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# SUPERCHARGE THE TOP OF YOUR FUNNEL

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## Supercharge the Top of Your Funnel with Quality Data and Analytics

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It's clear that the marketer who best analyzes internal and external data points to predict where, when and how to engage a customer or prospect will win out in his or her efforts. That's why the future of predictive analytics seems so bright with over \$200 million being invested by the venture community in just the past twelve months.

That's the high-level big picture, but digging down into the tactical trenches, how can predictive analytics improve top of funnel activity? From my perspective, there are a few opportunities that companies might consider in order to optimize the process. For those of us who believe that predictive analytics is the future of marketing, however, we still have to admit that success is heavily dependent upon accurate and complete data. Although, in marketing, data has historically been a thorn in the side.

First, let's take a step back in time to the early 2000s when marketers ran prospecting email campaigns with publishers. It was a challenge, then, to entice the prospect to click and ultimately submit a desired form. It required multiple touches to drive lead volume, but on the flip side, it instilled discipline and rewarded [great copy and creativity](#). In time, the publisher's opt-in audience fatigued, resulting in weak returns.

This created a new opportunity which was quickly addressed by the crowd-sourced data model. It debunked email address rental and offered contact email addresses for perpetual use. Based on ease of access, sales and marketing systems were flooded with contacts of questionable quality. It wasn't uncommon to end up with hundreds of contacts tied to a single account. To make matters worse, if you took the time to manually review these contacts, you'd find that a good percentage were completely fictitious. This was the "ugly little secret" of the crowd-sourced model. This problem was further compounded as the data aged, leaving the marketer to lose even more confidence.

This scenario presented the perfect backdrop for predictive analytics to enter the stage. The predictive approach seeks to identify contacts with characteristics of a potential buyer (i.e. look-a-likes) beyond simple demographics and firmographics. Where marketers lost confidence in lists, predictive analytics provided models for behaviors and attributes which could provide for much more accurate and relevant targeting. In understanding this history of data in marketing, however, we see a cycle of dependence as marketers who initially trusted in their data lost that trust, replaced that trust in predictive models, and, if predictive models don't perform as expected, that trust may also be lost again moving forward. We see indicators that improvement is needed as [Aberdeen cites](#) that only 47% of lead scoring practitioners

report that they are executing lead scoring at an effective or very effective level. Of course, this all comes to a head in top-funnel marketing performance, so I recommend the following...

First, closely review your initial contact data in the context of what a given model is analyzing and scoring.

If the model pinpoints two or three data points to be significant (i.e. predictive), then you should seek to understand the coverage of those data points within your own data set and the audience being scored – as the two are not always the same. This will also help to ensure that the model is being applied to an accurate and complete contact universe. Additionally, with confidence in your model's output, you can expand your efforts to target all accessible contacts that fall within your ideal audience profile (i.e. buyer committee).

In tandem, I also recommend running a Contact Gap Analysis to understand the contacts you have and the ones missing at each account based on the ideal audience profile. The gap results provide the blueprint to focus contact discovery on closing the most important “gaps” first (e.g. account and job title combinations). Finding those key contacts requires a diversified approach that includes multiple data sources coupled with the web and social media discovery.

In my experience, the battle will be won by organizations that effectively map their ideal audience profile and then best utilize marketing automation and content to [identify opportunities](#), close deals, and retain customers.

For more information on data and analytics, particularly as they pertain to lead scoring, download Aberdeen's free report, [Lead Scoring: The Fundamentals & Factors in Best-in-Class Programs](#).

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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##### About the Author

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