

GUIDE

Harnessing the Signal Science Approach for B2SMB Prospecting

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The Signals Are Clear: Signal Science is the Key for Marketing and Sales Success



➤ Are Your Prospects Still Ghostly Specters?

Not so long ago, the signals used for identifying and qualifying prospects were mostly limited to firmographics, a mashup of the words firm and demographics. But, at best, those firmographic signals were vague and unspecific. And the result was a prospect characterization that was equally vague and unspecific – more of a ghostly apparition than a crystal-clear rendering of an ideal prospect.

But those days are over. **Firmographics is no longer the best you can do; it's now the least you can do.** In this interconnected digital age, a proliferation of SaaS solutions and a host of associated technological advancements have changed the game.

01 The Signals Are Clear: Signal Science is the Key for Marketing and Sales Success

These tools have enabled a mega-shift in the process of identifying prospects, and effectively selling to them. That's why what you used to do (and might still be doing) no longer works, including:

- Scatter-shooting, shot-in-the-dark email campaigns
- Marketing budgets blown on creating directionless buzz across a broad array of platforms and channels
- Time and money blown in developing content that is simply too generic to strike a chord with your true prospects
- Vaguely targeted SMB demand generation programs

Each of us is deluged with an overwhelming amount of content thrown at us every day. It's like a cacophony of content that constantly surrounds us, like the never-ending dull roar of a waterfall. And that's why content that isn't precisely targeted is unlikely to ever reach the intended audience.

➤ Big Data and the Dawn of the Interconnected Era

Every business has a digital footprint — and that includes every business on your prospect list.

Until very recently, it simply hasn't been possible to obtain granular information about most prospects. You were limited to firmographics. But with virtually every business now online, that granular information is now available.

Technology is helping sales and marketing teams harvest those digital signals that can be used to define and find highly receptive prospects through real-time data and insights.

The collection of signals that reflect a business's digital footprint are called digiographics.

Content can then be crafted that addresses unique problems and needs, that offers customized solutions and makes your marketing messages stand apart.

Signal science provides the methodology for making use of the thousands upon thousands of digital signals that are now available for your prospects. It makes it possible to leverage those digital signals in improving virtually every aspect of the sales cycle, including prospecting, targeting, messaging, and engagement.

➤ Harnessing the Signal Science Approach to Sales and Marketing

Signal science sifts those digital signals, and arranges them in unique combinations that inform you about critically important prospect attributes. Putting signal science to work for your company should focus upon three key classes of digital signals:

Digital Maturity Signals

These signals provide a great indication of whether a company is likely to be a high-quality prospect for the product or service you're selling.

Here are a couple of examples of using digital maturity signals:

- ➔ Search engine marketing, digital ad campaigns, and active social media accounts can serve as excellent indicators of the spend and growth intent of businesses.
- ➔ Derive engagement signals from the social media activities that permit you to time and tailor your interactions and engagements with the targeted market. Identify the most-used social media platforms / channels that appeal most to your defined buyer persona (based on industry, role, location, and the products/solutions you want to sell), and then focus your marketing efforts through those platforms.

Need Signals

These signals help you identify the specific needs that a business must address in the near term, and enable a needs analysis of a business.

Examples:

- Use technographic profiles to rank your prospects on tech maturity, and tailor your offering / campaigns. Focus on SMBs who don't have the product(s) you sell (but need), and on SMBs using certain SaaS / technology products for which you offer complementary solutions (Salesforce customers, for example).
- For a company that sells cyber security solutions, SMBs that are Ecommerce enabled but have a low cybersecurity score are a great group of accounts (with a clear need) to prospect into.
- Similarly, Restaurants that have the online reservation option on their website, but have poor online reviews reveal a clear need for a Review Management platform.

Match the business's deficiencies relative to it's category and local competition, and match against your solutions. (Falling behind the competition provides a compelling motivation to act!).

Budget Signals

Avoid wasted time and effort by using budget signals to assess a company's current spending (an example of micro-segmentation).

Examples can include:

- Businesses that have invested in an email-automation stack / marketing-automation stack are likely candidates with the need and budget for continuous content development.
- Businesses that have recently purchased recruitment software provide a sure signal that they are on the path to growth. Growing businesses are more likely to invest in sales and marketing automation tools to support their growth.
- Businesses that are spending any amount on online ads, but lack commerce tools such as scheduling and payments on their websites.

It's frustrating to spend lots of time cultivating a prospect that simply can't afford your product.

➤ Signal Science is for the Smart and Progressive. Firmographics is for the Has-Beens and Wannabes

Maximizing the benefits of signal science is crucial for every company that wishes to be able to compete in this modern age – or, to put it simply, every company. Because we have undeniably arrived in the new era of smart segmentation; there is no going back. Staying alert for the technologies, strategies, and organizational thinking that will help your company excel is not just a wise approach, it is rapidly becoming a competitive necessity.

Leveraging the benefits of signal science, such as micro-segmentation and needs analysis, will result in improved targeting, better leads, and precise messaging.

The result will be more meaningful conversations, more closed sales, and higher customer retention rates – the ultimate goals of all sales and marketing professionals.

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Segment your Prospects Based on Budget, Need, and Compatibility Signals



At a time when many small businesses are a little short on time and money, segmenting using budget signals can really make a difference in your demand gen efforts.

Including small businesses that simply can't afford your product or service in your target audience is simply a waste of your marketing spend. Instead, using data that allows you to look for budget, needs, or characteristics that you can use to meaningfully segment the accounts will enable you to craft stories that are relevant to the SMB buyer.

Using this data-driven approach, you can divide the market into similar and identifiable segments for more targeted, focused sales and marketing cadences that are more effective at engaging buyers and generating higher returns.

Budget and need signals are most useful when customized to a company's product or service, but there are also a handful that are common to most businesses.

➤ **First Things First: Review Budget Signals**

Marketing spend is often a key budget indicator. If a business is spending on Google Ads, for instance, they're investing in growth. Signals in the HR and Technology categories are a great place to start. Hiring is another key indicator of growth and budget. Businesses that are hiring are more likely to be in the growth mode.

Businesses' tech stacks also reveal a lot.

- Are they using a marketing software like a Content management platform?
- Are they eCommerce enabled?
- Do they have a secured website?

These are positive indicators.

In addition to classic technographics, like their content management platform, with BuzzBoard, you can now also leverage digiographics - their digital footprint, like advertising spend and community forum reviews.

➤ Next, Determine Need

Once you've the budget signals plugged in, the next step to meaningful segmentation is to determine need. Ad spend (or any paid online marketing activity), for instance, should be coupled with a related technology signal—e.g. eCommerce capabilities.

It's crucial that a business's website has the necessary eCommerce tools to support easy and safe online purchases—thus making the most of their advertising investment. After all, driving traffic to a website that only allows “window shopping” leaves money on the table. If eCommerce functionality isn't in place, the visitors can't convert to customers...so a little investment in the website would help the business to get the biggest ROI for their ad spend.

➤ Last-but-not-least: Confirm Compatibility

Companies that have recently invested in marketing-related technology (e.g. an email automation stack) are likely to be scaling. Consider which of your solutions complement their growth strategy and are compatible with their existing tech stack.

Every strategy will be different, depending on the purchase triggers for your product or solution, but here's a general list of budget and need signals that you may wish to consider as you start to customize your filters:

- Revenue
- eCommerce
- Social engagement
(posts, frequency, followers)
- Employees
- Estimated tech spend
- Content volume
(backlinks, # of pages)
- Location count
- Estimated ad spend
- Website traffic

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How to Adapt, Find Opportunities, and Deliver Value



➤ Filter for the Conversations You Want to Have

BuzzBoard’s “**Find Prospects**” feature is certainly our most popular tool—but don’t stop there! Use the filter functionality to segment prospects based on the conversations you want to have. To optimize your list, apply filters to identify those prospects that indicate via multiple signals (compatible technology, digital practices, ad spend, growth trends, competition, etc.) that they are the perfect fit for your solution and highly likely to be open for a conversation. Think of this filtering process as step one to building genuine opportunities to engage.

For example, let’s say that you’re a broadcast media sales rep and you’re using BuzzBoard to build a prospect list of roofers in San Diego. That’s a great category. But it’s crucial to be able to engage with each roofer in an impactful way.

What if you could filter that list to identify roofers in San Diego with their own YouTube Channel? You can! And this is where it gets really interesting. You accomplish a couple of very important insights by using YouTube as a filter:

- You identified those roofers who understand how important it is to communicate to an external audience.
- You now have an opportunity to maximize their efforts through the solutions you sell, positioning yourself as the consultant they genuinely need to help them rise above the noise.

Use the data to see where they are in their business journey, and where they're headed. Understanding the bigger narrative allows you to engage in ways that are meaningful and impactful.

➤ Save Your Lead List

At BuzzBoard, we understand that time is money—and having personalized conversations with the right SMB decision makers is what closes deals. The less time you have to spend researching or entering in data, the more time you have for building relationships—so please save your original lead list. You can go back to it and add or take away filters without re-creating the original.

Next: the list you save helps you meet important KPIs. Applying filters from the original list is part of the practice of filtering for the conversation you want to have, so the context you need for the phone call is already there.

➤ Leverage Competition Insights

Now that you have your list, you have phone calls to make. During that first phone call, you'll want to keep it simple, and impactful. Time and time again, I hear reps trying to give too much information on the first phone call. They start talking about a business's digital marketing discrepancies and sometimes go down "digital dark alleys" by trying to sound digitally savvy. But all they're really doing is confusing the person on the other end of the line.

The Competition feature in BuzzBoard allows us to provide immediate value. For example, this type of opener is generally highly successful: **I was doing research on businesses just like yours and I want to show you how some of their digital marketing strategies are increasing market share and revenue.**

There are multiple variations of how we can phrase the above. Just remember to include two of the keywords that resonate with all business owners, decision makers and gatekeepers alike: **market share and revenue.**

In Summary: The Way Forward is with Signal Science

Marketers are struggling to adapt to today's digital-first buying experiences that customers have come to expect, and seem less aware of the technologies and data insights they need to make it possible. This is more glaringly true of organizations that are focussed on the SMB buyers, a segment that can in fact be served better with the right approach to using data and signal science that address their unique attributes and hence improve engagement.

Organizations selling to or servicing SMB's should take a step back and determine their go-to-market approach first. If they want to adopt more personalized marketing approaches that are proving to improve ROI, then account selection and segmentation are the keys to success. This is where the power of signal science can be truly unleashed.



Accounts that see both targeted brand and acquisition messaging are 6x more likely to convert.

- LinkedIn Research

The deep data and signal analysis can reveal thousands of data elements that can be distilled to become a signal stack that they can now apply against their database of SMBs to generate an accurate list of viable prospects, with the most revenue potential.

Using signal science, they can start gaining a clearer understanding of each customer, including their requirements, preferences, behaviors, and even their motivations for making a purchase.

Having signals and account-level data that provides insights into a business's need, growth, and customer voice means they can better understand and segment their account lists with more relevant content and conversations that accelerates the buying journey towards a purchase.

This guide simplifies the path to realizing the true potential of digiographic insights and why such data variety must live in your CRM. To reiterate, this is even more crucial when you are SMB focused —a segment that is as disparate and elusive as they come —but with tremendous revenue potential for your cloud-based and digital solutions.

In conclusion, enrich and activate your CRM/ SMB database with deep data and signals to support your sales and marketing efforts. Look for growth, budget, need, and buying behavior to identify the best fit accounts first, then look for patterns and behaviors to further segment them into accounts lists that can be activated by sales and marketing teams.

About BuzzBoard

BuzzBoard is fueled with over 20 years of acquired intelligence of 30+ million small-to-medium businesses to help solution providers deeply understand their customers and build trusted relationships in today's digital-first selling environment. BuzzBoard's AI-powered intelligence engine powers account-based marketing and sales performance using its proprietary SMB signal stack and category classification system to identify, segment, and score the accounts with the highest revenue potential.

When accounts inside CRMs and marketing automation platforms are populated with BuzzBoard account intelligence, better opportunities to increase revenue surface. BuzzBoard's proprietary data and signal stack generates unique insights about each prospect's environment, operations, digital footprint, technology stack, purchase triggers, risk exposure, and more. With BuzzBoard, it becomes easier for demand generation teams to target the best-fit contacts for account-based marketing campaigns and for sales to skip "qualification calls" and start talking solutions.

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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



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