**Q&A With John Steinert, TechTarget: Implementing Structured Analytics Into Intent-Based Strategies To Increase Productivity**

Intent-based strategies are an effective way of identifying buyer behaviors and needs — but they’re also very complex. With an influx of data coming in from multiple touchpoints and sources, marketing teams need to ensure they have a solid analytics strategy in place to correctly analyze the information coming in.

To get more insights into the best ways to sift through the abundance of insights, the *Demand Gen Report* team sat down with John Steinert, Chief Marketing Officer of [TechTarget](https://www.techtarget.com/), to discuss the importance of implementing structured analytics into intent-based strategies.

***Demand Gen Report: Why is it so important to have structured analytics in place to analyze intent data? What are the benefits?***

**John Steinert:** Any go-to-market (GTM) executive understands that process changes spanning multiple disciplines put ROI at risk. Thus, the more complicated an implementation, no matter what it promises, the more inherent the risk. Ideally, a solution should add immediate value practically right out of the box. To drive adoption momentum instantly, teams should be able to use it directly to support their existing daily actions.

Without structured analytics built into how you receive the data, this is obviously a challenge. Conversely, when structured analytics are built in, outputs are customized down to the individual user. The idea is to be very prescriptive so that an SDR or an account executive can immediately understand how to do the same job they’ve been doing and get better results.

***DGR: What benefit does generating and analyzing activity intent data hold for marketers?***

**Steinert:** Intent data is all about increasing GTM productivity. Productivity increases come from taking fewer wrong actions and more (higher quality) right ones. When a GTM organization can use its actions to create behaviors in a targeted segment or target account, it is creating new information about the target’s intentions vis-à-vis an interest or a problem.

Using a sales motion analogy, intent is all about discovery. Practitioners across GTM should configure their efforts to generate their own first-party intent data and acquire outside intent for the purpose of increasing productivity. That includes seeking answers to critical questions that will help them better understand the people within their buying centers and differentiate active buyers from passive information consumers.

***DGR: What’s one of the biggest mistakes you see marketers making when analyzing/acting upon intent data, and how do you recommend they correct it?***

**Steinert:** The biggest single mistake marketers make is having expectations of their intent program that the initial source they choose cannot fulfill. If their expectations or requirements can’t be met by the source as a project team, marketing teams run the risk of making promises to colleagues that will be impossible to deliver on. Then, colleagues will lose confidence and the intent program may falter – worse, marketers then may not get another chance at it for a year or more.

To avoid this situation, marketers should assess their longer-term expectations for leveraging intent very carefully. Instead of focusing only on what should be done first, they should think about the full crawl, walk, run cycle to uncover where they want to be well in the future.

If organizations want many teams across their GTM to get value out of their intent sourcing, make sure marketers should source from suppliers who can deliver value to product and campaign people and sales organization. Understand the differences between third- and second-party sources, account insights only versus opt-in person level signals, leads-based versus buying group focused, modeling versus observed methodologies and so on.

***DGR: How can marketers move beyond basic persona frameworks and develop detailed profiles******surrounding active buyers?***

**Steinert:** Personas are not actual people; they’re models of people who have either been involved in purchases in the past or who we think will be involved going forward. Both have a variety of obvious limitations that any team should understand when using them. Even when rigorously constructed, historically modeled personas aren’t very agile – they don’t adjust to recent changes in the industry that have impacted who will be involved in purchases going forward.

Personas created for new efforts (whether product, segment, account or otherwise informed) are necessarily based on hypotheses – they’re a best guess since no history yet exists. In cases like this, the persona “owners” will want to use intent monitoring at the buying group and real person-level to continuously refine their personas based on their actual targeted audience’s composition and preferences.