The Real Intent Scorecard

A live build you can steal · 60-minute working session with Brian Bird and Vivek Shankar

Pipeline challenges and signals. Inefficient marketing approaches plague outbound programs. Teams frequently overinvest in expensive third-party intent data.

Signal sophistication and activation. Sophisticated signal implementation requires corroboration across multiple data points. Activation tiers range from human outreach to automated systems.

Custom signals and strategy. Custom signals leverage web scraping and public data. Basic signal frameworks can be implemented within one week.

Where pipeline breaks

- **Two failing approaches.** "Finding a needle in the haystack" means manually identifying accounts with limited information. "Boiling the ocean" means targeting an entire database without knowing which prospects are ready to buy.
- **The three signal types B2B teams use.** Third-party intent signals bought from data brokers, listening through social media tracking, and first-party intent from website engagement.
- **Where the overinvestment happens.** Teams most often overinvest in third-party intent data. It is relatively easy to implement, but it is expensive and it is not unique, because competitors can buy access to the same datasets.
- **Why a single signal fails.** Company-level website resolution cannot tell a junior analyst from a CEO, and it carries no context on timing, source quality, or competing signals.

Building a signal that holds up

- **Three levels of sophistication.** Good reacts to any available signal. Better looks for corroboration across multiple signals. Best uses algorithmic scoring that understands signal decay and the interactions between buying committee members.
- **What a signal actually is.** Three parts: the observation, the degree of confidence in the source, and the implication, meaning the action it requires.
- **Three tiers of activation.** Human outreach for the highest intent, automated system-driven outreach for the middle tier, and a watch list for accounts that do not yet warrant direct engagement.
- **Worked example: Meridian Fleet Systems.** Stacking signals on a hypothetical B2B software company (three pricing-page visits in five days, a new VP hire with relevant experience, open job roles) escalates the account's priority score and justifies moving from automated outreach to direct sales engagement.

Running it as a system

- **Capture and activation are two systems.** Connected, but separate. Not every captured signal needs activation, and some activation does not need to be signal-driven.
- **Outreach can live anywhere.** A CRM, a dedicated outbound platform, or alongside a CRM, depending on the programme.
- **Signals decay.** When a signal ages, or a press release shows a competitor was hired, the intent score drops. Pull back human outreach and move the resource to higher-intent opportunities.

Custom signals: the part nobody buys

- **Competitive web scraping.** Crawl specific subdomains or login pages on a competitor's site to identify which companies use their platform.
- **Public and regulatory data.** OSHA filings, municipal building permits, and similar records surface physical locations and operational priorities that employee count and revenue never show.
- **Contact graphs.** LinkedIn profiles and job titles can infer the location of facilities such as manufacturing plants, identifying target sites that are not publicly listed.

What it takes

- **One week to a basic implementation.** Building the framework is continuous, but a functional first version is a week's work. It needs a commitment to research-driven exploration to validate and form new hypotheses.
- **The signal architect wears three hats.** Product manager, data-driven engineer, and product marketer, because the value of a signal has to be communicated to the sales team.
- **If you have little first-party data.** Focus on research-based signals and pain-qualified segments rather than boiling the ocean. Evidence of pain inside a segment is enough to build a relevant signal.
- **If you are locked into third-party tools.** Keep the contract if you must, but treat that data as one input in a multi-signal deployment map, never as the basis of the whole strategy.

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