



MQA vs. Traditional Lead Scoring

There Is No Contest

A Short Intro from our CEO

“Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting different results,”
Rita Mae Brown, *Sudden Death* (1983).

You may be thinking, “Einstein is the person who said that!”

You’d be wrong. We’ve persistently credited the wrong person with the adage for as long as I can remember—or at least as long as the internet has been around.

The phrase and the analogy are strong parallels to traditional lead scoring. Marketers have insisted lead scoring can drive better pipeline results. And as long as we’ve advocated for lead scoring, salespeople have disagreed with the results.

Unfortunately, sales is probably right.

Because many of our CRM systems split up person data across two, unconnected tables (leads and contacts) and how unreliable data entry is, it’s really hard to figure out whether someone is highly engaged when there are multiple records for the same individual.

Compounding the issue is the typical B2B buyer committee. According to [Gartner](#), the average complex B2B solution sale involves 6-10 decision-makers.

So why are we still trying to measure intent at the contact/Individual level?

At CaliberMind, we decided to try something new. Let’s stop the insanity with a new way to qualify accounts.

Take care,



Eric Westerkamp
CEO
CaliberMind



What's Wrong With Lead Scoring?

Traditional lead scoring looks at two pools of data on any given person record:

1. Identity (title, hierarchy, department, company profile, etc.)
2. Engagement data (activities, campaign members, web visits, etc.)

Oftentimes, companies analyze sales qualified opportunities (pipeline) to develop an ideal profile to target and nurture. Less commonly, companies optimize this profile based on closed-won opportunity data (revenue). Neither method is wrong; it just depends on what your company wants to optimize for. If you're a smaller company and not confident you've nailed down your buyer audience, optimizing for qualified opportunities is a great start.

Engagement data is a broad term used for possible indicators (from both first and third-party data sources) that your prospect is interested in your product. Depending on which system you're using to calculate your lead score, you may only consider campaign data, or you might have the ability to incorporate sales activity, web data, and more.

These two factors are combined for the lead score. Marketing teams may even go so far as to use lead scoring information to screen incoming qualified leads for the sales team. It often looks like this:

		Persona →			
Intent ↓		A	B	C	D
01		MQL	MQL	MQL	Gated
02		MQL	MQL	MQL	Gated
03		MQL	MQL	Gated	Gated
04		MQL	Gated	Gated	Gated

Legend: ■ MQL Gated

This method of MQL gating is problematic for a few reasons:

1. B2B opportunities involve a buyer committee - not a single point of contact
2. Data hygiene is never perfect
3. Most CRMs split person data into two, disconnected data tables
4. Scoring methods are prone to bias

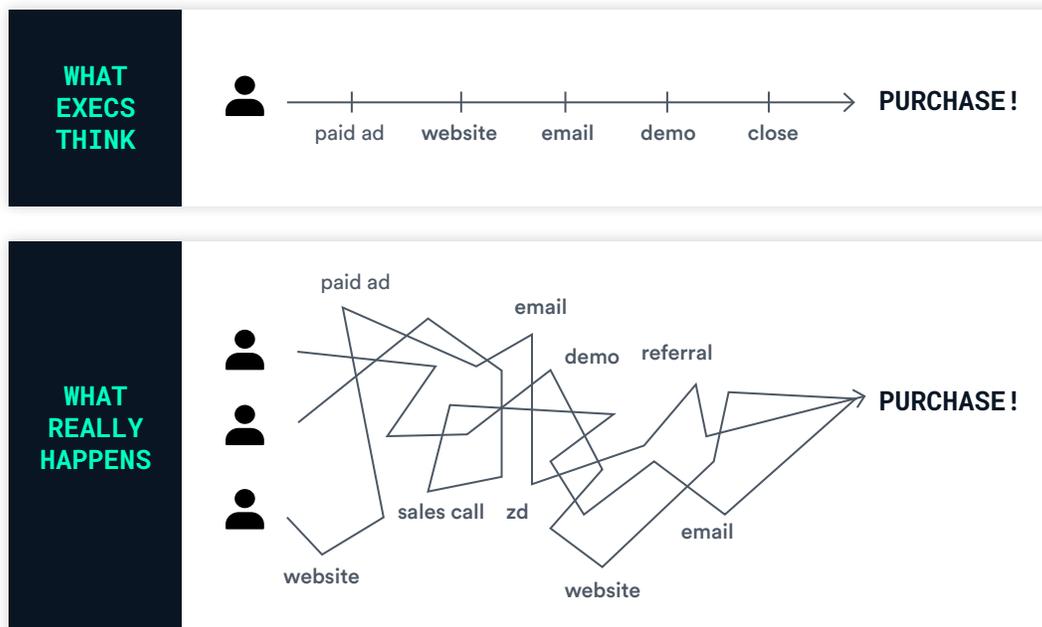


The Buyer Committee

According to [Gartner](#), in an average firm with 100-500 employees, seven decision-makers are involved in most purchases. In any complex B2B solution sale, the average is 6-10 decision-makers.

These people have different profiles and engage with your company in very different ways. A CFO may be strictly interested in getting their hands on any ROI data, while the technologist may be more concerned with whether or not the tool meets a list of requirements.

Businesses should be tracking activity across an entire account, and they should understand who is typically involved in a sale. Traditional lead scoring doesn't account for buyer committees.



Data Hygiene

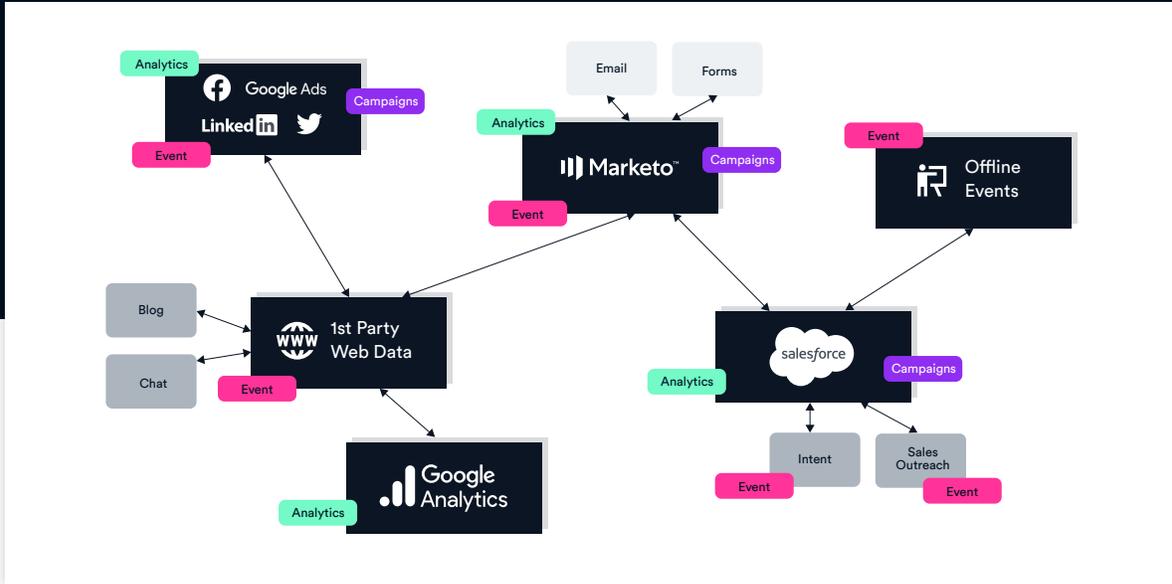
Every salesperson wishes a content download came with the person's full bio. They'd like to know what television shows they watch, what features they care about most, and who else they're going to have to work with in the company to move a sale over the finish line.

We haven't seen an enrichment tool that can meet these demands. With stricter legislation anticipated in the United States, we expect businesses will need to learn to rely more on their own data collection strategies than third party data.



Data Silos

The average marketing tech stack has **over two-dozen** tools (although we've seen research that insists this number is higher).



Human Bias

Human bias is introduced into any model before it's even built. That's because we determine which information we're collecting and what we ignore. Bias also influences the perception of the final lead scoring product. People are hardwired to remember negative experiences more than positive, so it takes very few negative interactions for a salesperson to throw your scoring model out the window.

How you decide to optimize the model can also be problematic. Let's say that inside sales can easily get meetings with a system administrator, but sales can't convert the opportunity until a director or higher is involved in the conversation. Optimizing for meetings set rather than qualified opportunities will make your inside team happy, but your field sales team will complain. Optimizing for qualified opportunities will mean harder, leaner work for your inside sales team.

Activity bias is more blatant.

Unless you use machine learning to look at all of your interactions to gauge the ideal sequence leading to an event (such as creating an opportunity that eventually becomes closed-won), chances are you're arbitrarily weighting your interactions. In most marketing automation platforms, a user assigns a score to each channel, and that score is applied no matter where the person appears to be in the buyer journey.

In short, marketing's silver bullet for sales qualification is flawed.



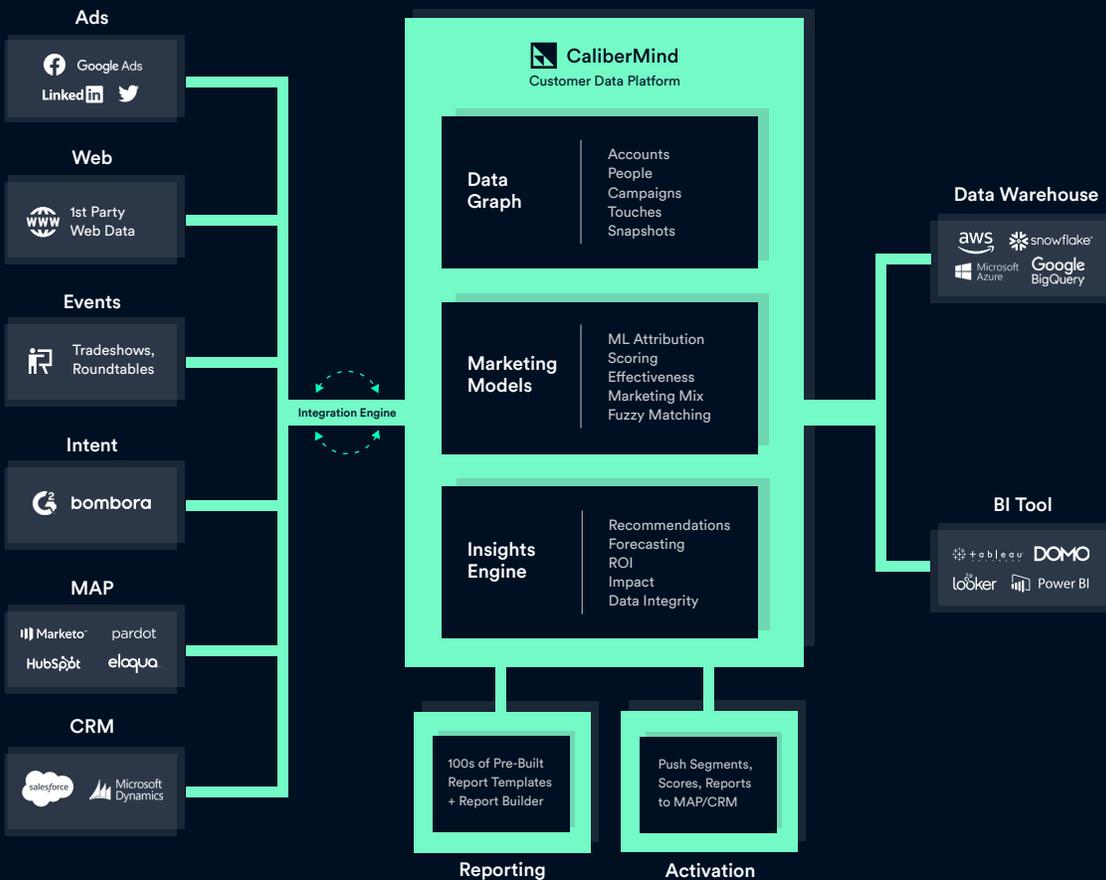
Introducing the MQA

Not Your Mentor's Scoring Model

We realized that reducing manual effort, assigning worth, and reducing bias is the perfect application of Machine Learning.

Imagine an algorithm that looks at every marketing event, decides its impact on pipeline or revenue - then assigns its score based upon that relative impact.

CaliberMind normalizes data across all of your platforms, which means we create data graphs to define a unified definition of any given account or contact. This also means that we can look across both leads and contacts when gathering data to analyze.



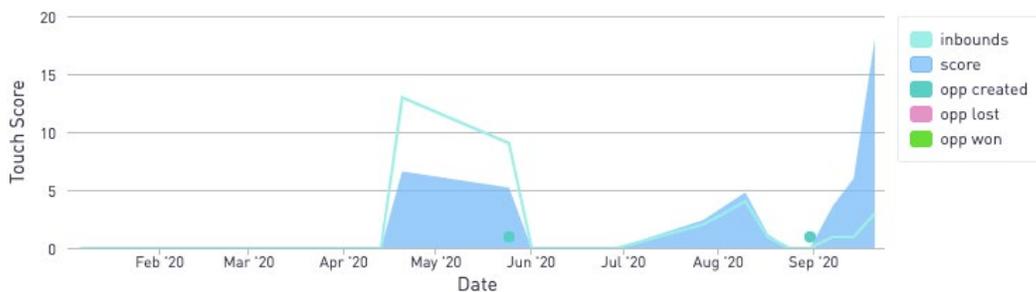
CaliberMind's Marketing Qualified Account (MQA) model was developed by our data science team and leverages a given customer's existing data to build ideal engagement profiles. It's a machine learning-based method that uses historical closed-won opportunity data to weigh the importance of interactions across the account.

In other words, our MQA model flags Marketing Qualified Accounts that have a higher than average likelihood to convert to opportunities—allowing us to get sales involved closer to the zero moment of truth (ZMOT) and even quantify the value of missed opportunities.

Buyer journeys are non-linear. Multiple people at a given account are at different places in the buyer journey, have unique content needs, and engage with your company in different ways. The MQA model still considers personas, but all engaged contacts are considered—not just the person sales selected as the primary contact, not just the contacts associated with the account, but everyone (leads included!) at the company.

Because CaliberMind integrates all of your data sources, you can incorporate sales interactions.

Engagement Score vs Activity Type



Scored Events

EVENT TYPE	EVENTS	SCORE
Sales Outreach	12	36.0
Page Visit	20	13.8
Content Downl...	1	1.0
Website Direct	1	0.6
Form Submit	2	

Department

DEPARTMENT	EVENTS	SCORE
Marketing	142	51.4
Executive	1	
Sales	1	

Seniority

SENIORITY	EVENTS	SCORE
Functional	23	27.6
Manager	102	23.8
Director	6	
CXO	1	
VP	12	



A Simple, Real-World Use Case

We Have Pockets! is an apparel manufacturer targeting large manufacturers. They sell personal protection equipment for assembly line workers. Their main selling point is—you guessed it—they include pockets in all their protective aprons, mechanic suits, or lab coats.

They have a lot of opportunities but want to narrow everyone's focus to the opportunities showing the most potential to close.

We Have Pockets! uses CaliberMind to look at their known marketing interactions (email newsletters, social media advertising, direct mail, trade shows, sales outreach, and even anonymous web data). We work our magic to normalize their data, create global customer profiles, and optimize their MQA algorithm for closed-won opportunities.

After analyzing their data and reviewing key winning opportunity profiles on manufacturer accounts, we can see that there are multiple people involved in the decision making process. The head of employee safety, human resources, and foremen all need to sign off on the order before purchase.

WE HAVE POCKETS! DECISION-MAKERS



But there's another pattern we can spot that we didn't expect.

Their targeted advertising on Facebook gets a crazy amount of conversions one month prior to the sale. We also see web traffic spike and activity increase on their Facebook page. We Have Pockets! digs into these findings and discovers that ads targeting the employees at a manufacturer are working.



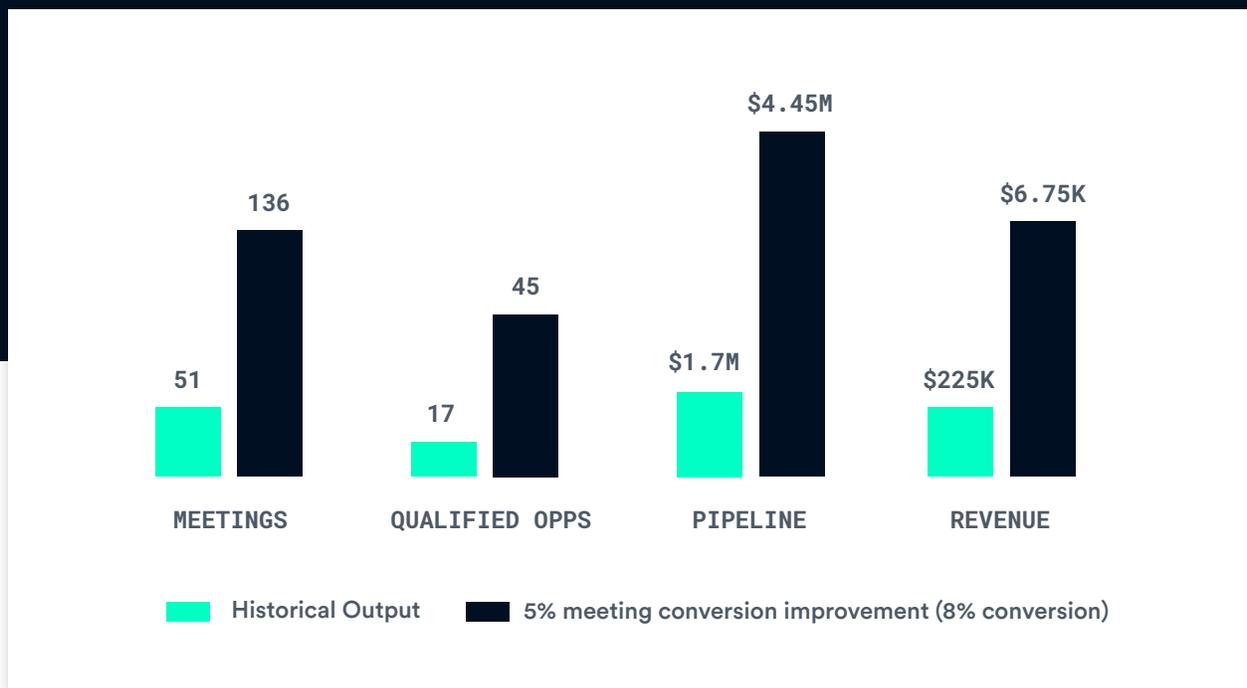
The employees are pushing their foremen to advocate for better equipment. And why wouldn't they? Everyone loves pockets.



The Impact

Small adjustments early in the funnel can have a **massive** impact on revenue. The more efficiencies we can gain through campaign optimization and elevating the right accounts with the right level of engagement at the right time, the better!

Let's say your account conversion rate has historically been 3% of marketing target accounts into meetings. Each quarter, your pool of targets is about 1,700 accounts. 33% of your meetings move to qualified opportunities. Your average sales price is \$100,000, and your qualified opportunity close rate is 15%.



By increasing meeting set efficiency by 5%, we increased revenue by **165%**.

In our early beta release, we're seeing accounts with the right buying signals passed to sales 3-4 weeks sooner, which has had a big impact on pipeline development (**25%+ increase**). When you consider 60-90% of the buying journey takes place with marketing, collapsing the timeline to a closed won is a big deal.

Think about it. Any salesperson would fight for the ability to pull more deals into the current quarter. They can't afford to wait several quarters to hit their number.

They want to sell more today, and with the right insights, they can.



Refining Your Model

There are things you should consider before implementing MQA. Let's talk through them!

Company & Product Maturity

When deciding on **when** to optimize for—whether it's opportunity creation, opportunity qualification, or opportunity close—it's important to consider how much data is in each of these pools and how likely it is to change.

For example, if you're selling a network data analytics platform and you've discovered a couple security use cases, but you're actively developing product features to capture market share in media & entertainment and genomics research, your closed-won population isn't going to be useful. However, if your sales team has already been setting meetings with these companies (which is plausible with a long buying cycle), your meeting set or qualified opportunity information is more promising.

On the other hand, if your inbound team is swamped and your field team is loudly complaining about the quality of the opportunities being created, either optimizing on "qualified" or "closed-won" would be a better move.

The maturity of your company and product will help determine how stable your data profiles are likely to be, which will drive optimization decisions.

Product Lines

Let's say your company sells commercial software licenses in increments of 50 seats and offers a software management service to allow large corporations to outsource this work instead of putting a burden on IT.

After researching your product purchase behavior, you notice that the initial purchase of seats is typically made by a business systems team within an information technology department. This initial purchase frequently involves a system administrator, business systems director, VP of IT, and requires sign off from the chief security office and finance. Your target market ranges from Mid-Market to Enterprise accounts, and you see fairly similar buying cycles of three months across account sizes.



Incremental license increases tend to happen when the system administrator receives warnings that are automatically triggered when the company only has ten open seats remaining. These sales involve the system administrator and are approved by the business systems director. Most companies don't require further review, and the buying cycle lasts less than two weeks.

The software management service is a different story. You see this purchased more often in smaller Mid-Market accounts that need to find a temporary solution to sudden employee attrition. You also see this purchase happen with in mega-enterprises. This sale involves a large buyer committee and can take up to six months to finalize, with the final month mostly consisting of legal teams arguing over red-lines (hey, it happens).

Because of the dramatically different buying behavior and committee profiles, each of the following scenarios is worth breaking out into a separate model:

- NEW SUBSCRIPTION ACQUISITIONS
- EXISTING LICENSE INCREASES
- SOFTWARE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

We didn't talk about subscription renewals, but if the behavior is very similar to the expansion (they get a reminder and renew within a few weeks), it may be worth bundling into the license expansion. Chances are, customers use the opportunity to explore competitors and negotiate better pricing, so the odds are good that you'll need your own renewal model.

Regional Buyer Behavior

Committee profiles, average opportunity timelines, conversion rates, and interactions can all vary wildly by region. If you're a multinational corporation and already have separate divisions for your marketing department, it's wise to consider requirements for an MQA algorithm by division.



Opportunity Types

Established customers have different buying behavior from new prospects. Your leading indicators for an expansion sale will also look different from a renewal.

Consider your organization's maturity and goals. If you're a young company with a small customer pool, optimizing for expansions and renewals may not be realistic yet. If you're a large organization with an aggressive new logo acquisition goal, prioritizing net new opportunities makes sense.

INFLUENTIAL FACTORS IN BUILDING A MODEL



COMPANY MATURITY

- Data Population
- Use Cases Discovered
- Audience Known?



GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS

- Buyer Committee Behavior
- Purchase Timelines
- Product Requirements



PRODUCT LINES

- Buying Cycles
- Target Personas



OPPORTUNITY TYPES

- Customer Acquisition
- Difficulty of Expansion vs Net New
- Probability of Renewal

Our [customer success team](#) can help talk you through recommended minimum data requirements and considerations for any of the scenarios explored above and more.



End the Marketing vs. Sales Worldview

"DO YOU GUYS KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING? THIS 'HOT LEAD' ALREADY HAS AN OPPORTUNITY ON MARIE'S ACCOUNT!"

"YOUR PROFILE ISN'T WORKING. I GOT A 'HOT LEAD' FOR A GUY IN ACCOUNTING. WE ONLY SELL TO IT."

"IF I HADN'T DUG THROUGH ALL OF THE FORM FILLS, I WOULD NEVER HAVE FOUND THIS HOT NEW OPPORTUNITY. HOW DID YOU MISS IT?"

We get it.

With MQA, sales feedback is being incorporated into the model without them having to do anything different. When opportunities fitting a pattern that used to be successful are no longer converting to the next stage and opportunities with a new pattern of activity are no longer converted, **the model sees it and adjusts!**

This is very cool for both salespeople and the poor marketing ops person who used to spend a lot of time defending lead scoring. But people must understand the benefits of removing humans from the MQA equation.

If the company's goal is to get more qualified opportunities, the model won't be skewed by the profile the inside sales team uses to hit their meeting set number. It will look across an account to determine whether the right people (plural!) are involved and taking meaningful actions—as determined by what has repeatedly worked in the past.

We're using data to bypass the politics that may come into play when we decide "winning factors" by committee. By using data as a source of truth, neither department feels like they're on a different side. Everyone is working to meet the same goal: build more pipeline and revenue faster.

We also surface the details behind an MQA status, so managers can look at a "sure thing" opportunity near the end of the quarter and see that critical committee members haven't been engaged. We show you the necessary profiles, whether or not they've engaged, and what kind of activity has taken place in what timeframe.



A More Complicated Use Case

CM Incorporated sells a fabulous marketing data platform. Their immediate buying committee (the people they interact with the most) usually consists of a marketing executive, the marketing operations manager or a revenue operations manager, and a marketing analyst. The secondary committee behind the scenes is the company's chief security officer, chief financial officer, and a business systems director.

BUYER COMMITTEE FOR CM, INC.

PRIMARY
COMMITTEE



Chief Marketing
Officer



Marketing
Ops



Marketing
Analyst

SECONDARY
COMMITTEE



Chief Security
Officer



Chief Financial
Officer



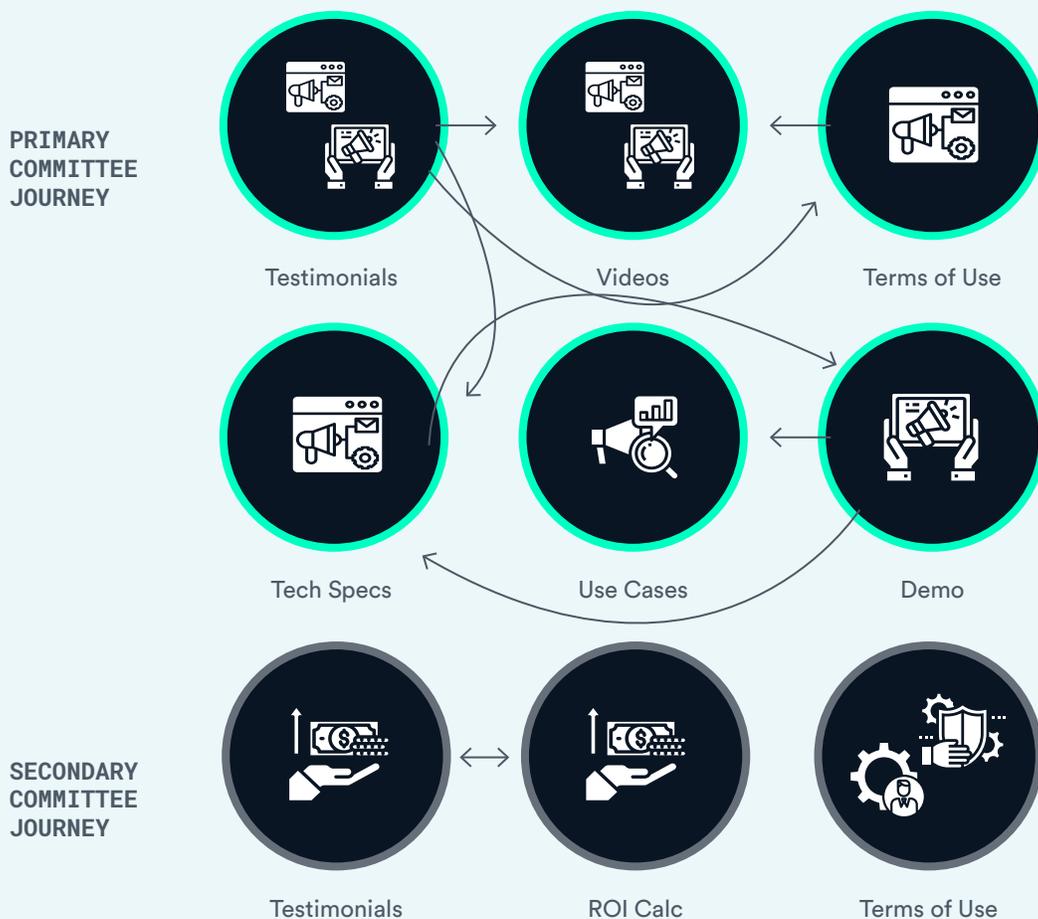
Business Systems
Director



In the past, primary decision-makers were engaged on the website about two weeks before filling out any forms or demo requests. The marketing ops person shows up on the website first, reading case studies, testimonials, and watching short videos. Next, the CMO shows up, preferring short videos and the testimonial page. The marketing ops person continues to look through integrations and technical specs, and the analyst dives into customer use cases. Then the marketing operations manager requests a demo.

We can also see that as the opportunity progresses through the stages, the secondary committee begins to interact with web content. The CFO is looking at testimonials and any documentation proving ROI. The CISO is reviewing the terms of services page along with the business systems director, who both also like to peruse integration documentation.

BUYER JOURNEY FOR CM, INC.



If we know the ideal target account demographics and that the marketing ops person is the typical entry point into the account, we could just have an SDR team email and call marketing ops people. As it turns out, marketing ops people hate repetitive hard-selling, and they don't like gimmicks. They want useful content, and they want to initiate a conversation over chat or email.

Let's see what happens with their newly found MQA insights.

SCENARIO 1

A salesperson gets an MQA alert for an account. They weren't on his radar before, so he checks out the engagement data:

The screenshot shows an 'ABM Engagement' dashboard with the following data:

What is engaging my account?
 Filtered by: SCORING MODEL: Inbound90, COMPANY DOMAIN: (ANY), PERSON: (ANY) per Week over Last 365 days

Scored Events			Department			Seniority			Engagement				
EVENT TYPE	EVENTS	SCORE	DEPARTMENT	EVENTS	SCORE	SENIORITY	EVENTS	SCORE	CONTACT	TYPE	SCORE	INBOUNDS	OUTBOUNDS
Sales Outreach	12	7.4	Marketing	142	9.8	Manager	102	5.2	Contact	5.2	32	49	
Page Visit	3	2.4	Executive	1		Functional	23	4.6	Contact	4.6	5	17	
			Sales	1		Director	6		Contact	0	0	4	
						CXO	1		Contact	0	0	3	
						VP	12		Contact	0	0	2	
									Contact	0	0	2	
									Contact	0	0	0	
									Contact	0	0	0	

Recent Engagements

SCORE	DATE	TOUCH/CAMPAIGN	TYPE	CHANNEL	WHO	DETAILS
1.0	2020-09-23	Email Response - Accepted: DEMO	Sales Outrea...	Organic Search		Salesforce: Status: Completed
2.0	2020-09-21	Email Response - RE: NEXT STEP: CaliberMi...	Sales Outrea...	Organic Search		Salesforce: Status: Completed
3.0	2020-09-21	Email Response - RE: NEXT STEP: CaliberMi...	Sales Outrea...	Organic Search		Salesforce: Status: Completed
4.0	2020-09-18	Email Response - RE: NEXT STEP: CaliberMi...	Sales Outrea...	Organic Search		Salesforce: Status: Completed
5.0	2020-09-08	Email Response - RE: NEXT STEP: CaliberMi...	Sales Outrea...	Organic Search		Salesforce: Status: Completed
6.0	2020-08-20	Email Response - Accepted: Updated invitati...	Sales Outrea...	Organic Search		Salesforce: Status: Completed

Even though no one has interacted with CM Incorporated on social media, filled out a form, or attended an in-person event, there are promising signals. Multiple people in marketing are engaged, including the VP of Marketing and a Marketing Analyst. We haven't seen ops yet, but someone in information technology has been crawling around the page.



The salesperson decides to reach out to the VP of marketing with helpful information they might like. They know that videos and case studies will probably land well, so he tailors a few messages and examples that closely align with this new account's profile.

Lo and behold, one month after MQA status, an opportunity is created:



SCENARIO 2

We have a lone wolf at CM Incorporated. He doesn't play by the rules and relies on his instincts. Many times, these instincts are pretty on point.

Unfortunately, his key, quota busting sale for Q3 didn't pass muster.

While the marketing analyst and marketing ops person at the purchasing account assure our salesperson the deal is closing, the CMO hasn't hit CM's content. Not once. And no one from IT has either.

Sorry, friend. Maybe next quarter—after you help your marketing ops person socialize content with the right decision-makers.



More Real-World Applications

Targeting

Do you cringe when you hear the words “target accounts”?

If not, you haven’t sat in the meetings we have. Watching sales and marketing argue over the perfect customer profile is painful. Participating on either side of the argument is a nightmare.

Now we have an easy button.

When you have MQA, the ideal customer profile gets clearer. You’ll know what kind of accounts and who should be involved in the sale when. You’ll even get to see what kind of content each persona prefers.

MQA is like chocolate maple bacon—three flavors you didn’t know you had to have in a single bite.

Identifying Likely Lost Opportunities

Remember scenario two from our CM Incorporated example?

Yeah, that was sad for the lone wolf. But the sooner sales management—and marketing—can identify revenue risk, the faster they can do something to correct the course for the quarter.

If you know what a primed account looks like, you can experiment with activities to push people to the ideal next action, which means more pipeline, faster.

Adjusting—and Measuring—Campaign Impact

Speaking of the next best action, how about measuring the number of MQAs associated with a campaign to determine whether you chose the right strategy? You can even slice and dice to figure out whether a campaign only works with a specific use case or product set.

Marketing is simply better with the MQA, and we’re excited to share it with you.



Did You Enjoy This Guide?

If so, we have more cutting-edge analytics strategies to check out:

The Ultimate Guide to Chain-Based Attribution

Only 1 in 4 marketers is highly confident they can quantify ROI. So, we did something about it... and outlined a new machine learning approach to attribution and ROI in this tell-all guide.

[LEARN MORE](#)



Unlock Marketing's Contribution with Chain-Based Insights

Marketing executives are reimagining how they think about marketing programs and their team's contribution to revenue. See how companies are finally unlocking their buyer journey with Chain-Based Insights.

[LEARN MORE](#)



If you like to geek out on the latest in marketing analytics,
join our MasterOps Community.

We're a group of people who believe in sharing knowledge
because it makes everyone a little bit better.

If that doesn't give you the feels, we don't know what will.

Welcome to MasterOps

The MasterOps mission? To ensure that marketing ops has a vibrant community they can lean into. Because confronting the challenges of modern marketing and revenue operations can be daunting. Let's make sure it's not. Together.

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CaliberMind is a Customer Data Platform —
built for B2B revenue marketers that use
data, analytics, and automation — to grow
revenue faster — together with sales.

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