

4 Steps to Become a Data Hero

In our recent research, [The 2023 Marketing Data Impact Report](#), we learned how today's marketers are building and converting audiences, improving metrics, and driving pipeline—all while under increasing amounts of pressure. When we drilled down into the data, we discovered a unique subset: the Data Hero.

These Data Heroes are making waves and driving results. **27%** of marketers from our study fall into this mighty category.



What is a Data Hero?

Data Heroes are those that responded that they are using the right data to convert audiences. How do they know they're using the right data? They know because it's proven in their pipeline.

But this isn't all that sticks out about the Data Heroes. Data Heroes are also more confident overall in their data and results, saw a better rate of improvement in metrics and revenue in the last year, and use their data for more advanced use cases than their peers. Long story short: These marketers are the gold standard of B2B marketers.

- **Increased revenue**

Data Heroes work at companies that increased revenue more than their peers. In fact, they were 3x more likely to report a significant increase in revenue than other surveyed marketers. They're driving revenue by using the right data to build and convert their audiences.

Revenue at their organization increased significantly last year:



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- **More budget**

During an uncertain economy, Data Heroes aren't struggling with tight budgets the way many other marketers are. While nearly half of their peers reported that their budgets stayed the same or decreased, 78% of Data Heroes saw an increase in budget this year.

4x as many Data Heroes reported a significant increase in budget over the other survey participants. With bigger budgets, they're able to invest more in the programs that are working and build on their successes.

Overall marketing budget increased significantly this year:

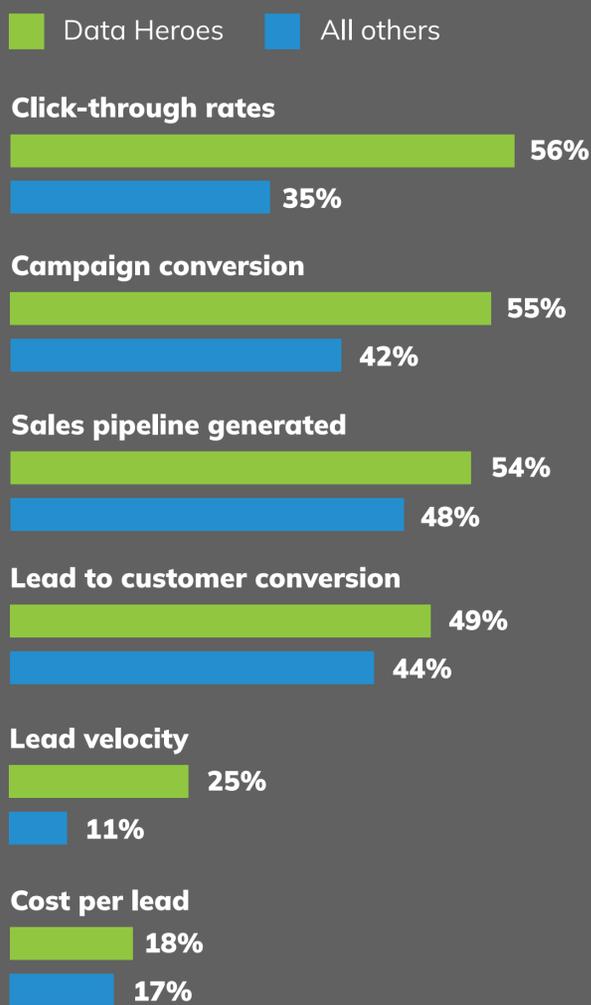


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• **Better results**

Driving pipeline with data is the main quality that sets Data Heroes apart. They're also seeing improved metrics, in particular, outperforming their peers significantly in improving click-through rates and lead velocity.

Which metrics have improved in the last year? (Select all that apply)



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In a time when marketers are under such high pressure to show results, driving improvement in all of these areas allows Data Heroes to prove they're making an impact. Since their current performance is on the right track, they are also more confident in their future. Data Heroes are more likely to hit next quarter's goals. In fact, they're nearly 3.5x as likely to feel very confident about reaching them!

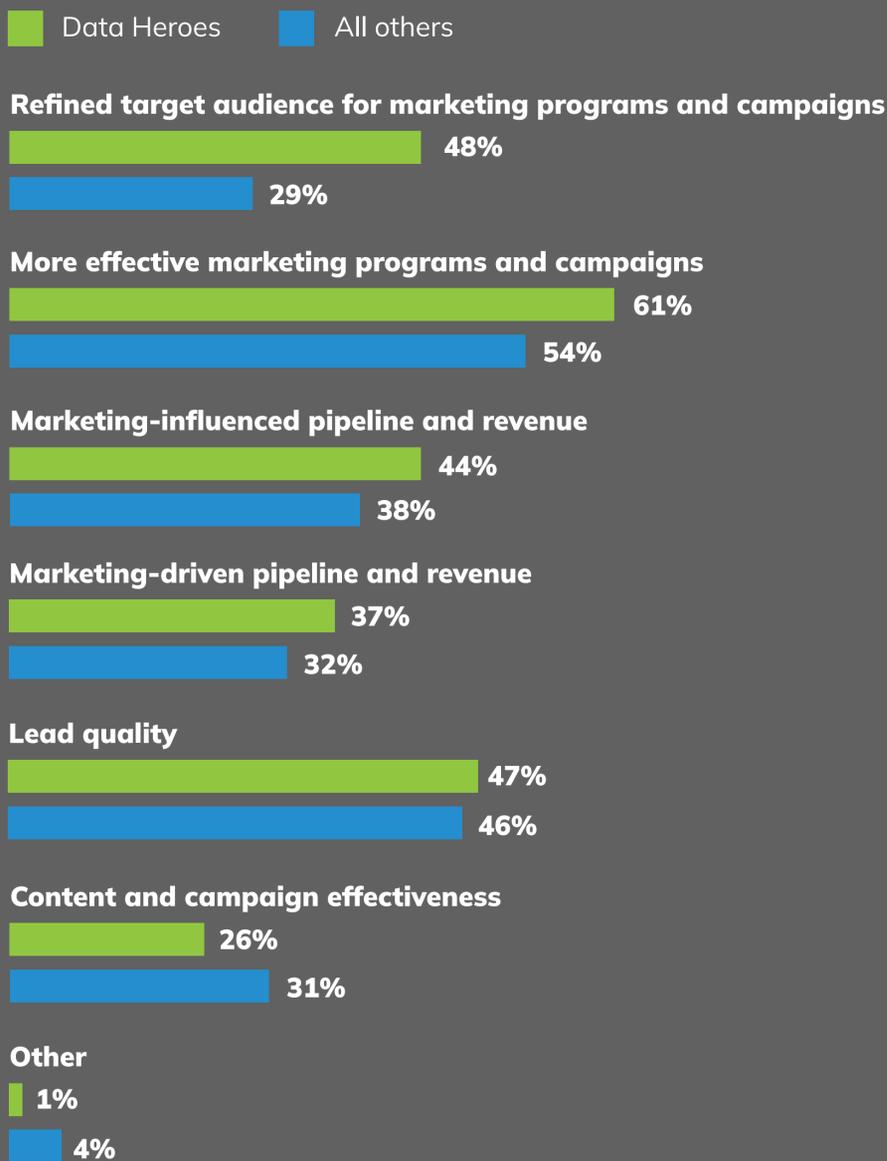
It's very likely they will meet or exceed next quarter's marketing goals



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They're so confident in their data because they can see it working. They're actively driving better results. And with those results, they're able to prove their value to the higher-ups more than other marketers can pretty much across the board.

In which of the following areas are you able to prove the value of your data-driven marketing programs to decision-makers? (Select all that apply)



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So, what can **you** do to become a Data Hero?

Step 1: Layer on more types of data

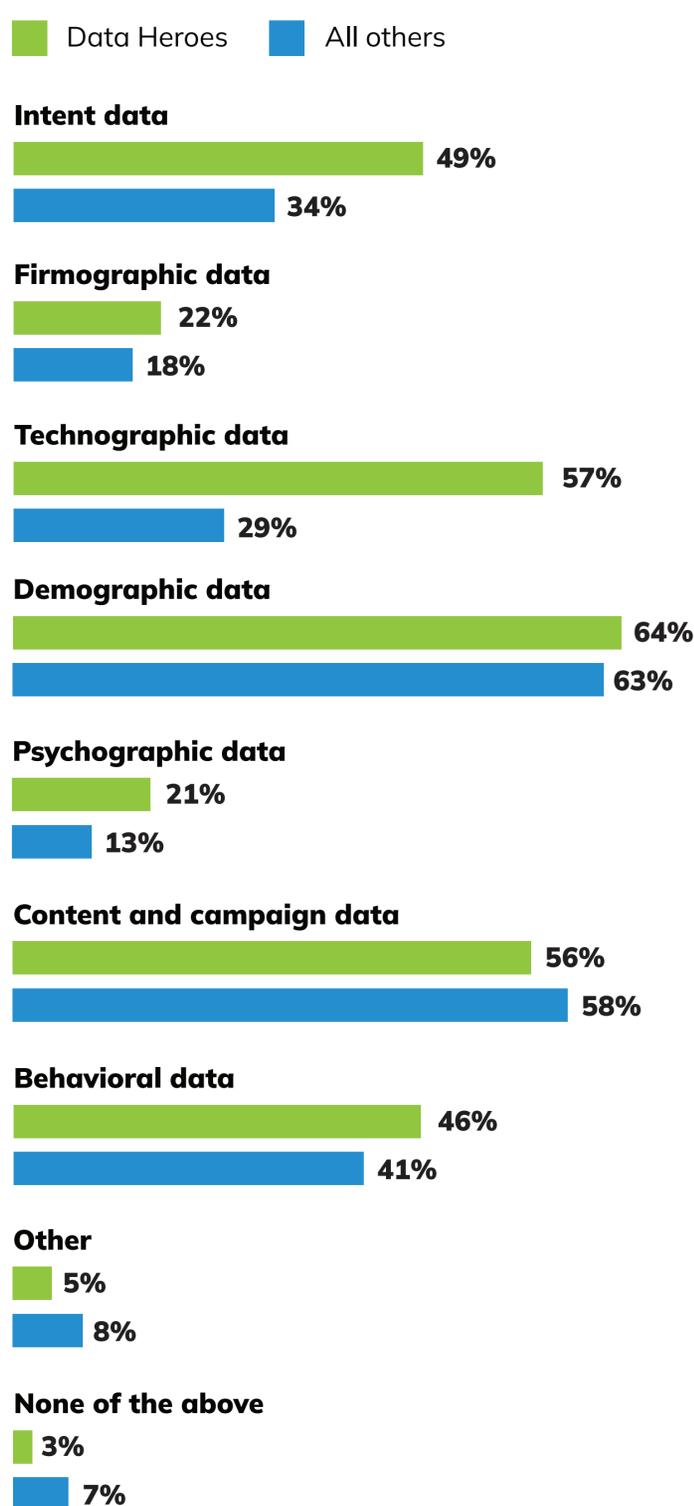
Data Heroes are using more data types than other marketers. By stacking commonly used data like demographics with more granular types like technographics, firmographics, and psychographics, you can get a better picture of your prospects and customers and build more focused audiences to target. Remember that you are not limited to one type of data. Try adding at least one more data type in your audience targeting strategy to improve your results.

Data Heroes use multiple data types

Data Heroes are confident in the data they use to target audiences. They show significantly higher confidence in all of the data types we asked them about compared to their counterparts.

To have the greatest impact on driving leads, these marketers are placing more importance on technographic data and intent data.

Which of the following are you currently utilizing when targeting audiences? (Select all that apply)



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This is significant because when you look at the types of data used by the Data Heroes versus other marketers, you see some gaps appear. These gaps tell us that not only are Data Heroes more likely to use technographic, psychographic, and intent data, but they're using a more comprehensive set of data. Other marketers may be only using a few, more common types of data like demographics, but are missing out on the improved results driven by layering data types.

How to get started

Layering in additional data types is relatively simple. Start with the data that you already have. If you need access to additional data, find a partner that can advise you on what to add based on your objectives and audience.

1. Create a standardized approach to data enrichment. Think about technographic, firmographic, and demographic data as well as intent data.
2. Backfill as much data from your own database as possible. Approach this like you're trying to build a complete data set for analysis. Work with a data provider to fill gaps.
3. Segment your database by intent topics that are correlated to your product or service offerings, company industry, company size, company revenue, job titles, etc.
4. Look for patterns and establish a few factors for testing. Experiment and learn.

By doing these four steps, you'll be able to build out better data segments, layer them together to enhance targeting, and ultimately create more pipeline.

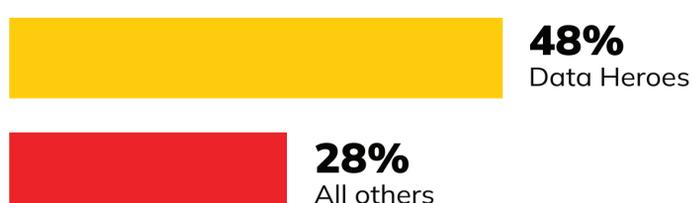
Step 2: Work with a data provider that offers managed services

With a managed service, you have the expertise of a data provider to help guide your strategy and optimize your efforts. We found a correlation between using a [managed service](#) to access and manage intent data and overall confidence in using intent data. Having confidence that you're using the right data to drive results is key when you're under pressure to prove your value. Work with a trusted data provider that offers managed services (or a range of service options, including custom) so you can be confident in your ability to drive results.

Data Heroes and data providers

Data Heroes are more likely to use managed services to access and manage intent data. By using a managed service, they have a dedicated [intent data provider](#) in their corner to help them navigate best practices and optimize their strategy. This could give them the increased confidence to try new strategies, knowing they can rely on the expertise of their data partner.

Uses a managed service to access and manage intent data



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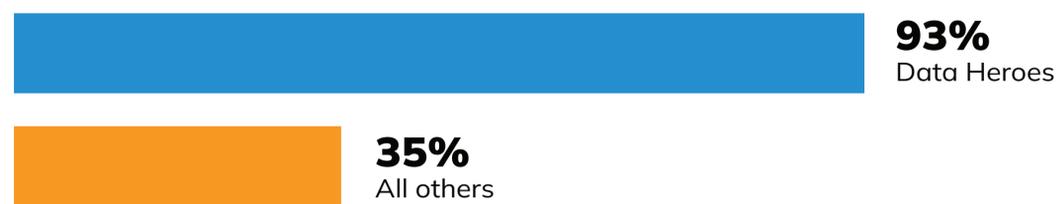
We also found that Data Heroes acquire data and value data offerings differently than other marketers. They're more likely to purchase stand-alone data to use internally, access audience-building and/or lead selector tools through a data platform, and get pre-made audiences and supplemental data from a partner.

They are also collecting data through their own properties. They do this at the same rate as the other marketers, which is perhaps the most obvious or basic method. Data Heroes continue to show that they are comfortable combining and layering data. Taking notes from the Data Heroes, you should be empowered to use the data necessary to fill gaps and complement your existing tech stack so you can drive higher-quality leads.

When it comes to [choosing a partner](#), even though they value many of the same factors as the rest of the marketers surveyed, something stands out. They don't care nearly as much about a partner's proven results. They do, however, care 2x as much about the breadth of topics a data provider offers. This points to their higher use of intent data and the impact they can drive with this type of information. They likely care about this breadth of topics more because they're already seeing results and they're confident they can replicate and build on these results given the right data.

Data Heroes are almost 3x as likely to report they're extremely confident using intent data to target audiences. Sure, some of this confidence comes from successful past experiences, but there is more to it. Data Heroes are more likely to get more support from data partners through managed services.

Extremely confident using intent data to target audiences



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How to get started

Choosing the right partner is key. You want to ensure you are choosing a trusted managed service and data provider who can scale solutions and campaigns to fit your specific business needs throughout your relationship. Look out for certifications like Neutronian, SOC2, ICO, Privacy Shield, and OneTrust to prove their data quality and compliance.

Here are some questions to ask:

- What managed services do you offer?
- Are your services customizable?
- What is your quality control process?
- Do you offer second and third-party data?
- What are your analytics capabilities?
- Does your data integrate into my existing tools?
- What are your security and privacy standards?
- What is your refresh cycle?

Step 3: Incorporate intent data

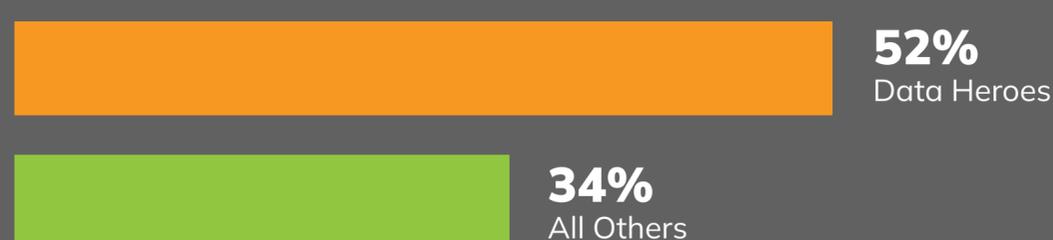
One of the biggest takeaways from our 2023 Marketing Data Impact Report is that intent data is valuable but underused. Data Heroes are using intent data more than their peers, they're more confident using it, and they plan to increase their use in the remainder of the year. This is because they are seeing results from intent and understand how they incorporate it throughout their efforts.

If you're already using [intent data](#), you're ahead of many marketers and on your way to being a Data Hero! If not, now is a good time to start. Going back to step 2, we recommend starting to use intent data through a managed service partner. That way, you have support and guidance to see results as quickly as possible.

Data Heroes use intent data

Data Heroes are significantly more likely to use intent data to build an audience than those who use data less effectively.

Uses intent data to build audiences:



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While using [intent data](#) to build audiences is a relatively simple use case, it's interesting to note that we also saw that they're more likely to be using intent in more sophisticated use cases like [account-based marketing](#) (ABM). Data Heroes are nearly 20% more likely to use intent to run ABM programs.

Ready to expand your intent use? Try these use cases:

- List selectors and campaigns
- Programmatic advertising
- Content syndication and email campaigns
- Account-Based Marketing
- Ideal Customer Profile (ICP) and Total Addressable Market (TAM) modeling
- Behavior modeling
- Trend analysis and competitive monitoring
- Past purchase behavior analysis and predictive models

They're also rapidly scaling their use of intent data. 86% of Data Heroes plan to increase their intent data use this year—with nearly half of those Data Heroes expecting their use to significantly increase. Data Heroes are strategically investing in the areas that are driving results. Building off of these proven methods means they're likely to keep reaping the rewards.

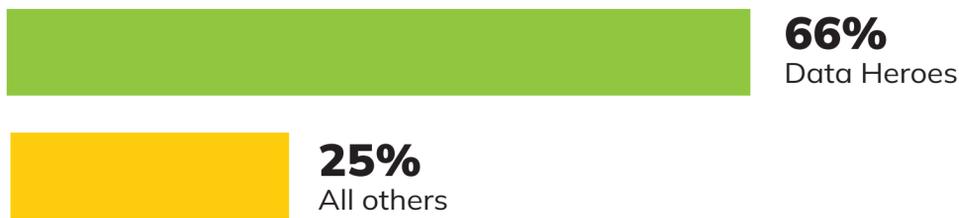
Expects the use of intent data to increase significantly in the remainder of the year:



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Remember, Data Heroes are those who are proving they're using the right data through pipeline results. It's no surprise they're leaning into intent data when two-thirds of them strongly agree that [intent data leads](#) drive more pipeline than other leads. Even further, when compared to their peers they are 2.6x as likely to believe this about intent data leads.

Strongly agrees that intent data leads drive more pipeline than non-intent data leads



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How to get started

Ideally, you'll want to work with an intent data provider to get high-quality, accurate, and privacy-compliant intent data. If your budget is too tight to purchase intent data this quarter, you can start with an in-house analytics deep-dive and strategy overhaul to tap into the potential of what using intent data can look like.

1. Label and categorize all your content by product, persona, buyer journey stage, and funnel position.
2. Run reports in your marketing automation platform to see what content is resonating with contacts that become opportunities and customers.
3. Shift your focus to what product or service offerings are associated with this content.
4. Use the associated product categories to build custom nurture streams and targeted ads. Then place lookalike audiences from your database into those respective nurture streams and ad campaigns to see what works.

From there you can see how those nurture streams and ad campaigns with intent topic focus perform and analyze conversion rate and lead velocity improvements. This process is helpful to see the tip of the iceberg of what's possible with intent — but you'll need to take it a step further and invest in intent data to maximize results.

If you already have access to intent data, follow these steps:

1. Link your intent data to your prospect and customer data by matching it to their unique identifiers such as domain.
2. Create new prospect lists by filtering on buyer intent to look for those in a buying cycle that are not yet looking at you.
3. Place prospects and customers into campaigns that reflect their likely stage in the funnel based on their intent scores. Those with low intent may be early in the process and may benefit from an educational white paper email while those showing high intent are likely later stage and can be passed directly to sales.
4. Run a programmatic display ad campaign to others in the buying group to improve brand awareness and smooth the road for buying group approvals in the upcoming closing process.
5. Use intent topics to help guide your team to focus on specific products in your portfolio, particularly if you are seeing multiple intent signals from a single company.
6. After the deal has closed, intent data can be continued to be monitored as a signal both of cross-sell/upsell as well as account satisfaction.

To optimize your [intent-based marketing strategy](#), look back on both closed-lost and closed-won opportunities to refine your interpretation of intent signals and use that to tailor your approach for future prospects as well as to source new look-a-like prospects. As you get more comfortable with intent data, consider buying it from multiple sources to expand data coverage.

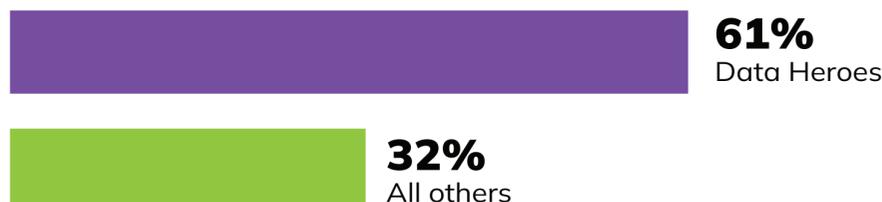
Step 4: Score for buying groups

Data Heroes are using [buying group scoring](#) significantly more than their peers. Follow their lead and use this method to better understand your prospects. This helps you track who at a target company is part of the purchase process and identify the key decision-makers on the team. Knowing who is involved in a purchase decision and their role in the process can help guide your nurture strategy. With this insight, you can deliver the right content at the right time to encourage conversions.

Data Heroes score by buying groups

Scoring is critical to organizing your leads. 61% of Data Heroes report that they use buying group scoring. They are nearly 2x more likely to be using this scoring method than B2B marketers who don't feel they are using the right data. By using buying group scoring they're able to get a better understanding of the potential customers' entire buying journey, key players, and how engaged they are in the buying process.

Currently uses buying group scoring in their marketing programs



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Again, Data Heroes are seeing results and are confident in their efforts. This is why 83% of them report they are satisfied with their existing methodology for the elements they use in lead scoring, and none reported they feel the need for more budget or to investigate the value to improve scoring elements. They're driving results and they're happy with the value they're seeing from their current scoring process.

How to get started

Based on your inbound leads from past campaigns, you can take a look at each contact who has engaged and their job titles and patterns will start to emerge. Doing a closed-won analysis from your last full year of pipeline data is one of the easiest ways to get started with buying groups. It only takes a few steps – just run the report, ensuring you have as much data enriched as possible, and export it to a spreadsheet.

1. Segment your data based on the products purchased
2. Break down your data further by industry
3. Next, break the data down by company size
4. Once you've segmented your data, layer in job titles associated with those opportunities
5. Look for patterns in the job titles

Looking at all of the job titles that are associated with different purchases is a good place to start in determining your buying groups. Depending on the depth of your database you may need to rely on a data provider to fill in the gaps in your data.

Going forward, you can build buying group scoring into your lead scoring process by tracking additional details on each account. Make note of each member involved in the buying process. Using the information from your closed-won analysis, you can connect the dots to contacts that haven't directly engaged but fit into the roles associated with your buying groups and incorporate them into your targeting and scoring process.

Become a Data Hero

Data Heroes are driving results and proving their impact. By following the steps outlined in this eBook, you can take charge and become a Data Hero at your organization.

Want to see the rest of the findings? Read [The 2023 Marketing Data Impact Report: B2B Marketers Under Pressure to Prove It or Pull Their Hair Out](#)

