Intent Topic Selection Best Practices

Considerations

Choosing intent topics can be difficult, especially if your business offers multiple products or targets various types of buyers. The following is a guide designed to help ZoomInfo customers think about topics in the proper way. The ultimate goal is to help customers identify the intent topics that will identify a set of companies more likely to engage.

Business professionals read plenty of content online. They jump from news stories to blogs to search engines to social media. It's not exactly easy to pinpoint a company's interest in a specific topic just from looking at some of the sites, pages, and words that cross the eyes of their employees.

Yet intent works despite not being a source of "hot leads." It's valuable because it identifies a set of companies more likely to be interested in a particular topic. No one knows for sure if a company with employees seeing the phrase "data center" at increased frequency is in the market for a new data center. But our research shows that companies with employees regarding the phrase "data center" at increased rates are significantly more likely to be in the market for a new data center than a random set of companies.

That's the real benefit of intent. A company performing outreach to sell recruiting software may usually call 100 different companies and get five interested companies. A company conducting outreach to 100 companies with signals for recruiting software could yield eight interested companies. That is a 60% increase in conversion rate! And yet in this scenario, 92 of 100 companies with signals for recruiting software still passed on a demo. This is how ZoomInfo customers maximize success with Intent- they recognize the ability to surface groups of companies more likely to close, and they prioritize their outreach to convert at a higher rate.

Topic selection is a crucial component of leveraging intent properly. Choosing the wrong types of topics can send your team headed in the wrong direction. Let's take a look at what kinds of things you should have in mind when selecting topics.
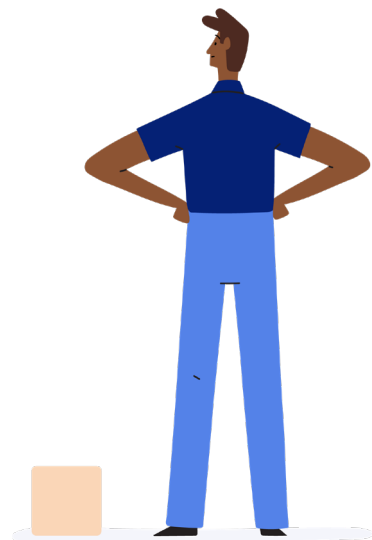
The Do's & Don'ts of Topic Selection

PRO TIP #1

Don't get picky! Trying to narrow a topic down to a very niche topic will result in low volume.

Example 1: You compete against ZoomInfo's API product for Enterprise companies. You want to set up a topic for ZoomInfo's Enterprise API.

This will not work because you are narrowing your topic down to something that is consumed very infrequently on the internet. The entire concept of intent is to identify companies consuming certain types of content more than usual. If you select a topic that is not consumed often, there will not be many signals.

Example 2: You want to find companies researching or consuming content about Japanese Accounting Laws.

Unfortunately, this is not a topic that is going to cross the eyes of business professionals very frequently. Very specific topics are going to leave you with a baseline of basically zero, and one single page view with the words "Japan" and "Accounting" may trigger a signal.

Instead, do this: Instead of looking for precise insights like interest in ZoomInfo's Enterprise API, set up intent alerts for "ZoomInfo," and give yourself more opportunity. You'll get a massive amount of traffic and signals for the topic ZoomInfo. Overall, the entire purpose of our Intent product is to identify companies more likely to close. Companies reading about ZoomInfo are more likely to buy ZoomInfo's Enterprise API than

companies not even reading about ZoomInfo. Furthermore, you can use our firmographic filtering capabilities, or our intent preferencing feature, to surface the companies with 1,000+ employees searching for ZoomInfo.

PRO TIP #2:

Don't choose or select general topics that naturally appear very frequently on the internet, or are often "in the news."

Example 1: Your company sells shipping materials. You want to select the topic "Shipping."

This will not likely produce expected results because the word shipping appears on the internet everywhere, specifically every single e-commerce website. Whether it's a CEO reading the shipping policies at an online retailer or a VP of IT trying to get new servers delivered quicker, this type of consumption is not indicative of a company wanting shipping materials. Even someone doing online shopping for clothes on a page in our network would trigger a page view in most cases.

Example 2: Your company sells COVID-19 preparedness kits. You want to require or select the topic "Coronavirus."

This will not likely produce expected results because virtually every professional in the world is consuming Coronavirus content. Individuals consuming pages with the word "Coronavirus" on them are not looking for Coronavirus preparedness kits; they are just reading about the virus.

Instead, do this: Determine what exactly someone in your market would be consuming that would indicate potential interest in your product. Someone who sells shipping materials would probably want to monitor "Packaging," "Packaging materials," or "Shipping Materials." Someone trying to sell Coronavirus preparedness kits is better off selecting "Workplace safety," "Return to work," or "Office Cleaning." These are topics that are more likely to identify companies in the market for these types of products.

PRO TIP #3:

Don't choose or select topics that describe your target market.

Example 1: Your company sells software to manufacturing companies. You want to select the topic "Manufacturing."

This will not likely produce expected results because anyone can be searching for this topic; it is not indicative of companies that fall within this specific target market. Companies in the manufacturing industry read an enormous amount of content with the word "manufacturing" on them.

Instead, do this: Use industry filters to find specific types of companies, and rely on Intent to surface companies performing actions that indicate potential buying intent. Do this by identifying phrases or topics that are only searched by companies in your target market when they are a good fit for your product or service.

Example 1: If some of your competitors have a strong brand reputation or market presence, monitoring the mention of those companies or products as a topic could be very fruitful. If you're a smaller CRM and compete against Salesforce, add it as a topic.

Example 2: If your product has complementary products that are often bought alongside your product, then it's a good idea to see which companies are interested in those products. If your product offers a Salesforce integration, you're likely a better fit for companies who are engaging in procuring Salesforce too.

Example 3: If specific products or topics indicate a certain level of maturity in an organization, those topics may indicate readiness for your product. For example, companies thinking about getting a talent acquisition system like Greenhouse or ADP may also be ready for employee engagement software.

PRO TIP # 4:

Don't choose or request topics that span across several very large verticals.

Example 1: When ZoomInfo licensed topics and intent data from a third-party, our product originally had the topic "Policy." This is an extremely ambiguous term. Think about how many different types of policies there are: insurance policy, foreign policy, company policy, privacy policy, etc.

A topic that spans across these different industries is going to return signals based on all of these various occurrences of the word policy. It doesn't help anyone to learn that employees at Apple read the word "policy" 25% more than usual last week.

Instead, do this: Identify and request topics that have singular meanings, such as someone reading that word or phrase almost certainly indicates consumption on your topic of interest. If no topic meets your criteria, that is a situation that warrants the requesting of a new topic!

PRO TIP #5:

Don't choose or request topics for products that share their company name with a common word

Example 1: You compete with the Sales Automation Tool "Outreach." You want to see intent for the product "Outreach."

This will not likely produce desired results because the dictionary word "outreach" is prevalent on the internet. What percentage of mentions of the word "outreach" in the news today is about the company or the product headquartered in Seattle? Virtually none, and that's why monitoring consumption of the phrase "Outreach" is unlikely to produce desired results.

Instead, do this: A better keyword here would be "Sales Automation," "Outbound Email," or other competitors like "Salesloft."

PRO TIP #6:

Don't choose or request extremely similar topics.

If you're limited in how many different topics you get, you're better off increasing your topic differentiation.

Example 1: Suppose you sell Social Media Listening software and are looking to select Intent topics. If you only have a few topics to choose from, you wouldn't want to select social media marketing, social media listening, and social media analytics. These are all topics that likely have a significant overlap in keywords from topic to topic.

Instead, do this: Differentiate your topics to get more breadth on the types of topics generating signals. Look for companies consuming information about competitors or complementary

products that often indicate a company is a good fit for your product or service. Someone interested in digital marketing solutions is more likely to get positive results by tracking topics, Social Listening, Brand Awareness, and Advocacy Marketing, rather than putting all of your eggs explicitly in the social media area.

PRO TIP #7:

Separate concepts deserve separate topics

Example 1: You are looking for companies trying to expand their international data centers. You request the topic "International Data Center Expansion."

Instead, do this: A better play would be to select the topics "Globalization" and "Data Centers." ZoomInfo is rolling out an "AND" search on topics in the platform, so you'd be able to see companies with signals for each topic individually and then also companies that were showing increased consumption on both topics in a given week. This is likely to produce more signals and outreach targets than a very narrow topic.
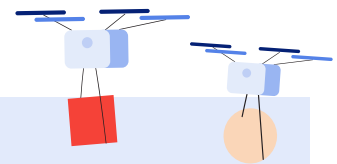
Conclusion:

At ZoomInfo, we know that Intent is only helpful if it's relevant and actionable. Our product and data science teams are working hard to make it easier to peruse, select, and request new topics. We're also working on more concepts to make selecting intent easier. Stay tuned!