal **D Score** depends entirely on the context – particularly the product or service the enterprise is selling.*

There are many cases where an enterprise will want to approach SMBs with mediocre or even low **D Score** (particularly when the **D Score** is combined with other filters that indicate the lack of a key piece of technology or infrastructure). Typically, our customers will identify a **D Score** range (e.g. 50-70 on the scale of 100) where they've had the greatest success in converting SMB prospects.

Building Segments Using D Score: Example



Although developing the **D Score** algorithm can be a sophisticated process, once implemented, the **D Score** is easy to understand and communicate. Our customers have found that using a framework based on **D Score** in addition to firmographics, considerably boosts their own understanding of market segments and how to address them.

*A final virtue of **D Score** is that it's inherently customer-centric.*

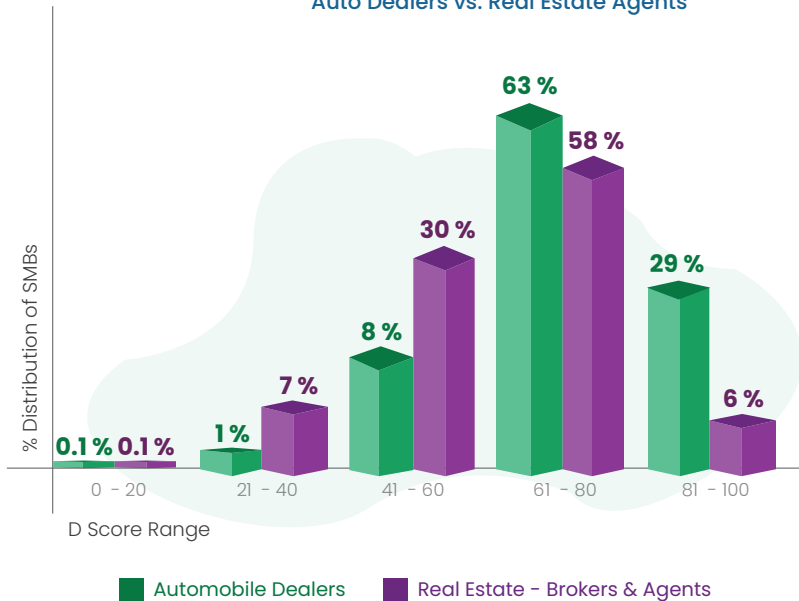
It represents the view of the world from the SMB's perspective. This also helps explain the power of the **D Score**: it uses internal conditions to segment SMBs, instead of external firmographics.

What Do D Scores Look Like?

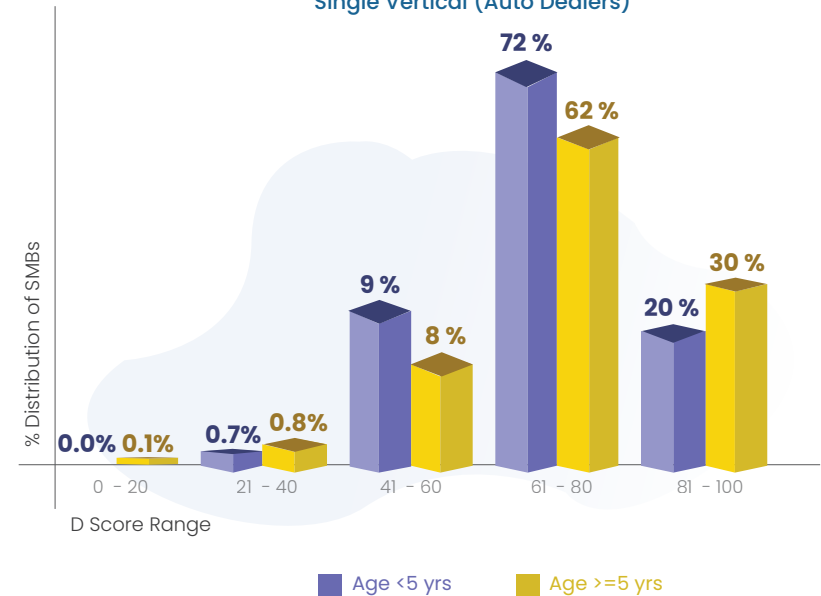
Because **D Scores** are metrics, they can be easily displayed and analyzed.

Here are a few examples of D Score distributions in some common SMB firmographic slices:

Comparison of D Scores for Two Verticals:
Auto Dealers vs. Real Estate Agents



Comparison of D Scores by Size Bracket, within
Single Vertical (Auto Dealers)



How Do I Implement D Score?

D Score is Relatively Easy to Implement

The BuzzBoard proprietary SMB data and the **D Score** algorithms reside in BuzzBoard's cloud-based platform, hosted on Amazon Web Services. These connect via APIs to an enterprise's existing CRM, sales automation, and similar systems.

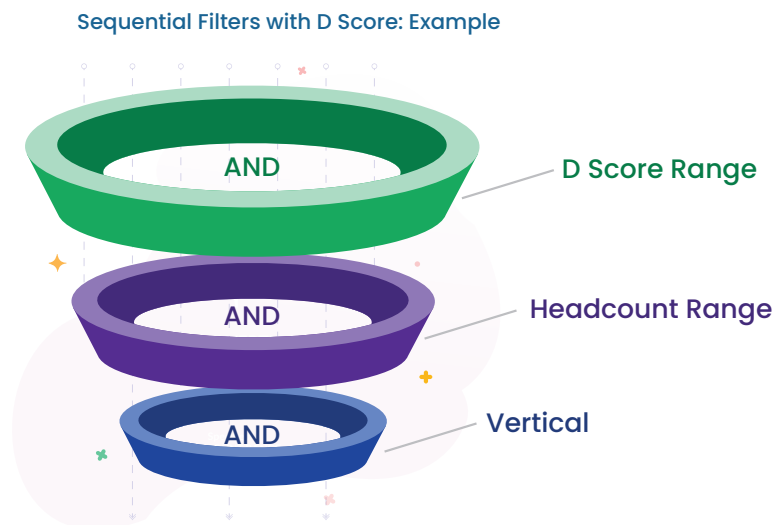
Implementing **D Score** only requires minimal changes to an enterprise's current practices and procedures. In fact, **D Scores** can be phased in by being generated in parallel with traditional metrics, to give personnel a chance to become familiar with them.

The implementation, onboarding and support of **D Score** are done by BuzzBoard's expert Demand Gen and Product Support teams working closely with the enterprise's own managers. Naturally, a customized **D Score** implementation takes a bit longer.

In a customized implementation, **D Score** algorithms can be as simple or sophisticated as the enterprise wants – they're totally configurable.

D Scores can be used, for example:

- Sequentially with other filters (before or after)
- As part of a Boolean screen (e.g. a specified **D Score** range AND specified headcount range AND specified vertical)
- In a totally customized configuration

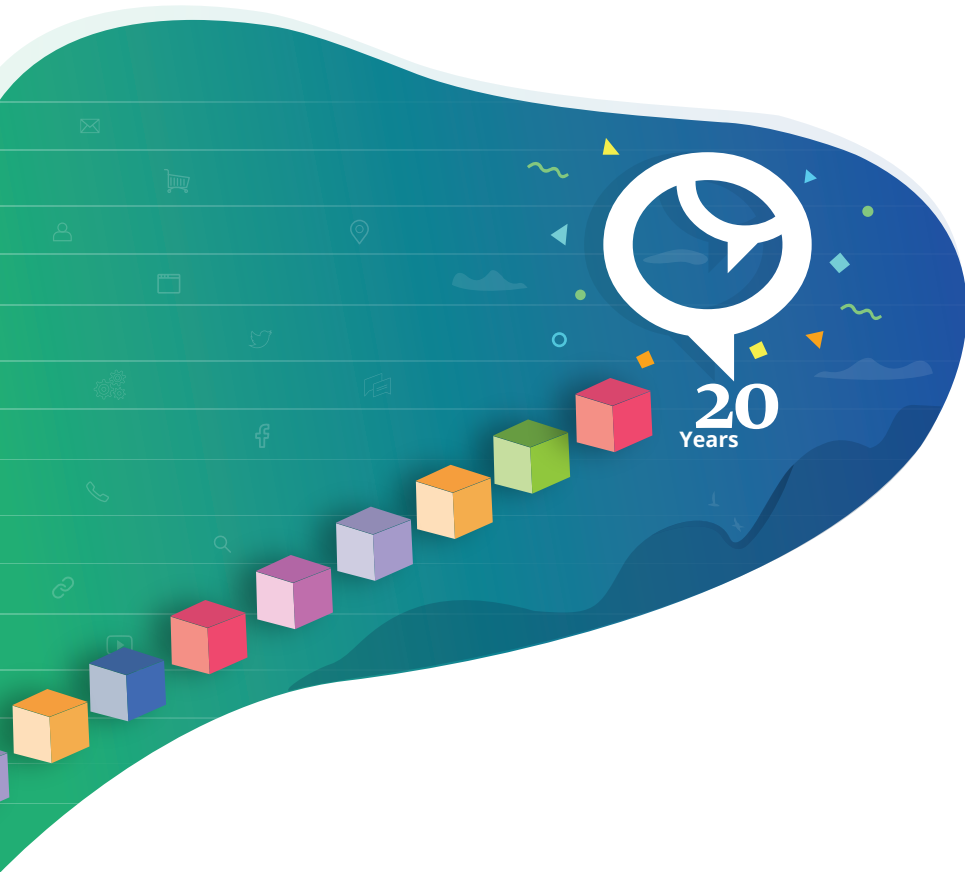


D Score algorithms are typically iterated going forward, using new data as marketing and sales experience accumulates. (Hypotheses and new algorithms can of course be back-tested at any point). **D Scores** can be refreshed in whatever cycle is desired (including on-demand) for individual SMBs or whole segments.

Like all BuzzBoard products D Score:

- Works natively with Salesforce CRM.
- Works natively and seamlessly with most other CRM, sales automation, and similar systems. Many of our customers have used **D Score** in a Zapier implementation. Our APIs are open and published.

D Score and BuzzBoard



It's not surprising that BuzzBoard is the marketing enablement company that has developed the **D Score**. The people behind BuzzBoard have been the specialists in marketing and sales to SMBs for over 20 years.

We are constantly thinking about SMBs and how our enterprise customers can sell to them and service them more effectively.

Because our DNA is all about SMBs, we've developed and commercialized many proprietary capabilities tailored specifically to the SMB market.


These include:

 **URL Identification**

The most powerful technique of identifying URLs for SMBs, even when the SMB data is incomplete, inaccurate or ambiguous.

 **Pixel Analyzer**

An automated bot that analyzes individual pixels in an SMB's digital footprint, to find connections to external platforms, data sets, and service providers.

 **SMBs and SMB Signals**

We maintain records on over 20 million SMBs in the US, and over 10 million worldwide. We populate most of these with over 6,000 separate data elements. We fully refresh our data set every 30 days.

 **Demand Gen Capabilities**

We have deep expertise in guiding enterprise customers to greatly boost their marketing and sales effectiveness with our tools.

*The **D Score** is the next logical step in our continual development of powerful, easy-to-use tools for reaching the SMB marketplace.*

Customer Testimonials



BuzzBoard is invaluable resource in delivering commercial success

- Darren Evans, Reach PLC



I like that I am able to compare one website with its competitors. It is very helpful to compare rankings with others in the market and industry and present my information more clearly to my clients.

- Alyssa Nicotera, **Hearst Digital Marketing Services**



It's an incredible trust builder

- Kristina English, Salem Media Group



Business insights you can't get elsewhere

- Glenda Losh, Reach PLC



One of the easiest tools to use. Every digital appointment I have uses a Buzzboard report. Competitive information is very valuable when showing clients how they rank among their competition.

- Leonard Owens, **Sinclair Broadcast Group**



BuzzBoard helped our sales team go from reactive to proactive

- Darrin Rush, Reach PLC



It takes weeks off my sales cycle

- Greg Thompson, Advance Digital



Buzzboard data has improved my cold call conversations

- Sarah Symns, Salem Media Group

Contact Us for a Demo or Trial

[Click here](#) to arrange a no-obligation demo, or start a free trial.



About BuzzBoard

BuzzBoard now has over 20 million records on US SMBs, with another 10 million records in other countries including Canada, UK, Australia and New Zealand. We believe this is the largest data set in the world of enriched SMB records. For most of these SMBs, we have thousands of data elements that are regularly refreshed and triple-checked via human audit. For the capture, processing and storage of this massive data set, we partner with Google Cloud.

We also support and integrate smoothly with Salesforce and other popular top 10 CRM platforms.

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