



How to Optimize Your Marketing Strategies with First Party Intent Data Year-Round

About NaviStone

NaviStone® is breaking new ground acquiring customers for our clients; adding the high response power of direct mail to the insights provided by the web browsing behavior that traditionally drives retargeting display ads. NaviStone has invented a way for businesses to send relevant direct mail to website visitors while maintaining the anonymity of those visitors to both the website owner and NaviStone.

Consumers are providing companies with more data than ever before. In exchange, consumers expect these companies to use that data to understand what they want and when they want it. Well managed web browsing data gives you the opportunity to reach an engaged audience, with an individualized message, at just the right time giving you a “first mover advantage” with these consumers. NaviStone helps through either our turnkey postcard program, or as a data feed to your existing direct mail campaigns.

We're proud to call Cincinnati, Ohio our home with our headquarters located in Over-the-Rhine.

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Maximize the Value of Your Intent Data

Data is the language of marketing. If you're not listening to the story told by consumer data, you're missing out on key pieces to the puzzle that can help you reach more customers more effectively. The most important type of data today is intent data — specific actions that can clue you into what a consumer is really thinking.

Spotting Intent Data

Think about what happens when you search Google. Say, for example, you're in the market for a new 4K TV. When you first search for "4K TV," Google will give you shopping results, but it'll also give you general information about 4K TVs, including a Wikipedia page. At this point, Google doesn't really know what you're looking for. But as you click on certain search results, Google can paint a better picture of the intentions behind your search. So, if you clicked on a few shopping results, Google is ready for you to search for 4K TVs in popular retailers like Best Buy and Amazon, which is why your future searches about 4K will have those search terms automatically populate.

Just as Google can zero in on your intent as it learns about your motivations, you can and should do the same with your consumer data. For our purposes, intent data is anything that hints at the purpose behind a consumer visit to your website. These clues can vary from site to site, from industry to industry.



Some signs of consumer intent are more obvious than others. A visitor placing an item in their shopping cart, for instance, is a clear sign of buying intent. But that's a sign anyone can see. Someone who looks up the shipping rates on your site is also someone with interest in buying. As a marketer, you must infer consumer motivation from much less obvious signals.

But there's much more to intent data than sniffing out the buyers. More than anything else, you're looking to determine the purpose behind every action.

Intent can be seen in an individual shopper who views foam rollers, yoga mats, weights, and water bottles...in January. This could very well be a New Year's Resolution to get into shape. It's your job as a marketer to help that person meet their resolution by providing them valuable marketing for workout gear. But astute marketers may also see an opportunity to provide consumers with information to help them map out a plan for improved fitness. The ultimate goal of intent data is to help you anticipate the needs of the consumer so you can be ready with an offer they want at the time they need it.

Changing Lifestyles

One of the key tenets of intent data is that it's fluid. Just as shoppers change their minds constantly about the world around them, intent data will change along with the preferences of consumers. Just because an individual exhibits buying intent today doesn't mean they're guaranteed to come back and buy tomorrow.

Marketing is increasingly about understanding lifestyles and life cycles. The days of getting by solely on demographics are long gone. Today, you must understand the lives of your customers and you should be ready to adapt along with them. The same person might shop at Target for their college dorm supplies, their first apartment furnishings and toys for their first child - and Target must be ready to market to this same person in each of these different stages of their life. Take for instance, an individual who is shopping for college dorm supplies. Over the next four years, this person's motivations will most likely be around getting their degree. But as everyone who's been to college or sent a child off to college knows, there are also mini-events throughout the school year that shape

this consumer's intent: Homecoming, Rush Week, Spring Break, Semester breaks. Their schedule can spur purchases. They may be more likely to take their car in for an oil change during the break between semesters because they have time then to take care of the routine maintenance. What year of college they're in can also shape motivation. In their third year, they may be looking for off-campus living, which means they'll be ready for different products, pricing, and marketing. What they aren't doing is planning their purchases around your peak season.



You might not have to deal with such drastic changes in your industry. If you sell mattresses, the likelihood that you're going to sell the same individual another mattress in the same year is low, but the sentiment remains. As people's day-to-day needs change, you must update your consumer profiles, and you have to modify your marketing accordingly.

This is where intent data really shines. You're no longer relying on demographics and purchase data, which is stuck in the past. With intent data, you're ready to anticipate what a consumer will need based on what is motivating them to act today. And as a result, you'll come away with a better understanding of your audience and consumer behavior than you ever had before.



Interpret Intent Data for a Complete Picture of Consumer Motivation

We'd all love to believe that consumers are perpetually looking forward to buying our products. Unfortunately, that scenario is far from reality. Someone who clicks a link in an email isn't necessarily someone who's interested in making a purchase. Instead, they might simply want to learn more about a new product you're offering.

Again, a solid marketing strategy can make a distinction between an active shopper and a browser. It's the difference between tastefully sending an email offer to someone and inundating them to the point that they unsubscribe from all your lists. However, intent data isn't just about not being a nuisance. It's about having the ability to provide truly individualized marketing to a potentially interested consumer —



and knowing the exact right time to reach out to that individual. Without the careful collection and implementation of intent data, you're just guessing. And in today's consumer experience-driven world, guesswork can be very dangerous.

Seasons of Intent

Think back to our example of Target marketing to the same people in multiple ways. Stores like Target can do this because they understand that there's more to data than simply looking at demographics and past purchases.

It's important to look at the lifestyle and stage of each consumer, then apply individualized marketing to the various seasons that occur in each individual's life.

These seasons aren't just limited to what's on the calendar. While marketers must navigate customary seasons like the holidays and back to school, they also should find ways to understand what's going on in the lives of their consumers. Target, for instance, famously has ways to tell when a customer is pregnant — even if people in that consumer's immediate family don't yet know about the pregnancy. Although stores must be extremely careful with this information, this is a prime use of intent data to determine the story behind seemingly innocuous purchases.

But there's more to seasons than the needs and wants of consumers. Businesses must plan for seasons as well. An electronics retailer that's known for its Super Bowl TV deals must plan for those promotions well in advance of Super Bowl Sunday. That retailer must not only find potential customers before the big game, but they have to keep existing customers happy, spread awareness of their sales and highlight the benefits of their products. All of these functions simply cannot be completed in the week before the Super Bowl. That's why it's so important to collect and analyze intent data during off season months. It's the ideal time to create audience segments, to test marketing approaches and to generally build a solid base of new customers so you know exactly what to expect during your peak season. Without this careful preparation, you won't be able to deliver the agile, accurate, and timely individual marketing that modern consumers appreciate.



Surveying the Marketplace

The topic of “lapsed” customers is a big subject these days, and it's not hard to see why. Nobody wants to waste valuable time and resources marketing to an uninterested customer who will not have the same lifetime value as an active or even new customer. But while a string of inactivity might indicate a lapsed customer on the surface, the reality might be quite different.

Instead of a “lapsed” customer, you may simply have someone who's happy with their purchase and doesn't

need to buy anything else for a while. Using conventional data, you can't truly tell the difference between this type of customer and an inactive consumer. But with intent data, you can get the full picture. This person still reads your emails and follows you on Facebook.

And better yet, they've recently begun saving items to their wish list and updating their profile information. Despite the lack of recent purchase, is this person truly lapsed? Based on the intent data, you have a strong reason to believe that this customer might not be lapsed for long. And it's a good idea to treat this individual as an interested consumer.

It's also smart to look at lapsed customers — or any type of customers, for that matter — and see if there's anything in your marketing that's missing the mark. In other words, is there something that's stopping someone from making a purchase from your company? This is where individualized marketing comes in handy — and this is why it's so important to understand consumer intent. This understanding eliminates much of the guesswork and allows you to deliver that exact piece the consumer is missing. In addition to considering lapsed customers,



you should also look at your various lifestyle groups to see if you can determine any ways to further segment your audience. For example, you might go beyond having one basic group for pregnant women, and instead, break this group up by trimester. Doing this will make you more attuned to what this group needs and wants from your advertising; by extension, this will help you to give each segment of your audience exactly what they want and need.

Of course, there's more to this equation than simply sending out the right promo code to the right person. Nailing consumer intent means you'll be able to predict exactly when someone is ready to make a purchase, or when someone just wants a little more information about a particular product or service. This helps you not only to provide a great customer experience, but to avoid the endless stream of unwanted marketing that turns people off. Like we saw with the example of the lapsed customer, the data will show you when someone is ready to buy. You just must listen to the data and be ready to react accordingly.

The era of the customer experience means having a well-oiled marketing machine is a competitive advantage. You want your marketing to be more efficient, more intuitive and more effective than anyone else's. Obviously, you want to make the most money, but by developing long-term relationships with your core audience members, you'll set yourself up for a steady stream of revenues over the long haul. Clearly, this type of marketing is a strength you'll want to protect, and that's why year-round dedication to CRM is so crucial to your success as a marketer.



Developing Effective Marketing Strategies that Last All Year

Planning for the Long Term

All marketing plans should have an endgame. In this case, your ultimate goal is to optimize the profitability of your busiest season. Doing this requires a multifaceted approach that involves nurturing multiple segments of consumers in a variety of ways.

For those “lapsed” customers who might only make a purchase once a year (if that), you’ll want to send periodic updates about the latest developments in your industry and how your company is capitalizing on those changes.

Frequent shoppers might do well to receive programmatic postcards about items they’ve looked at recently, or they could receive an individualized catalog that is created to anticipate their needs. Let’s say that last year John bought a new 4K TV, during the Holiday season. It’s now June, and John is looking at audio systems, soundbars, and wireless speakers. An individualized catalog sent to John in October or November with audio systems, upgrades and other affinity categories — like gaming systems, comfy pajamas, or even snack foods — could be exactly what John needs to make his decision to buy easier. This person’s intent data in the off season has clearly shown how you can earn his business when it is your peak season.

People without strong ties to your brand could receive a promo code that will persuade them to choose your site over a competitor, where you can work to build a customer experience that makes it easier to come back to your business again and again.

The situations will undoubtedly vary in your industry, and they may even change from day to day. What's important is that you're knowledgeable about the lifestyles and stages of your customers, and that you're ready to meet them at their level, wherever that might be. By listening to intent data and preparing well in advance of your busy season, you'll be able to provide the right touch at the right time.

Cross-Channel Marketing

The same person might visit a store, sign up for your email list, browse your site and read your product reviews. However, if you aren't set up to recognize these different touchpoints as being from the same consumer, you'll never be able to piece together the different ways in which this individual wishes to communicate with your company. That's a major problem in this modern climate, in which consumers expect companies to have the ability to connect these dots automatically. A cross-channel approach isn't



just a good idea, it's a virtual necessity in today's era of fragmentation. If you're not equipped to monitor and analyze all your different touchpoints under one unique identifier per customer, you'll miss out on some vital intent data that can show you how to properly market to that person on an individual level.

Of course, there's more to cross-channel marketing than gathering data. This approach allows you to truly tailor your marketing to the

references of each individual customer. Cross-channel does not mean being in every channel, but being in the channels your consumers are using. In turn, those customers can have confidence they'll get a great experience no matter how they interact with your business, making them even more likely to support your brand and recommend you to others.

Data Integration

Collecting consumer data is only an effective exercise if you put that data to good use. Data gathering for the sake of data gathering only serves to alienate customers who are already wary of their digital footprints. But if you use data to create something totally unique that provides value to your audience, you'll reap the rewards.

When you let data tell the story, you allow yourself to map out the typical path to purchase for all of your audience segments. This shows how people typically find out about you, reach out to you, learn about new products and eventually make a purchase. This information is not insignificant. The more you know about how your audience behaves, the better you'll be able to serve them — not just during your busy season, but at any point during the year.

Once you have these building blocks in place, you're ready to really make things happen. Every piece of data you bring in furthers this path to purchase, refining what already works and building new templates for new audience segments. It's the only true way to gain a comprehensive understanding of your customer base — and again, if you're not letting data drive this understanding, you can't ever hope to speak the language of the customer.



Applying Intent Data

Customer Acquisition

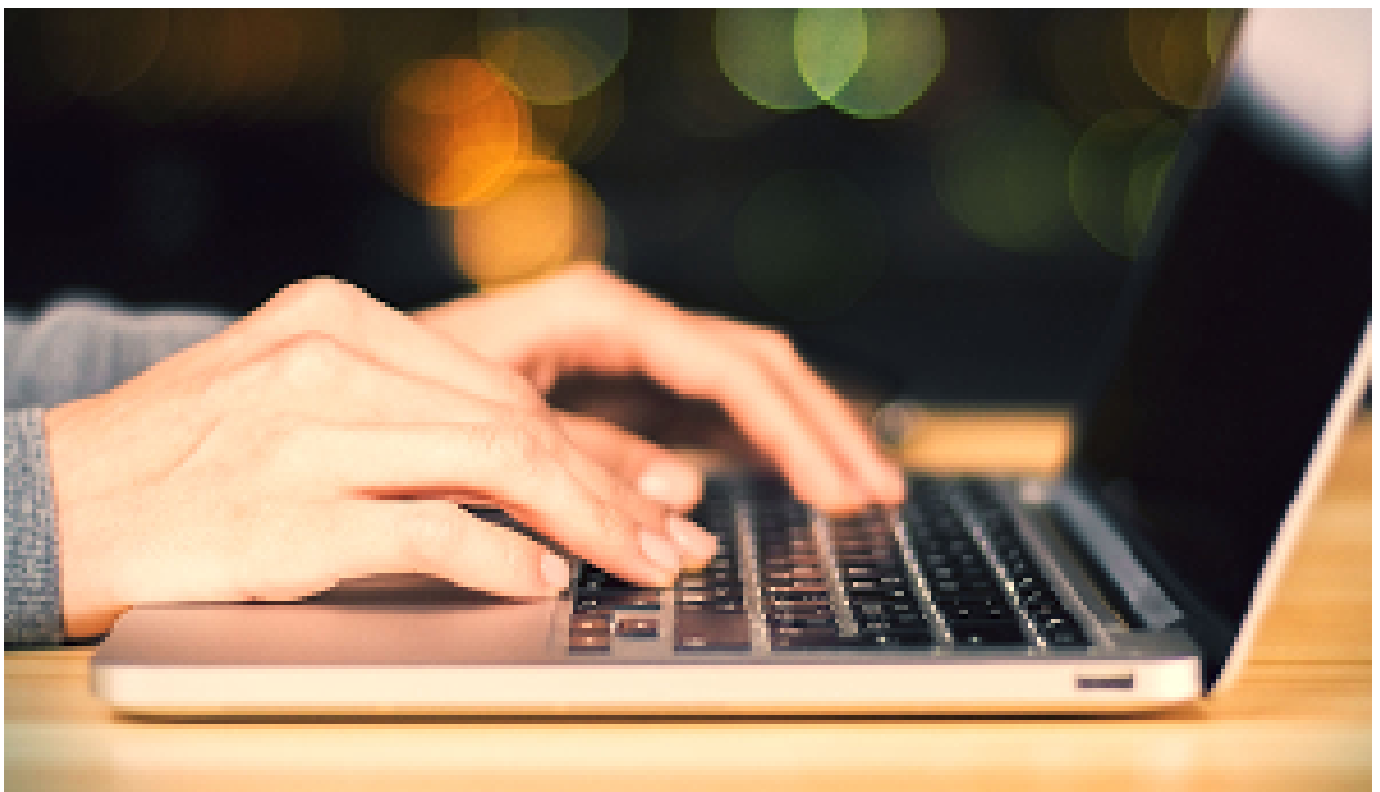
Acquiring new customers doesn't happen overnight. The groundwork for customer acquisition is laid throughout the entire year, and the final payoff occurs when a purchase is made.

The real work lies in the endless compiling and analysis of intent data. Going over this data with a fine-toothed comb will help you to learn the pain points of your customer base before they even walk in the door. Without even knowing someone's name, you'll be able to provide them with expert service and marketing because you'll truly understand what makes the people in his or her audience segment tick. When you're able to achieve this level of expertise and properly convey that to the customer, they'll have no reason to seek out other alternatives.

Reactivation

Some companies look at reactivation as a lost cause, which doesn't make a whole lot of sense. After all, when you're talking about reactivation, you're talking about someone who made the choice to buy from you in the past. Who's to say they won't do so again?

As we saw when talking about lapsed customers earlier, intent data can give you major clues about a former customer who might be interested in making another purchase. It's up to you to pick up on these hints and take the right action to bring that person back into the fold. They're not going to reach out to you — you have to take the initiative to get them back. And if you've been paying attention to the intent data, and if you've properly tested all of your approaches, you'll know exactly what to do.





Planning Individualized Marketing Plans for Scale

Modern technology allows marketers to do some amazing things. You can send out automated postcards, create customized catalogs and text customers about flash sales. But the truth is that all of these “instant” marketing tools are anything but. For these tactics to be successful, they require significant planning in advance.

Imagine trying to send each individual customer a promotional offer in their own unique preferred manner during your busiest season with no prep time. It's impossible. You wouldn't be able to do it. On the other hand, if you put in the time to really get to know your audience during the off seasons and diligently test your approach, you'll have all the tools you need to implement truly individualized marketing when it matters most. Not only will this data-based individualized marketing strike a chord with your customer base, but it'll ease the burden on your internal systems and your marketing team, leaving you open to take advantage of legitimate spontaneous marketing opportunities that may arise.





Conclusion

Your ability to reach customers at your busiest times is a direct reflection of the work you've put in throughout the year. When you understand the seasons and the lifestyles of your customers, you can give them the marketing they need at that particular time. When you can tell the difference between a lapsed customer and a content customer, you'll know what buttons to push to keep that individual interested. When you understand all of the different ways a customer wishes to communicate with your business, you'll create a marketing plan that leverages that information and nudges prospective customers down their own unique path to purchase.

If there's a moral to the story, it's this — the effort you apply towards CRM and customer retention always comes back around. If you pass up the opportunity to better understand your audience during your slower months, those same customers will pass up the opportunity to buy from you when you need their support the most. On the other hand, if you use your slower times to get to know your audience better, to apply their intent data in a constructive way, and to test out different ways of wowing your customer base, you'll see huge results during your busy season. Best of all, your company will be able to focus on what really matters — giving the customer a great experience they'll rave about for months to come.

