



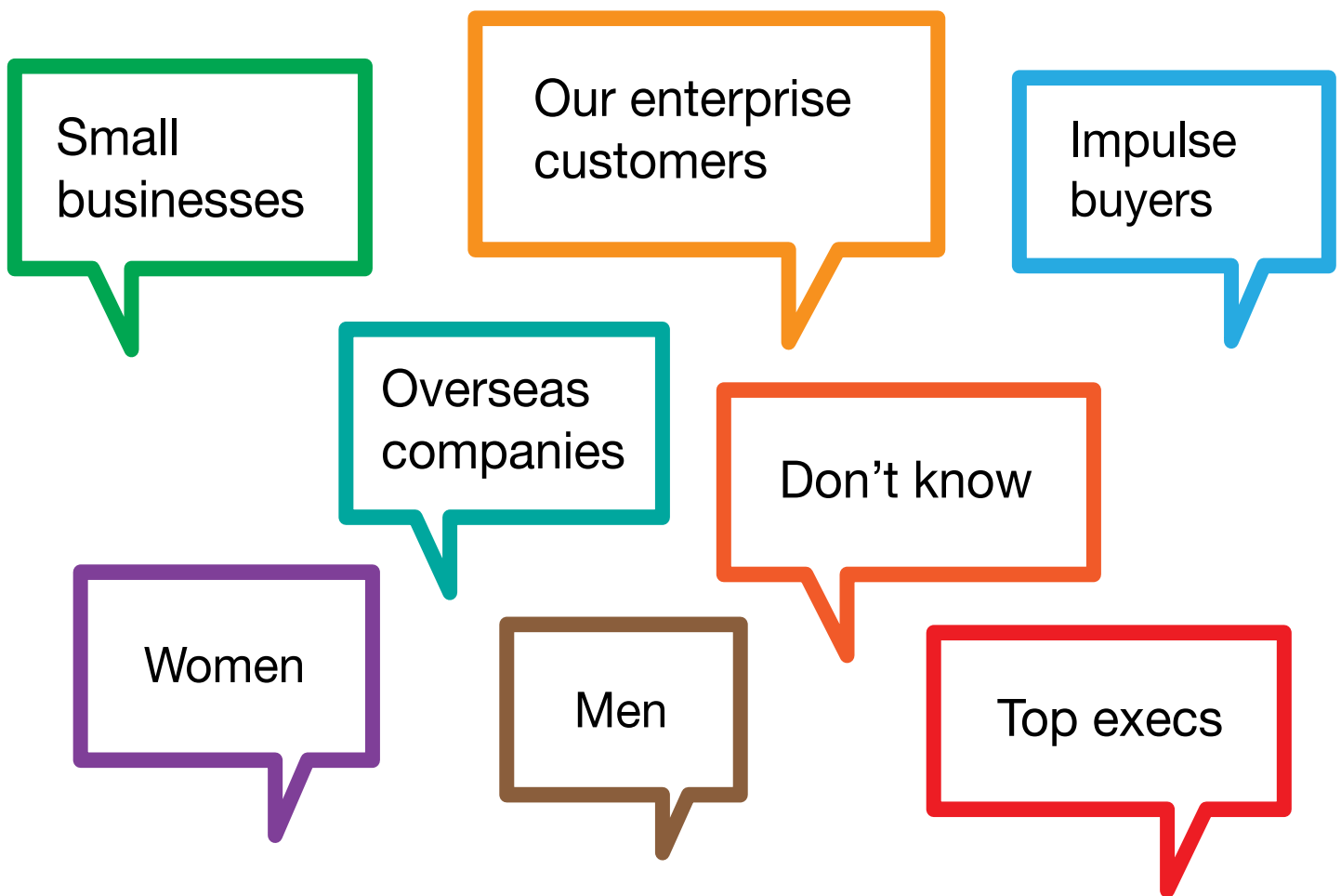
# Know your customers, know your prospects

Customer details make marketing work

*ZoomInsights Guide*



# Ask everyone at your company: Who are our most profitable customers? Here is what you might hear:



## If you don't truly understand your customers, you face these challenges:

- Not knowing how your best buyers are different from those who spend less
- Ineffective (if not damaging) direct marketing campaigns caused by poor segmentation
- Missed opportunities from incomplete prospect databases

This guide provides four insightful approaches to understanding customers and building more profitable marketing campaigns.

**What you'll learn:** Discover key insights about your best (most profitable) buyers Build buyer personas Turn data into a goldmine Create small segments of perfect prospects Read on to learn more!

## Build buyer personas

Do you ever feel like your approach to targeting your best possible buyer is like flinging spaghetti on a wall and seeing what sticks? You're not alone. Despite the massive amount of analytics available to companies today, many marketers are still misfiring ... sending the wrong content to the wrong prospects.

A good way to sharpen up your aim is to create buyer personas. Think of them as detailed profiles about your customers. Creating buyer personas helps you determine who to target and with what message.

Buyer personas "help marketers make better decisions about a few key areas of a marketing program, including which aspects of the product or service are top of mind for the buyer and how the buyer is thinking about the benefits" of the product or service, said Adele Revella, founder of the Buyer Persona Institute and author of "The Buyer Persona Manifesto." She said that when done correctly, establishing buyer personas serves as a potent reality check. "It's just amazing how often companies are off target about this."

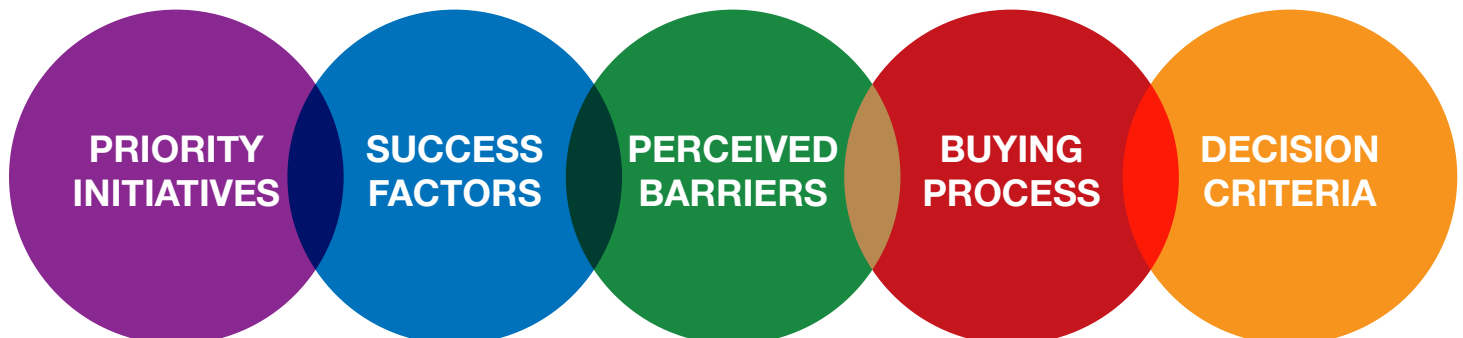
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## The five rings of insights

Among the most critical components of buyer persona creation is uncovering what Revella terms the "Five Rings of Insight." These "rings" give marketers inside information about how buyers evaluate a given solution; for example, the Priority Initiative insight illuminates "what's different about the buyers who actually go forward and buy, what success means to them and whether it's one particular aspect of the solution that defines success or the overall initiative."

The insights also include a candid look at perceived barriers to success – attitudes and negative perceptions about the company or a specific product that would stop someone from closing the deal. Here again, the tough questions often become an exercise in perception vs. reality. "Frequently, it's not obvious to the buyer how our product is addressing the benefits they want to achieve," Revella said as she offered marketers a bit of advice she recently read: "You can't read the label on the jar you're in."



# Talk to your customers to really know them

Acquiring the coveted information requires marketers to get out of their own heads. It's become antiquated to describe your customers by the most basic of data – like title, industry, region and company size. “We are not trying to just build a description of whom the buyer is and that's the end. This doesn't help me be a better marketer,” she said.

Marketers need to get far more granular to make their messages relevant and make the prospecting pay off. Marketing automation firm Eloqua, for example, knows that a “sweet spot” for buying Eloqua often lies within the first few weeks of a job change. Purchasing data from ZoomInfo of prospects that had a title change within the previous month resulted in a tripling of leads from one of Eloqua's marketing campaigns.

Rather than looking at marketing as B2B or B2C, Revella said it's more helpful to assess “high consideration vs. low consideration” purchasing decisions. For low-consideration situations, the purchase is impulsive. But for complex purchases – often the case in B2B – buyers usually can walk you through their decision-making process, she said.

Revella suggests calling both buyers and those who took a pass after a recent campaign.

The success rate for this interviewing method? Based on Revella's own research, three out of 10 people will call you back or take your call and one of three may talk your ear off, but you'll get great insights. What's more, as you to speak to customers, you'll uncover some great case study opportunities. After the interview, ask them if they are willing to let you use their comments as testimonials or in case studies. Two birds, one stone.

Once you've gotten them on the line, make it a conversation, not just a Q&A. Ask questions based on the answers they give to dig a bit deeper. Revella advised, “The biggest thing people do wrong is ask a question and move on. You don't have to be a professional researcher to do this. They'll talk.”

## The customer interview

- If calling a current customer, **thank them** for their business! (People often forget this etiquette.)
- Assure non-customers that **you aren't trying to sell them** anything.
- Ask them if they have **15-20 minutes** and don't take up any more time than that.
- Don't be a slave to your list of questions. **Let the customer's answers guide your curiosity.**
- **Immediately email a thank-you note.**

## Possible questions

- What pain points made you consider our product?
- Who was involved in the decision to purchase our product?
- How is our product used at your company?
- What benefits/results are you achieving?
- Tell me about your department.
- What keeps you up at night?
- What could be improved with our product?
- Would you be willing to be part of a case study?

# Turning customer insights and data into a goldmine

In addition to culling the findings from your qualitative customer research, you'll want to run some analysis on your entire marketing database. Whether in-house with your own analytics team or using a B2B data provider, have a data expert assess your customer data to find trends and confirm the demographics of your perfect prospect. If you use a B2B data provider, its data experts can analyze your existing customer data against detailed profiles of millions of companies and businesspeople. This uncovers more prospects that share characteristics with your best buyers (similar industries, competitors, revenues, roles, region, etc.). While you're at it, have your data provider update records, remove stale data and fill in any holes in your data so you have just-verified email addresses, direct dial phone numbers, correct titles, etc.

The next step is to fuel your entire marketing database with perfect prospects, based on your new insights. Don't assume that the "sweet spot" attribute you found is too obscure to use in segmentations.

Robust B2B data providers often collect – and can segment on – granular details. For example, if you found that your perfect prospects work in sales teams of a certain size, are female, have a certain degree, are on a board of directors, work with a non-profit, etc., ZoomInfo's data experts can provide prospects that match specific criteria like these and many others.

Now you've got a goldmine. Couple unique insights unveiled in your interviews with some essential analysis and updating of your marketing database and presto! You have a refined answer to the question, "Who are your best customers?" There's an added benefit to the hard work you just did: When you share what you learned with your CEO, he or she should be thrilled – your business's stakeholders will now get a much clearer answer to that commonly asked question.

## Get in touch

Speaking with a Data Expert is easy. Simply call 866-904-9666 to speak with a Data Expert at ZoomInfo, or visit [zoominfo.com/dataservices](https://zoominfo.com/dataservices) for more information.

# Dividing your prospects into small groups

Marketers are realizing that sending the same message to a large list of prospects won't work.

Dennis Dayman, chief privacy and security officer at Internet marketing firm Eloqua, told ZoomInsights that "relevancy is the new message."

Hila Nir, marketing director at ZoomInfo, agrees: "Making marketing work is all about sending just the right content to just the right people and it takes a great deal of preparation." She advises marketers to divide their prospects into very small, very targeted groups according to shared roles, characteristics, interests, price sensitivity or some other commonality. For example, some prospects may be better suited for a lower-priced deal, while others are decision makers on complex offers.

While it might seem that the time involved could eat into your overall ROI, Nir says her experience is quite the opposite. "True segmented marketing campaigns are more expensive than the mass email-to-everyone approach – also known as spam – but they're much more successful in growing revenues and brand awareness."

Dayman pointed out that, especially with B2B marketing, there's a larger analytical piece. "You really have to do the work on the front end and target your message," he said. "Then take time to review the campaign and see what's getting people interested. A \$1 million deal is way different than a \$19.95 offer."

# Customer information checklist

Use this checklist to make sure you're doing all you can to gather and use prospect information effectively:

- Interview customers and potential customers who didn't buy
- Build buyer personas that describe your best prospects in detail
- Analyze your entire prospect database for trends
- Expand your database with new prospects who share your best customers' attributes
- Update existing records in your database with new email addresses, phone numbers, etc.
- Divide prospects into very small, very targeted groups

## Related ZoomInsights resources

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