



How to increase B2B conversion with targeting innovation

WHITE PAPER

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How to target with job titles

If you want to understand a business, start with its most precious asset: the people who work there.

What do they do? To what degree? What level of experience do they have, both at the company and within the industry? Where else have they worked? What experiences and relationships did they likely bring with them to their new job?

These questions get amplified when considering the executive team, middle management, and the overall structure of the employee organization. In short, the company's priorities, competitive advantage, and future direction are tied to the characteristics of its workforce. How many and what types of people enter and leave the company?

For most B2B sellers, few things matter more than the kinds of people who work for and lead a company.

Common misconceptions when targeting with titles

Before talking about better ways to target with titles, let me start with two common misconceptions about job titles. In the last year, I've looked at more than a thousand job specs for account-based marketing (ABM) and B2B lead gen programs. Two big problems stand out. First, lots of demand gen marketers and media companies think the exotic titles salespeople come up with exist at scale in the market. Second, these same buyers apparently think titles are very standardized.

Neither of these assumptions is true.
Let me offer some proof.



Using title keywords to find your personas

I'll start with the practice of using keywords in titles to find the right people. I have to admit I used this approach myself back in the day. Don't get me wrong. If you are a salesperson looking for the right person in a large company, this approach is fine. It doesn't always work, but it's not a bad place to start. If you are a marketer trying to generate leads at scale, well, that's a different, sadder story.

To illustrate my point, I'll use my LinkedIn Navigator account.



LinkedIn, at last count, has 630 million profiles. Yeah, I know. Some of those folks are dead and some are fake, but still, LinkedIn has a LOT of the people you are probably trying to target in B2B. So, I did a search for a title that is right up your alley: **Director of Demand Gen**. I didn't set any industry criteria. No headcount specs, either. I just limited it to the US.

Guess how many titles came up? **Seventy-seven.**

What? I won't hit my quota of marketing qualified leads (MQLs) this month with a paltry **77** titles! So, then I did **Director of Demand Generation**. I know. You'd think entering **demand gen** would retrieve people with **demand generation** in their title. I know I did. However, LinkedIn Navigator is not very smart. (Bill Gates, if you are reading this, and you should be, you might want to get your Bing team to help out your LinkedIn team so that the search function doesn't suck and so the folks at Google aren't laughing at you.)

It's not just LinkedIn Navigator. Most of these title search functions operate on two extremes, often at the same time:

- They pull in lots of extraneous titles, like **Director of Demand Planning** when you are looking for **demand generation** (Hello, ZoomInfo) **and/or**
- They won't recognize an obvious related title phrase like **demand generation** when you enter **demand gen** and vice versa (Nice to meet you, LinkedIn Navigator)

Why does this happen? Well, there are several reasons. First, the person writing the business rules was not guided by data science. Second, he or she had no idea just how complicated titles are. Third, if you sell contact names or audience access (that is, if you are a B2B media company), well, you like volume, even if it's not that helpful for the advertiser. Volume, after all, seems like the logical answer to the question, "How can we B2B media companies make a lot of money?"

Of course, the right answer is really, "By helping your advertisers find the right people without annoying those in your audience who are not a good fit."

I guess no one this side of Google and Facebook got the relevancy memo. Let me clear that up now.

Memo:

To all B2B Media Companies:
Stop annoying your audience with irrelevant ads.
Thank you. — Your subscribers who would like to be loyal if you weren't so abusive.

But I digress.

Back to my query of LinkedIn Sales Navigator. Guess how many **Director of Demand Generation** titles there are in the US?

Nine hundred ninety-two.

If I want only those Directors of Demand Generation who work in companies with **500** or more employees, the number shrinks to **430** people.

Hmm. That might not be enough to hit my MQL quota this quarter, either, right?

This kind of thing shows up all the time. Marketers want these specific titles. They want them because marketers ask really good salespeople who in the company makes decisions for whatever the marketer's company sells, and the salesperson offers these very specific titles.

Let me give you just one more example. Cyber security is about the hottest technology category in the world. About once a month, we read about some well-known company getting hacked, and the credit card information of millions of people lands in the hands of a Russian mob. Therefore, every company has someone heading up cyber security, right? Well, maybe not.

Directors with cyber security in the title? There are 1,979 in the US, according to our good friends at LinkedIn, only 1,420 of whom work in companies with 1,000 or more employees.

Of course, there are no doubt LOTS of businesspeople worried as hell about cyber security and demand gen, for that matter. They just didn't get the memo on putting your favorite keywords in their titles. Let me remedy that once and for all:

Memo:

***To all people marketers are trying to target:
Would you please put keywords in your titles so that we can find you? Thanks.
— Marketing departments everywhere.***

Tweet that, okay? It's worth a try. #PutKeyWordsInYourTitle. We'll start one of those movements I've been reading about.



When marketers run into this kind of problem, they often go from one extreme to the other. If they are looking for **B2B demand generation marketers** and can't find enough, they settle for people with **Marketing** anywhere in their title. Voila! The count goes from **992** to **431,221**, according to the fine folks at Google.

The same thing happens with any other function. Can't find enough people with **cyber security** in the title? Okay, use the word **information** anywhere in the title. The count jumps from fewer than **2k** to **84.7k**. Neither of these extremes—being too specific or being too broad—helps you target who you need to target.

The reason your preferred keywords don't yield very big search results

Okay, all joking aside (well, a little *less* joking, anyway), what's going on? Why aren't there more people with those kinds of keywords in their job titles?

There are two reasons. First, titles aren't standardized (more on that later). Second, little companies don't have the headcount luxury of hiring a bunch of specialists. Most companies are little. Teeny tiny little. According to the NAICS Association, there are **16.5m** businesses in the US. (Other government agencies estimate that there are up to **30m** businesses, but these include microbusinesses with very little buying power.) At least **71%** of the **16.5m** have fewer than **four** employees. You won't find very many Directors of anything in those companies. Even if you go up to **50** or more employees, they are only two percent of the business population. A company with just **50** employees rarely has enough buying power to warrant a lot of investment in lead gen.

That problem of company size matters. For example, only **0.2%** have **500** or more employees. In fact, only about **0.8%** have **100** or more employees, according to the good people at NAICS. That's right, less than one frickin' percent! What happens with this idea of functions is that, as companies grow, they add more and more specialists, generally.

A B2B tech company might get to **10** employees before hiring anyone in marketing. Instead, they will hire an agency or contractors. In some industries, they might not even do that much.



Now, think of all the must-have functions in marketing: *Events. Digital. Branding. Demand gen. Content marketing.* You see the problem? Never mind *social media, email marketing, lead nurturing, channel marketing, search engine optimization, PR, paid search, customer marketing, field marketing, market research, analyst relations, product marketing, marketing operations*, or five other sub-functions of a robust marketing team.

You won't find much specialization until the marketing team is, well, a team. Not a *basketball* team. I'm talking a football team or a rugby team. That's why, in a small company, you'll see people who are the director of sales *and* marketing. Employees in smaller companies wear many hats. Hiring specialists and generalists is also a matter of philosophy. Some believe in specialization. Some don't.

Often, technology adoption drives this specialization of

staff. If you are going to play in the marketing big leagues of search engine optimization, you need someone who not only deeply understands how the Google search algorithm probably works, but who stays abreast of this ever-changing landscape. That person probably needs several technology tools to really do their job well.

That function didn't exist in marketing departments a generation ago. Neither did *social media marketing*, *marketing operations*, *conversion response optimization*, and a lot of other titles. You see why titles aren't standardized? Companies aren't static. What they ask their employees to do differs over time. Sure, marketing people still write ad copy, just like they did before World War I. They still issue invoices, process payments, sell face to face, and many other standardized jobs. They also have numerous *new* functions, often driven by technology innovation, like cloud and mobile computing.

That leads to the second big problem: Titles, regardless of the size of the company, are not standardized. Our chief data scientist looked at our current databases of business professionals—we subscribe to three of the largest such databases—and found that there were nearly **30 million** unique titles in the **90 million** names in the US we have in our combined data sources. In other words, **one out of every three** people has a unique title.

Sure, there are lots of people with a title of **Director of Marketing**, but just that common title has numerous variations:

- Marketing Director
- Director, Marketing
- Senior Director of Marketing
- Associate Director of Marketing
- And so on

Just so you don't think our database is inaccurate, let me offer a little more perspective. There are about **329 million** people in the US. About **129 million** are employed full time, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

In other words, even if all the other titles in the market match one of the titles in our database, you would still end up with **every fourth person** having a unique title. To make any sense of such a jumble of words, you need data science and the desire to help companies find the right people in the right companies.

Let's face it. With B2B media companies addicted to volume, there are not a lot of data scientists working on this problem. Let me give you an example. Ziff Davis is a very popular B2B media platform in the tech industry. According to our good friends at LinkedIn, Ziff has **4,190** employees today who claim to work for Ziff Davis. Of those, only **one** has the keyword "Data Science" in his title. **One.** (And yes, it's a guy.)

How about The Wall Street Journal? There are **7,895** people working there, including the parent company, Dow Jones. Okay. That's the voice of business. Surely, they have a mob of data scientists. Well, not exactly. They have **one**.

One.

Now, they do have a few folks who write about artificial intelligence. They just aren't doing much data science. They talk the talk. They just don't walk the walk. Most of the old media companies are that way. That's why companies like Facebook and Google are wiping them out. Well, that's one of the reasons, anyway.

Am I saying you shouldn't use title keywords? No. If you are doing account-based marketing to large accounts, then by all means, use smart words and phrases to find the titles. Just don't assume you'll find everyone that way. You won't.

Two new ways to use job titles in B2B targeting

How should you use titles? There are two emerging ways to use titles to better target your market. Both require data science and artificial intelligence.

Using titles to target the right companies

We obviously think of titles as a way to target buyer personas. What we *should* be thinking about is using titles to target the *right* accounts. If you marry job titles with resumé data and company data like headcount and industry, think of what you know about a company:



The mix of functions relative to the overall headcount

Lots of marketers use headcount (i.e., number of employees) as a targeting tool. There's nothing inherently wrong with that. Size matters. It correlates to buying power. However, not all headcount is equal.

For most companies, the functional mix of that headcount matters a lot. Let's say you are selling technology to help marketing teams with project coordination. Let's say you find that bigger companies are better prospects because there is more coordination. One way to target that market is to say you want only companies with **1,000 or more** employees. However, what if some of those companies have very small marketing teams? Let's say a farm, where there are lots of workers and sales happens to a small number of food processing manufacturers and food wholesalers. On the other hand, what about a demand gen agency of **200 employees** but where **80%** of them are marketers? Those kinds of examples render raw headcount far too inexact. You miss prospects you'd like to keep and target prospects who are not a good fit.



Management layers

How many managers, directors, and VPs are there relative to the overall headcount? Flatter organization (fewer layers of middle management) speaks to corporate culture and the distribution of decision making. Is this a top-down company or does management empower front lines with budget-allocation decisions? These differences in management philosophy influence business buying behavior. Top-down companies want products and services that increase visibility, for example.



Resumé and title data to improve targeting

When you combine title information with resumé information and industry information, additional targeting possibilities appear.



Tenure

Tenure matters. Generally, the longer someone works at a company, the greater the degree of trust he or she earns with management. How tenured are the employees? How might tenure correlate to buying behavior for your solution?



Industry experience

Experience within the industry is yet another dimension that may impact business buying behavior. An obvious example is training. Companies with lots of inexperienced employees may need to increase their knowledge of the industry and will seek out training and coaching solutions which may not resonate with companies who have more seasoned employees.



Former customers

The best salespeople stay in touch with former clients. B2B marketing teams? Not so much. Obviously, resumé data combined with functional title information can help companies find former customers who now work at other companies.

These are just a few of the ways to improve targeting of companies by understanding the people who work there. To capitalize on these kinds of possibilities, you need to use a matrix. That's because the mix of people is complicated.

The matrix lists functions across one axis and the level of the person in the other. Within each cell, you insert a number that expresses the degree to which the person works in a function and the level of his or her involvement.

Here is a simplified example:

	Customer Support	Marketing	Sales	Product	Engineering	Software	IT	Legal	Human Resources
C-level	0	.5	1.2	0	1.3	0	0	2.2	0
VP	0	1.2	7.2	0	3.6	0	0	27.9	0
Director	0	2.4	13.8	.02	8.2	0	0	65.5	0
Manager	0	3.4	39.0	0	22	0	0	121.0	0
Staff	0	7.9	20.4	0	37.9	0	0	99.3	0

A real matrix would have more functions and subfunctions. (Trust me: sorting out titles into functions is not simple.) With proper aggregation (distributions matter and averages can easily deceive), a function-level matrix can capture properties of populations of companies such as segments, markets, or regions.

This much more nuanced way of finding the right people and the right companies is orders of magnitude better than manually slogging through title keywords and using simplistic industry and headcount information to target B2B buyers.

Using titles to target the right people

With the right sources of B2B data, a data scientist, a data analyst, and some UX design and engineering talent, you can use a function level matrix to identify not just the right companies but the right people within those companies. With techniques like *natural language processing*, data science can group keywords into logical clusters so that, for example, people with **demand gen** are grouped with those with **lead generation** and **campaign(s)** in a marketing sub-function. Likewise, if you have resumé data about people, then you may be able to use that information to find people with various keywords or phrases that suggest **demand generation**.



About LeadCrunch[ai]

The problems we solve

Despite technology advancements, even the best marketing teams get very low conversion rates throughout the funnel. Plus, most marketing teams must argue constantly to get revenue credit for marketing influenced leads. Conflicts with sales over lead volume and lead quality are never-ending.

These problems stem from B2B complexity. B2B buying behavior involves multiple stakeholders, evolving buying criteria, and an elongated consideration cycle. The sales and marketing tech stack has thus far only increased this complexity.

Our experience design

We think differently about how to find and grow lasting B2B relationships. Scaling relationship development with artificial intelligence (AI) necessitates a data model that describes the B2B ecosystem. The data must not be a snapshot in time but a network of ever-changing people, ideas, and companies. Mere firmographic models are too inaccurate and simplistic.

Scaling relationship development also means analyzing not just your hand-raisers, who convert infrequently, but your ideal customers. With such profiles, AI can predict who will buy and their buying capacity and buying longevity, not just who will respond.

Because the B2B ecosystem is constantly changing, your marketing model must learn continuously, too. The LeadCrunch always-on AI platform adapts to competitive threats, ideas that are changing market perceptions, and changes to your solution portfolio and business strategy. This continuous learning means tightly integrating content marketing with audience targeting, delivering a stream of proactive insights, and feeding outcomes back into the platform to improve targeting and insights.

Above all else, the design must simplify the complexity and make marketers the new maestros of shareholder value.

Our services

We make it easy to pilot our AI-driven B2B marketing system. No complicated tech stack integrations. No long-term commitments. Only pay for qualified leads who engage with your content. We can also nurture the leads with your content, identify additional personas within an account for your sales team to engage, or even engage and nurture those additional personas in each account. Each lead is multi-touch verified and guaranteed to meet your campaign criteria and contain valid data.

