

A Forrester Consulting  
Thought Leadership Paper  
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# B2B Sales And Marketing Intelligence Solutions Drive Improved Business Outcomes

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Many B2B organizations are making strides toward more productive sales and marketing intelligence practices, but very few have mature practices.

## Executive Summary

Generating meaningful insights into markets and customers is critical for growing every B2B business. Maintaining a comprehensive set of B2B sales and marketing intelligence technologies and best practices enables companies to more effectively collect and manage the widest range of high-quality data and create the most meaningful insights. However, companies' capacity to take advantage of these essential tools and techniques varies widely.

In May 2019, DiscoverOrg commissioned Forrester Consulting to evaluate the maturity of B2B sales and marketing intelligence practices in the market. Forrester conducted an online survey with 417 manager-level and above B2B sales and marketing professionals at companies in the US and Canada to explore this topic. We found that although companies are making strides toward more sophisticated B2B sales and marketing intelligence practices, very few companies are truly mature. However, as companies mature their B2B sales and marketing intelligence practices, they are seeing significant gains over those with less mature practices.

### KEY FINDINGS

- › **Few companies have achieved B2B sales and marketing intelligence maturity.** In an assessment of B2B sales and marketing intelligence maturity, only 1.2% of companies achieved a score indicating maturity in the space. Even those that are leaders do not show a high level of maturity, but rather a moderate level of maturity.
- › **Companies struggle with bad data.** In fact, only 8% of marketing professionals said their sales and marketing data is 91% to 100% accurate. This bad data causes companies to waste valuable resources (employee time) and prospects to fall out of the sales cycle when needs aren't met.
- › **Companies with B2B sales and marketing intelligence solutions have seen an increase in the quality and quantity of leads.** Respondents whose companies have had higher-quantity and -quality leads and pipeline through implementation of a B2B sales and marketing intelligence solution reported that they have realized 35% more leads in their pipeline and 45% higher-quality leads leading to higher revenue and growth.

# B2B Sales And Marketing Intelligence Requires More And Better Data

In the age of the customer, B2B buyers have shifted to become more like consumers with an increased demand for personalization, a strong preference for self-service research, and a delayed engagement with sales.<sup>1</sup> As B2B buyers grow more complex and have increasing expectations, companies must work to maintain comprehensive, accurate data on their consumers and prospects to keep up with buyer demands and win market share.



The B2B sales and marketing landscape has changed. Respondents agreed their sales and marketing departments have had to change in the past three years in an attempt to provide personalized experiences and solutions (see Figure 1). Sixty-seven percent of respondents indicated their customers’ desire for individualized attention from their companies has somewhat or significantly increased over the past three years. Companies are recognizing that their existing data practices cannot keep up with this increased demand, with roughly three-fourths of respondents acknowledging an increased need for more accurate customer personas (77%) and high-quality data on prospects and customers (73%).

**Figure 1**

**“How have the following elements of your sales and marketing departments changed over the past three years?”**



Base: 417 manager+ sales and marketing professionals (B2B) with insights into B2B intelligence activities and market intelligence tools at companies in the US and Canada  
 Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of DiscoverOrg, May 2019

Companies need high-quality data and accurate personas to meet customers’ demands for personalization.

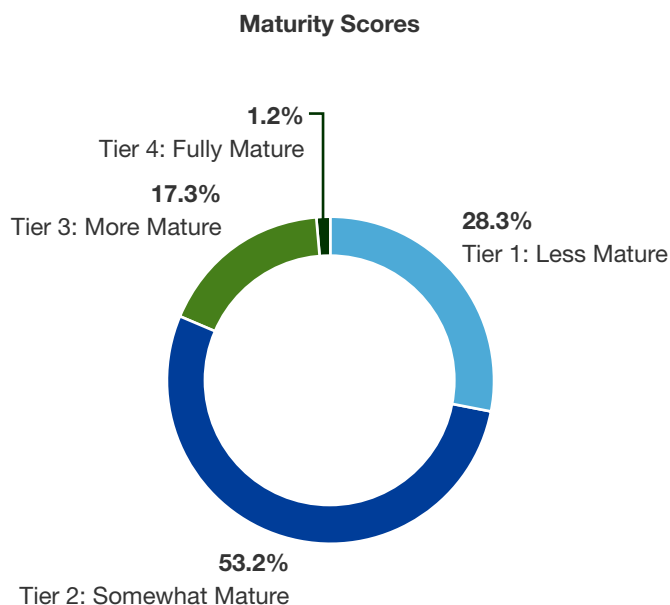
## ONLY A HANDFUL OF COMPANIES HAVE MATURE PRACTICES

Companies recognize the need for more mature B2B sales and marketing intelligence practices, but most companies are still working toward that goal. We asked respondents a series of questions and scored their responses to determine the maturity of their B2B sales and marketing intelligence practices.<sup>2</sup> These questions included implementation of B2B marketing and sales applications, usage of data sourcing tools, and sales and marketing capabilities.

From those scores, we identified four tiers of maturity: Tier 1 (Less Mature), Tier 2 (Somewhat Mature), Tier 3 (More Mature), and Tier 4 (Mature). Interestingly, the vast majority of companies show limited maturity (over 80% fell into Tier 1 or Tier 2, which is characterized by siloed and inaccurate data on customers and prospects, as well as moderate to no use of metrics and analytics). When scored against a five-point scale (with 1 being least mature and 5 being most mature practices), only 1.2% of companies achieved an average overall score of 4 or more. This indicates that while companies are making improvements with respect to sales and marketing efficiency and the use of systems and B2B sales and marketing intelligence, these is still a lot more to be done to optimize their efforts.

Even leaders in the space did not show a high level of maturity, but rather a moderate level of B2B sales and marketing intelligence maturity.

Figure 2

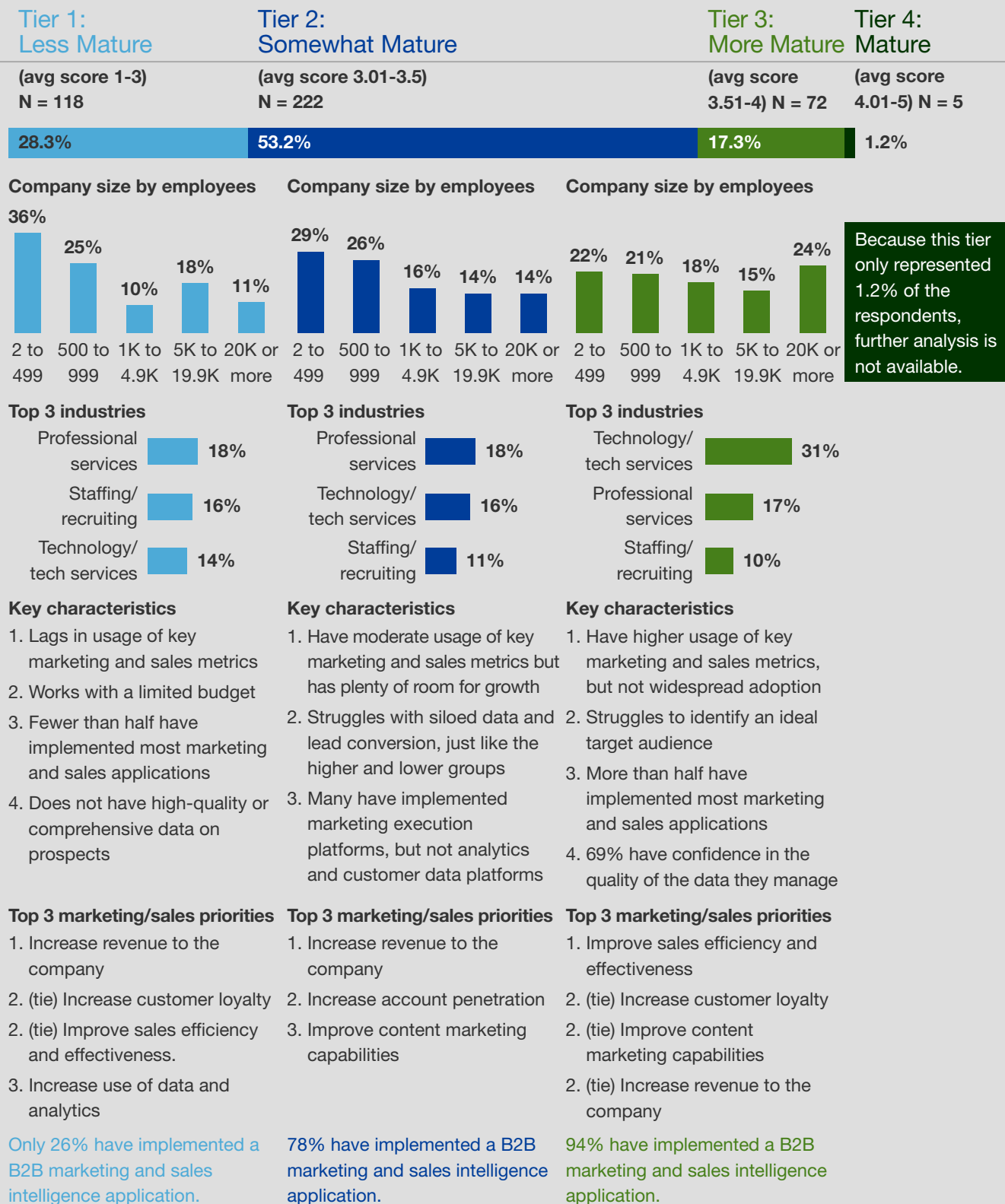


Only 1.2% of companies achieved a B2B sales and marketing intelligence score that indicates maturity in the space.

Base: 417 manager+ sales and marketing professionals (B2B) with insights into B2B intelligence activities and market intelligence tools at companies in the US and Canada  
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of DiscoverOrg, May 2019

To further examine the B2B sales and marketing intelligence of each tier, we examined key characteristics of each group. Because Tier 4 (Mature) only represented 1.2% of respondents, further analysis of this tier is not available.

Figure 3: B2B Sales And Marketing Intelligence Maturity Profiles



Base: 417 manager+ sales and marketing professionals (B2B) with insights into B2B intelligence activities and market intelligence tools at companies in the US and Canada  
 Note: Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.  
 Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of DiscoverOrg, May 2019

# Siloed, Incomplete Data Creates Challenges

As so many respondents lack maturity with their B2B sales and marketing intelligence practices, it's important to understand the challenges impeding that progress. We found that:

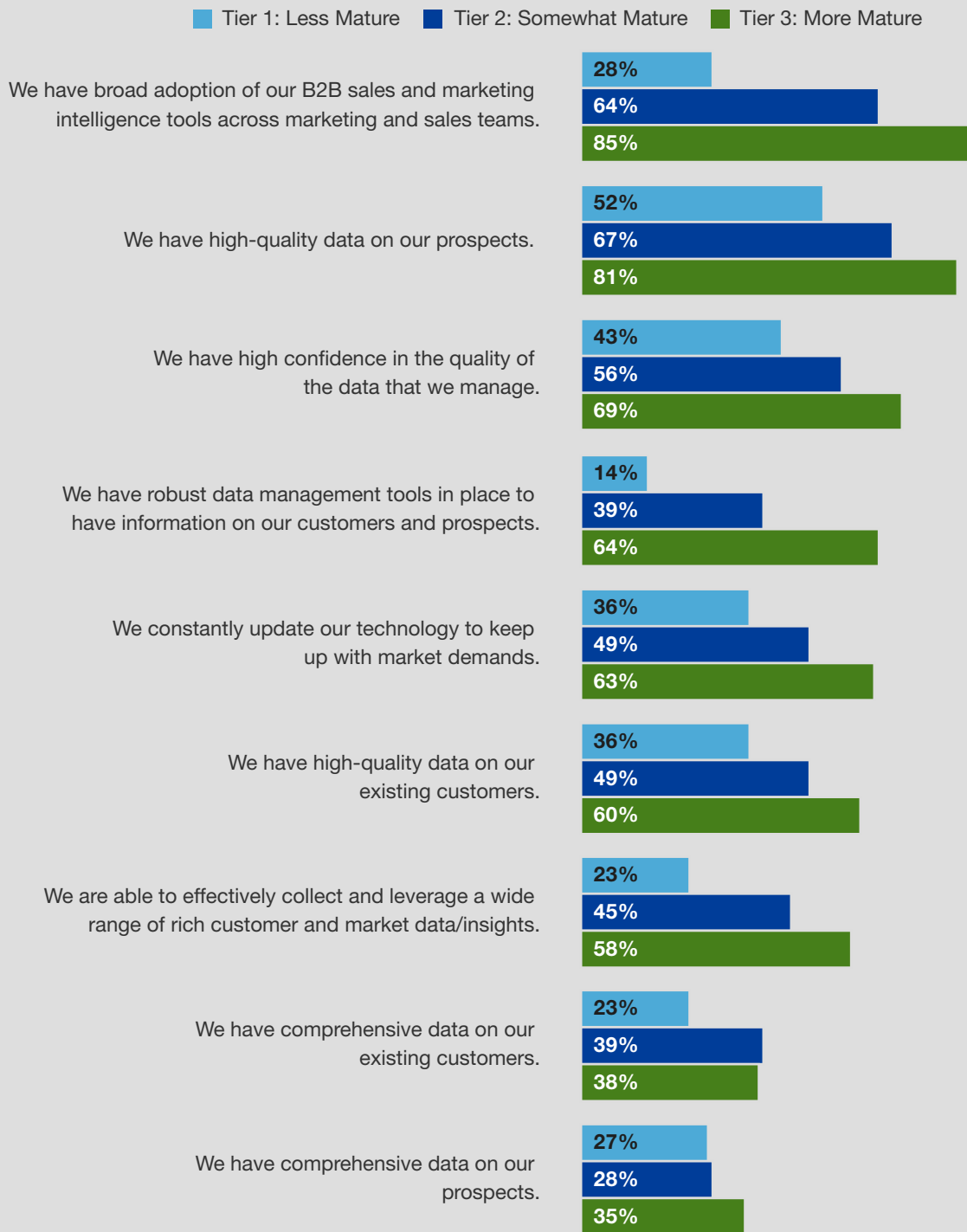
- › **Tier 3 (More Mature) companies have a broader adoption of a B2B marketing and sales intelligence application.** Only 28% of Tier 1 (Less Mature) have adopted this type of application broadly across sales and marketing teams, while Tier 3 (More Mature) companies have an 85% broad adoption rate across teams. Driving broad adoption doesn't just require access to the data, but a level of organizational commitment and resources that are often lacking in smaller and less mature organizations.
- › **Better data is needed, even among Tier 3 (More Mature).** While many of the More Mature group use B2B sales and marketing intelligence tools across their teams, these companies still struggle with having high-quality and comprehensive data on their customers and prospects. Tier 1 (Less Mature) companies even claim to have more comprehensive data on their prospects than on their own customers.



Tier 1 (Less Mature) companies have more comprehensive data on their prospects than on their own companies.

**Figure 4**

**“Which of the following statements apply to your organization’s current sales and marketing capabilities?”**



Base: 417 manager+ sales and marketing professionals (B2B) with insights into B2B intelligence activities and market intelligence tools at companies in the US and Canada

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of DiscoverOrg, May 2019



- › **Companies struggle with outdated, siloed data and lead conversion.** Roughly half of respondents said the challenges that keep their companies from achieving their sales/marketing priorities are converting more leads to customers (51%) and having poor-quality, inconsistent, or inaccessible customer data (48%). Both Tier 3 (More Mature) and Tier 1 (Less Mature) companies indicated that better information on prospects would improve their sales effectiveness (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5**

**“What drivers cause your prospects to fall out of your sales cycle?”** (Showing responses ranked most often in the top 3)

**Tier 1 (Less Mature) Companies:**

- 1** The right prospects aren’t targeted because we don’t have an ideal customer profile.
- 2** The leads were not properly vetted before entering our sales cycle.
- 3** Sellers can’t execute on appropriate engagement plans for new leads.



**Tier 3 (More Mature) Companies:**

- 1** Sellers can’t execute on appropriate engagement plans for new leads.
- 2** Seller communications on information shared is not in line with the needs of buyers.
- 3** The leads were not properly vetted before entering our sales cycle.

Base: Variable manager+ sales and marketing professionals (B2B) with insights into B2B intelligence activities and market intelligence tools at companies in the US and Canada

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of DiscoverOrg, May 2019

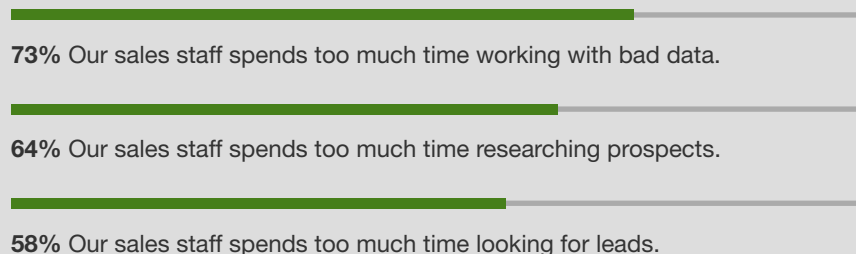
- › **Valuable resources are wasted on inaccurate data.** Even though companies overall reported that their sales and marketing data is more accurate than it was three years ago, it still falls below 75% accuracy for 75% of companies. In fact, only 8% said their sales and marketing data is 91% to 100% accurate today. This causes sales staff to waste their time working with bad data and spending too much time looking for information (see Figure 6).

**Only 8% of companies said their sales and marketing data is 91% to 100% accurate.**

**Figure 6**

**“Rate your level of agreement with the following statements about your sales staff.”**

(Showing percentage of respondents who answered “Agree” or “Strongly agree”)



Base: 417 manager+ sales and marketing professionals (B2B) with insights into B2B intelligence activities and market intelligence tools at companies in the US and Canada

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of DiscoverOrg, May 2019

# B2B Sales And Marketing Intelligence Solutions Increase Sales And Leads

Although many organizations are struggling with outdated and siloed data, B2B sales and marketing intelligence solutions can help increase sales and generate more high-quality leads. We discovered:

- › **Automating tasks and improving data quality would increase sales staff satisfaction and productivity.** Eighty-three percent of respondents agreed that automating routine tasks would increase employee satisfaction, and 78% agreed that obtaining better data on prospects would allow sales staff to spend more time focusing on more complex tasks and engagements. As companies look to B2B sales and marketing intelligence solutions to help with these needs, respondents indicated that it is very important or essential that the product can integrate with CRM or marketing automation systems (83%), provide data-driven insights that prioritize selling activities based on opportunities most likely to close (81%), and a data-driven system for identifying the right selling activities for nurturing specific opportunities (80%).
- › **Companies look to B2B sales and marketing intelligence solutions to improve maturity.** Based on implementation plans, there will likely be a spike in B2B sales and marketing intelligence solutions in the next year. While 67% of respondents' companies have already implemented this type of solution, that number should grow to 87% in the next year. Most of this adoption is from the more mature groups. Only 26% of Tier 1 (Less Mature) have adopted this type of solution, while 94% of Tier 3 (More Mature) have already adopted.
- › **Companies that have implemented a robust B2B sales and marketing intelligence solution have seen higher revenue and higher qualified leads.** The top five benefits reported from companies that have implemented this type of solution directly address the challenges that they are facing, including better leads and more timely interactions (see Figure 7).



Only 26% of Tier 1 (Less Mature) companies compared to 94% of Tier 3 (More Mature) companies have adopted a B2B sales and marketing intelligence solution.

“We have invested more time and resources into customer relations management techniques and software to adapt our sales and marketing strategy to more effectively collect and leverage a wide range of rich customer and market data/ insights.”

*C-Level marketing/ advertising executive*



Figure 7

“What benefits did you receive by implementing a robust B2B sales and marketing intelligence solution?”



Base: 278 manager+ sales and marketing professionals (B2B) with insights into B2B intelligence activities and market intelligence tools at companies in the US and Canada, who are implementing/ expanding B2B sales and marketing intelligence solutions  
 Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of DiscoverOrg, May 2019

› **Adopters of B2B sales and marketing intelligence solutions reported an increase in the quality and quantity of their leads/pipeline.** Seventy-six percent of companies — 77% of Tier One (Less Mature) and 85% of Tier 3 (More Mature) — that have adopted a B2B sales and marketing intelligence solution saw an increase in the *quality* of their leads and pipeline. On average, the quality increased by 41.5%. Seventy-two percent of adopters — 65% of Tier One (Less Mature) and 75% of Tier 3 (More Mature) — saw an increase in the *quantity* of their leads/pipeline. On average, the quantity increased by 35.3%. Companies that have adopted a B2B sales and marketing intelligence solution have realized the drastic benefits of a boost in quantity and quality of lead/pipeline that fuels their sales/marketing objectives of increasing revenue and improving outreach tactics. The perceived value of these solutions continues to expand as companies move upward along the maturity curve, developing more mature sales and marketing practices to realize additional value from these solutions.



76% of companies that have adopted a B2B sales and marketing intelligence solution saw an increase in the quality of their leads and pipeline.

# Key Recommendations

The benefits of advanced B2B sales and marketing intelligence solutions and best practices are clear: significantly more and higher-quality leads, improved sales productivity and satisfaction, and increased revenue. To achieve these results, your company needs to move up the data maturity curve by:



**Taking stock of your data maturity, skills, and resources.** The first step toward improved efficiency and effectiveness is to undertake an honest assessment of your department's existing data practices and skills, as well the internal data management and analytics resources available to you in other parts of the organization. Use the characteristics of the maturity levels described in this study as the benchmark for your current state and road map for improvement.



**Developing a data strategy and road map.** Inventory your current data and insights sources to identify critical gaps. Do you sell to large enterprises and need deeper insights into corporate hierarchies and reporting relationships to improve your prospecting efficiency? Do you already have a strong firmographic foundation but need help with contact data or intent signals to prioritize and personalize your engagement? Or are you moving into a new market and need insights on unfamiliar personas and buyer types? Once you have a clear picture of your needs, you can develop a comprehensive data strategy and road map designed to achieve specific business goals and objectives.



**Prioritizing technologies that improve data quality and automate insight delivery.** Too many B2B organizations focus their technology investments on the “last-mile” solutions designed to automate and optimize marketing and sales engagement — while neglecting the foundational data and insights technologies that “fuel” these solutions. To create the personalized, contextual experiences modern B2B buyers demand, B2B companies will need to rebalance their technology investment priorities to ensure they have the complementary sales and marketing intelligence solutions and best practices in place that can improve their data quality and automate insight delivery.

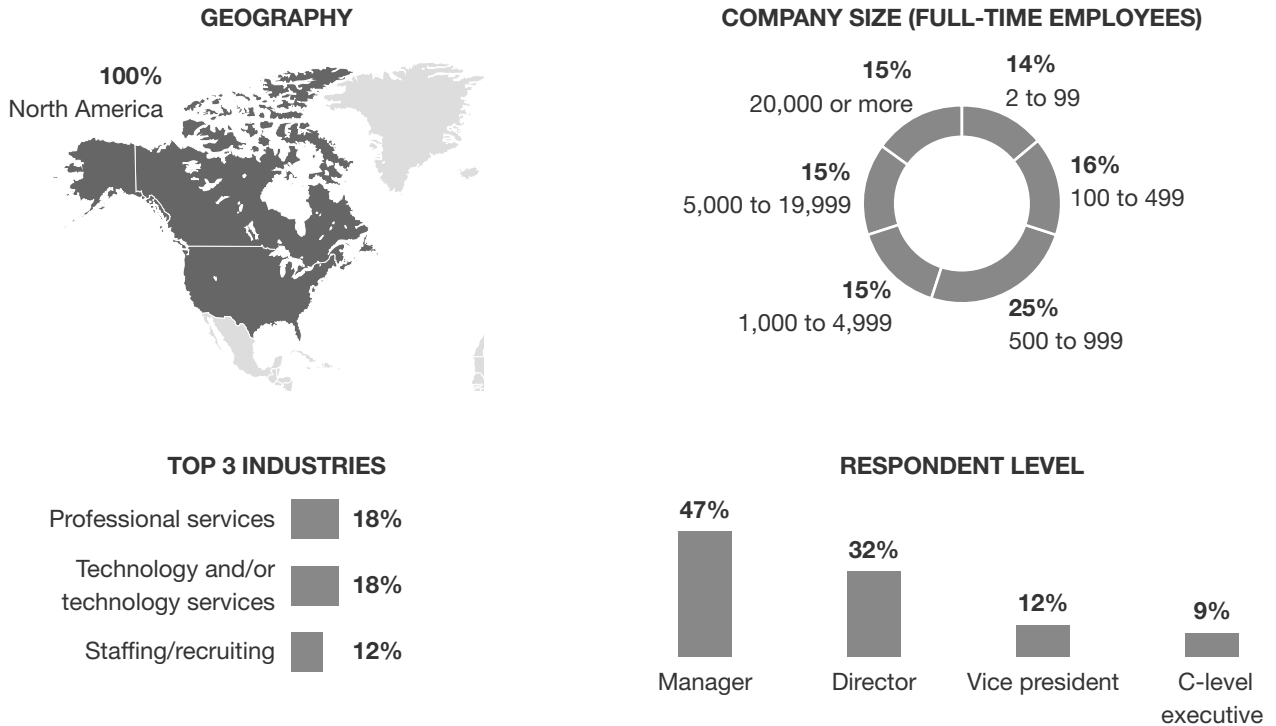


**Driving comprehensive adoption of tools across teams.** Companies should not just invest in these tools at a marketing or sales level alone but should prioritize ensuring there is wide adoption among sales and marketing teams by integrating the usage of this type of application at a granular level. This technology can bridge the gap between sales and marketing teams to better collaborate, share data, and align strategies. It also allows companies to more effectively leverage their data to reach their overall business objectives, moving them upward along the maturity curve.

# Appendix A: Methodology

In this study, Forrester conducted an online survey with 417 manager-level and above B2B sales and marketing professionals with insights into B2B intelligence activities and market intelligence tools at companies in the US and Canada to explore B2B sales and marketing data intelligence. The study was completed in May 2019.

# Appendix B: Demographics/Data



Base: 417 manager+ sales and marketing professionals (B2B) with insights into B2B intelligence activities and market intelligence tools at companies in the US and Canada  
 Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of DiscoverOrg, May 2019

# Appendix C: Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Source: “The Birth Of The B2B Consumer,” Forrester Research, October 5, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Data Intelligence Model Calculation: There were 35 factors of data intelligence. The questions included an implementation scale of B2B marketing and sales applications, a usage scale of data sourcing tools, and a select-all-that-apply sales and marketing capabilities question. The scales for the two scales questions included five answer options, ranked from lowest data intelligence (1) to highest data intelligence (5). For the select-all-that-apply question, five points were given for each answer that represented mature companies, so the option was either 0 points (not selected) or 5 points (selected). The sum of these values indicates the data intelligence of each respondent. Possible scores ranged from 26 to 175. Respondents were grouped based on their aggregate score into four tiers: Tier 1 (Less Mature), Tier 2 (Somewhat Mature), Tier 3 (More Mature), and Tier 4 (Mature). Tier 1 represents average scores of 1 to 3; Tier 2 represents average scores of 3.01 to 3.5; Tier 3 represents average scores of 3.51 to 4; Tier 4 represents average scores of 4.01 to 5. While maturity levels are low among companies surveyed, they are likely even lower among prospective buyers of intelligence systems, based on the high concentration of large companies in the survey relative to the market, which are shown to have higher maturity levels.