UNGATE
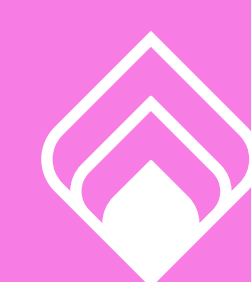
MOVE INTO THE FUTURE OF CONTENT

Unleash your content,
the ungated experience
is here.

QUALIFIED

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Foreword

Imagine two banks offer you a loan. One demands your credit score and an invasive background check. The other does not. Which do you apply to first?

Or, consider two companies trying to recruit you. One asks you to compile your dated job history and complete a pages-long application. The other simply wants to chat. To which do you reply first?

Or, think about this. Two vendors write a guide to help you do your job better. One won't let you read it until you surrender your phone number, email address, and the company you work for. The other offers their guide freely–no strings attached. Which do you read?

You understand where we're going with this, and why the book you're reading is itself not locked away behind a form or "gate." Instead, it's gate-free and available to anyone looking to step into the modern marketing world.

The buying journey has changed. Buyers have turned against any form of the gate, and as we argue in this book, so should you. We explore the forces that have led the industry here and present a (hopefully) persuasive argument for rethinking everything you know about the value of buying friction–and why it's finally time to give up the gate on your website.

From content to seller's calendar availability, buyers want information right when they're on the site–and you should be serving it up to them.

What You'll Learn in this Book

In this book, you'll learn how to ditch the antiquated marketing form, while still collecting the information your team needs to create the buyer journey your customers actually want.

You'll learn about:

◆ The history of forms, where they came from and why they still stick around, despite being outdated.

◆ How shifting buyer expectations impact marketing and sales team strategies.

◆ How to ensure your buyer is the one benefiting from your content and experience on your website, not just you and your teams.

◆ Why giving up the gate actually earns your buyer's trust.

◆ How the Pipeline Cloud helps you keep generating leads and growing pipeline without forcing buyers through unnecessary hoops.

1

HOW FORMS CAME INTO FASHION

Marketers have a long history of introducing friction into the buying journey. They're also the only ones who can remove it.

A few years ago, 77% of respondents told Gartner that B2B buying had grown more difficult. But in reality, it has been difficult for a very long time. And marketers have often increased the difficulty of buying when it served a purpose.[1]

In marketing, a gate is something that creates difficulty for the buyer, but makes things easier for the seller. Gates are common, and web forms are perhaps the most common format. They have been slowing down purchases since the emergence of the graphical internet, around 1992.
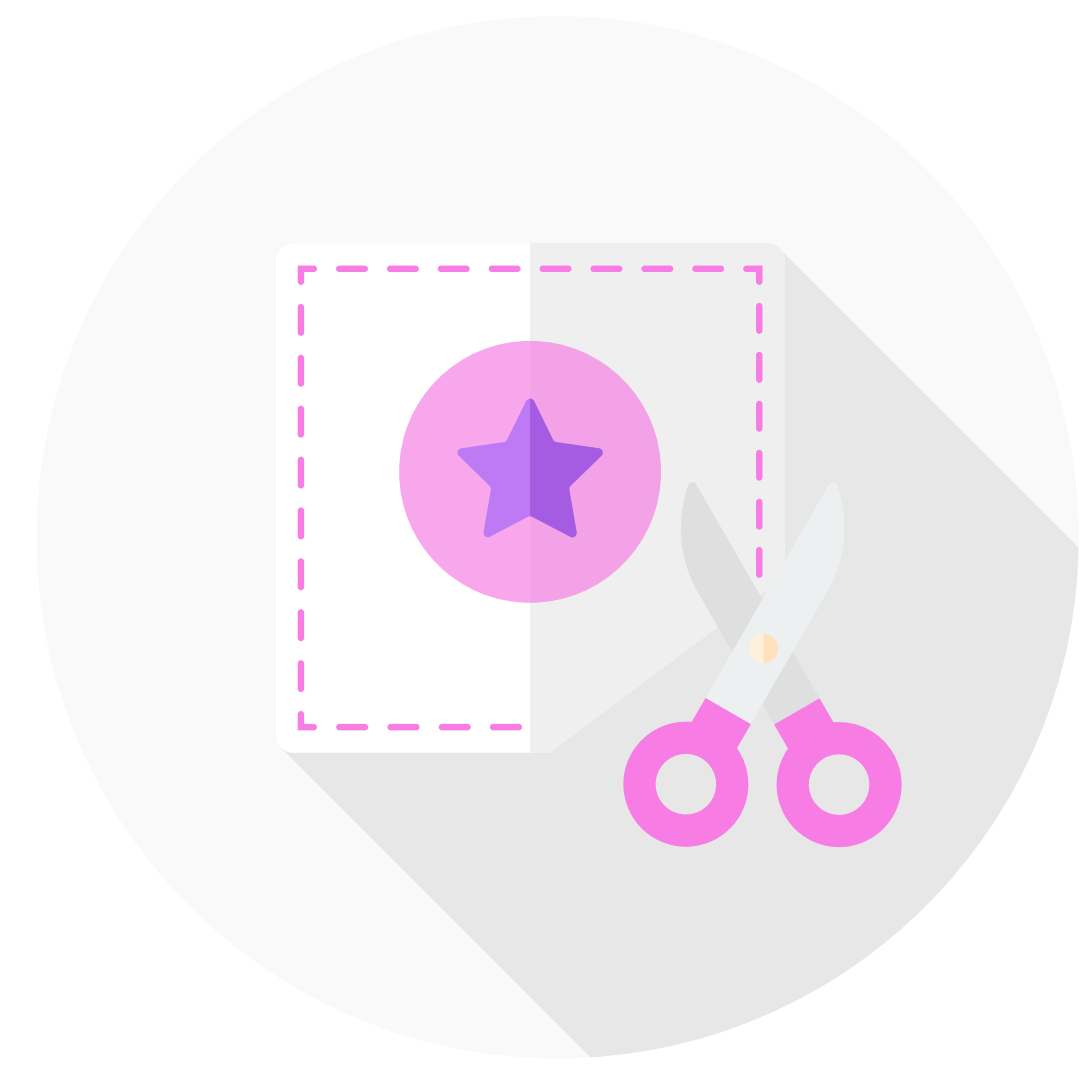
Common types of marketing friction
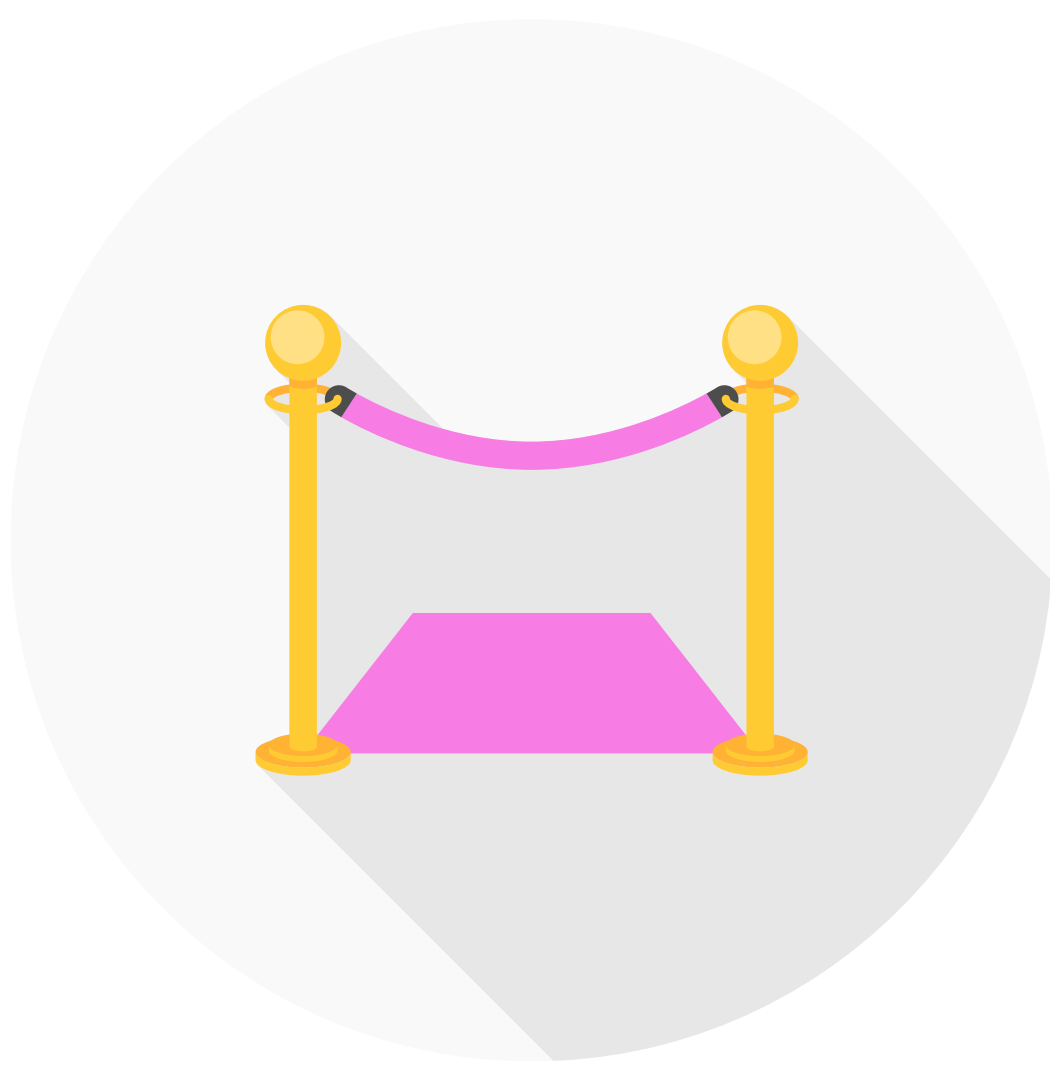
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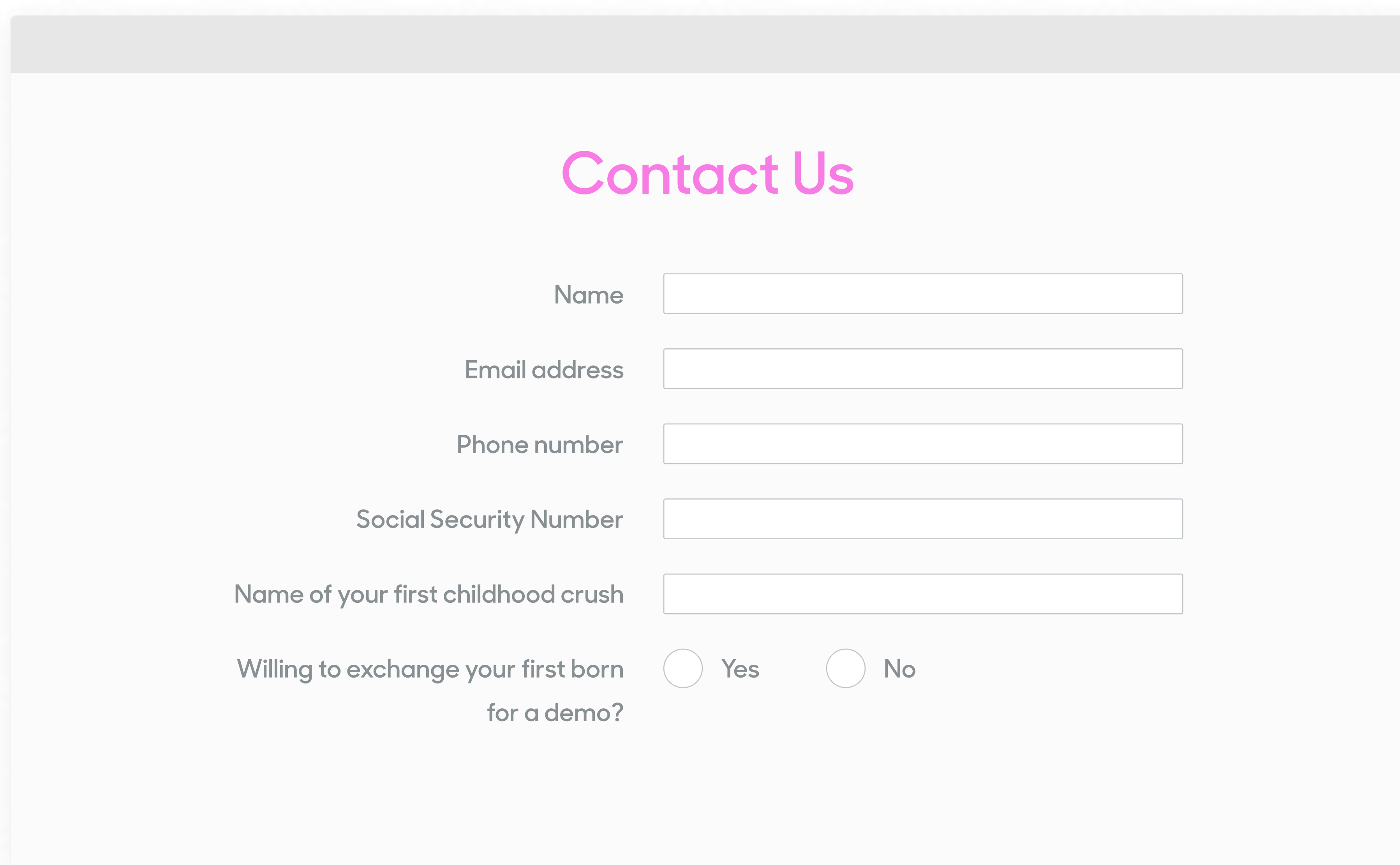
Timed releases

Coupons

Membership clubs

Sweepstakes

Newsletter signups

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1 Gartner https://www.gartner.com/en/sales/insights/b2b-buying-journey

In the 90s, most website contact pages and ads simply listed the business' phone number. But that presented a problem. Most landline phones (remember those?) didn't tell you who was calling. So if someone called, the only way that business would know who they were was to ask. To attribute that call back to the website, the salesperson would either have to ask about that too, or, place a coupon code online. To gather more of that data and produce lists they could market to, early internet entrepreneurs invented forms that were mere digital copies of the type found in catalogs and magazines.

Contact Us

Name	
Email address	
Phone number	
Social Security Number	
Name of your first childhood crush	
Willing to exchange your first born for a demo?	◯ Yes ◯ No

These new, digital forms created work for buyers. But in trade, marketers and salespeople now knew who their buyers were. Unless of course people used phony contact information, which is why marketers also began demanding double validation—asking someone to confirm that they'd received the email or call, to prove the contact method they provided was real.

Verification expanded the outreach process from one step to three. It was much more work for customers than a simple phone call, and introduced a delay, but it produced lists. And it worked, for a little while. Today, nearly every B2B organization pushes their entire pipeline through these forms, which result in long delays in sales cycles and endlessly aggravate buyers. These forms simply haven't kept up with the instant communication expectations that we have in every other facet of life.

CHAPTER 1 RECAP

Forms were necessary back in the 90s, but they haven't kept up with the modern communication needs of today's buyers.

2

BUYERS EXPECT SPEED, PRIVACY, AND EASE

Today's buyers expect quick answers to questions the moment those questions arise. Much has already been written about the "consumerization" of B2B, but it's now a fact of life.

Consumers look to their personal lives for comparison. They don't compare your analytics against your competitors' analytics—they measure it against the simplicity of the fitness app on their iPhone. They don't judge your customer service by the support of other B2Bs—they judge it against the cookie they receive upon each visit to the Hilton DoubleTree.[2]

And when they Google a question and are led to your website, they expect to find an answer, quickly. This puts them squarely at odds with the web form as envisioned in the 90s, which demands they fill in their information and… wait. Or fill in their information when they'd rather not, and be pestered.

The three forces all but guarantee that their preferences and what B2B offers will continue to diverge:

1. **Buyers want things on-demand:** Buyers are accustomed to instantaneous answers and streaming content. They want their B2B content in a similar format that's just as easy to consume. When they read a white paper, they now expect it to also entertain. When they have a question, a reported 82% of buyers expect an immediate response.[3]

2. **Buyers demand privacy and quid pro quo:** Consumers expect to fully understand how you'll use their data, and are hesitant to provide it unless the value is clear to them. Only 32% of buyers accept all cookies when presented with a GDPR banner.[4]

2 Gartner https://www.gartner.com/en/sales/insights/b2b-buying-journey
3 HubSpot https://blog.hubspot.com/sales/live-chat-go-to-market-flaw
4 Statista https://www.statista.com/statistics/989896/users-consent-in-advertising-tracking/

3. **Buyers expect to use their preferred mode of communication:** Buyers want to engage over their most preferred channels, whatever those happen to be at the moment. They'll settle for self-help or a chatbot if that actually helps, but generally, want to talk to a knowledgeable human. This presents businesses with a dilemma. 43% percent of buyers prefer not to interact with a salesperson at all.[5] Yet 76% who want to talk to one want to talk to one immediately.[6] And buyers often flip flop.
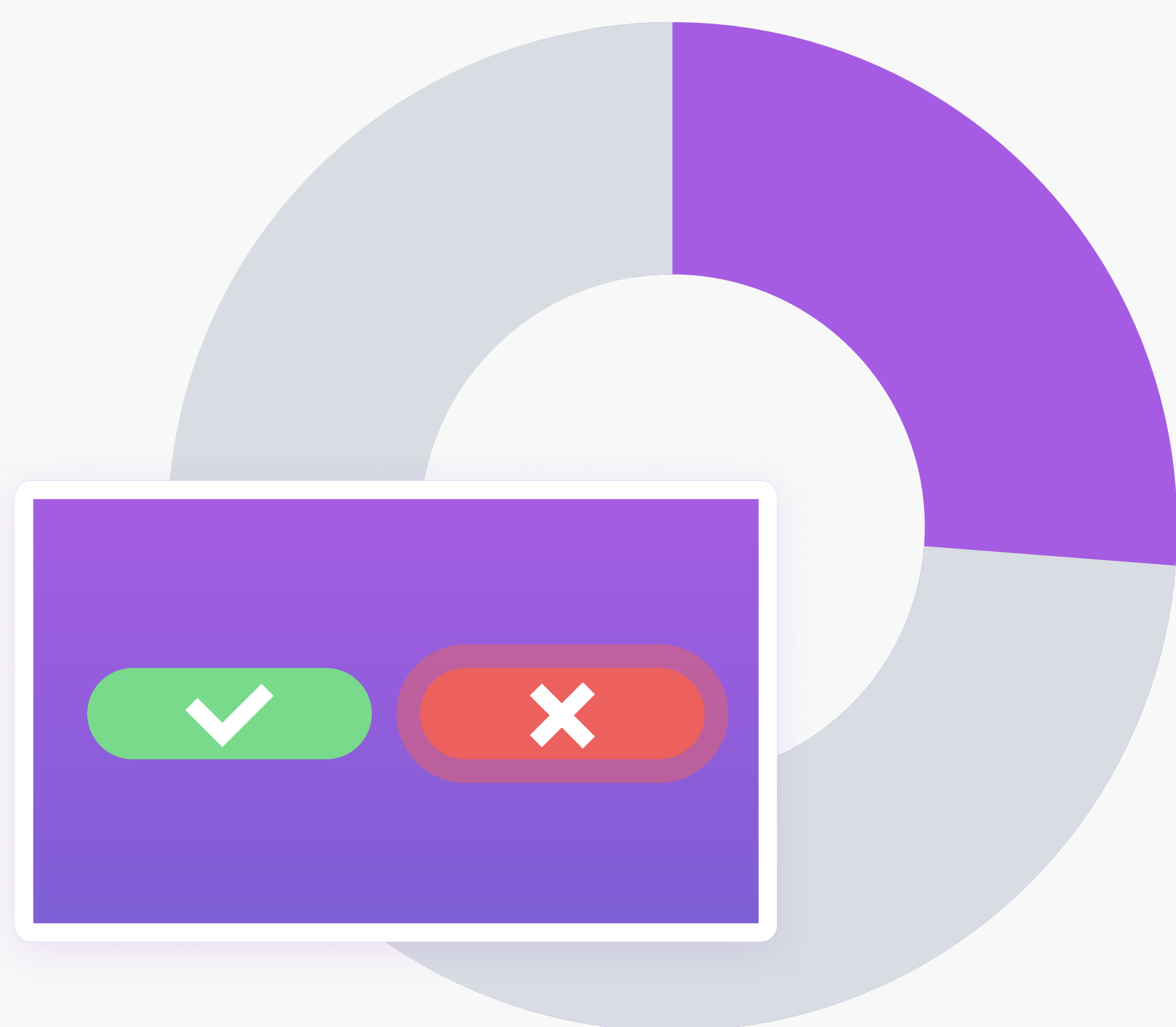
Only 32% of buyers accept all cookies when presented with a GDPR banner.[4]

All this means is that your buyer is now comparing your content to Netflix, browsing in Incognito mode, and will talk to your chatbot, but may want to talk to a person at a moment's notice. In sum, they want B2B to feel more like a just-in-time, on-demand experience. And the question becomes, how will you respond?

5 Gartner https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/gartner-says-b2b-sales-organizations-need-to-give-customers-a-se

6 MyCustomer https://www.mycustomer.com/sales/sales-performance/dont-believe-the-myth-b2b-customers-want-to-speak-with-salespeople-earlier

Buyers want B2B to feel more like streaming from the couch.

More and more companies are launching streaming B2B networks.

CHAPTER 2 RECAP

Successful modern marketers need to deliver on the buyer's expectations of on-demand content, clear intentions with their data, and human-centric communication. Burying your team behind gates drives buyers away.

3

CHAPTER

WHO BENEFITS FROM A GATED CONTENT AND WEBSITE EXPERIENCE?

We already know the form is outdated, but why has it endured all these years? Gating your website serves only one side of the marketer/buyer relationship—and it isn't the buyer.

One of the biggest shifts in buyer behavior is the Content Revolution. Marketing teams are pumping out blogs, books, webinars, you name it, and they're doing it at a breakneck speed, but the distribution methods have to keep up with changing buyer expectations.

According to Scoop.it, 80% of B2B content is locked away behind a gate. That's the overwhelming majority of content online, hidden behind forms that only 2% of website visitors will actually fill out.

Yes, calculating your ROI on your content creation is much easier when you're collecting contact information in exchange for it, but is this the most critical metric when it comes to the value of your content?

Or is true value derived from removing barriers to thoughtful, useful content that educates, inspires, and motivates your target buyer?

It's time for our ideas around how content ROI is measured to shift. It's no longer working to dump Contacts into an automated email nurture series—buyers want to do their own research, engage with relevant content made just for them, and approach your sales team when they feel like they know what they want.

We sat down as a team a few years ago and asked ourselves this same question: who is gated content really for? Our buyers or us?

We defined what we loved about content marketing, and what we hated about the traditional content marketing model, and came up with a list of all the things we liked and disliked about engaging with B2B content.

Google-friendly content: SEO is the name of the game, so it's critical that Google can crawl, index, and rank your page.

Ability to download a PDF: The PDF format looks nice, plus some readers will want the ability to download a PDF and forward it to a colleague.

Ability to request content via email: Some readers will want to be able to find the piece of content in their inbox later on.
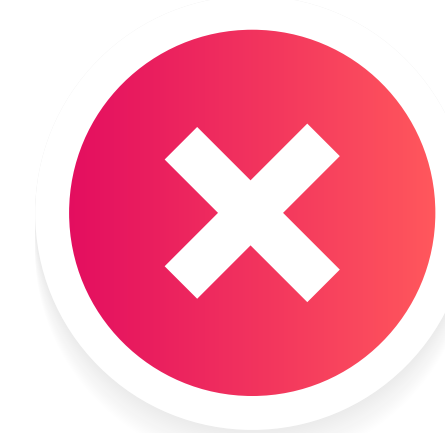
Gate-to-read mentality: Most companies required that you provide your email address before you could access the content. We didn't like handing over our information without seeing the finished product, or we opted to give fake info.

Hosted on different website domain: Some websites led you to completely different landing pages outside of their main site, which was a disjointed experience.

Non-conversational: There was no way to engage with a company via chat while reading their content.

After this exploration, the answer we found was Conversational Content Marketing–an ungated book, combined with the power of Qualified Conversations, giving our buyers the best possible experience while also generating leads from our custom chat experience. Read more about how this transformed our content strategy here.

CHAPTER 3 RECAP

It's time to ask ourselves if we're really measuring the value of our content through the right lenses. Buyer behavior has changed, it's time to meet their content needs differently.

4

UNGATE YOUR CONTENT, UNGATE YOUR MINDSET

Ungating your buyer experience is a two-step process–and the first step is the hardest. It's time to start giving away your content freely, and without forms as barriers. Successfully ungating your content requires a few shifts in your overall content strategy:

You have to produce meaningful content with valuable insights.

When you hide your content behind a form, the exclusivity does create a certain sense of demand for a small percentage of buyers. There's a sense of mystery, and maybe even a little taste of sunk cost fallacy by the time they actually download your PDF, regardless of what the payoff is in the end. This makes your content seem meaningful on the backend, but when it hits a wider audience, that tune can change fast.

Openly offering your content means it has to be valuable from the jump, and engage readers all the way through. You have to optimize for engagement, not downloads, which results in stronger, more impactful content that buyers actually want to read start to finish.

You have to stop thinking in terms of leads and MQLS.

Traditional marketing metrics have been on their way out for awhile now–and it's because they don't accurately account for shifting buyer behavior and content strategies. Ungating your content will allow for more people to consume it than before, changing how buyers interact with your website. This is incredible for your brand awareness and trust, but it makes attribution tricky.

Leads and MQLS are no longer possible to capture when your content is freely distributed, so you have to shift your focus to KPIs that hold your marketing team accountable without losing the major impact ungating your content will have.

Shifting your focus to measuring other indicators can be scary for B2B teams at first. Sourced pipeline and revenue aren't nearly as easy to measure as MQL conversion. But the added complexity in showing ROI on your content shouldn't deter you.

Measure your content's actual consumption instead:

Scroll depth: How far are users actually getting into your content? Where are they dropping off? This will help shape your content creation and show you where you're losing people.
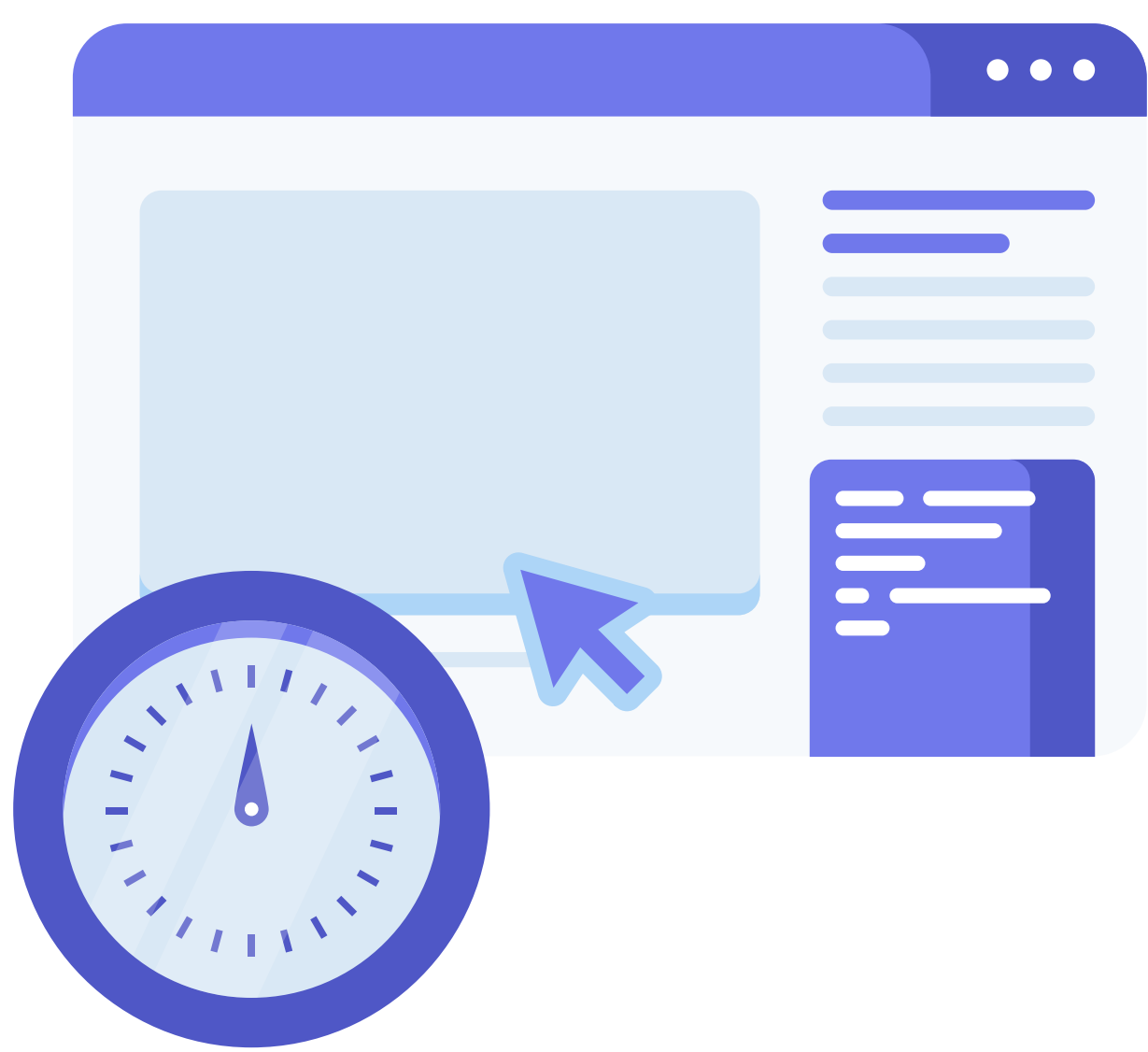
Time on page: Be smart about how you measure this. Are you asking users to download a PDF? Because that takes just seconds. A blog post and a PDF will have totally different read times. Use this to identify if people are actually reading your content, or if they bounce to somewhere more valuable.

Page traffic: It seems obvious because it is. Are people actually coming to your content? This is where you can dive into SEO optimization, without a gate, your content can be indexed by search engines–a key factor to getting in front of new customers.

It boils down to this: **if companies have never heard of you, they can't buy from you.** Ungating your content gets you in front of more eyes, at more companies, and if you're creating engaging and educational content that actually matters, the buyers will follow.

You have to rethink your distribution strategy.

Removing the gate means you can serve up your content in new channels–rethinking how you distribute content is imperative to successfully ungating it. Instead of a form-based email nurture campaign, you'll be placing your content natively in social media channels, or creating video and podcast content that lives on Youtube, or creating a company-wide strategy to bolster your LinkedIn following and engagement.

But there's one channel that you *have* to get right: Sales.

Your sales team is one of your biggest levers to pull as you ungate your content. Instead of generic email templates and cold calling, you have the opportunity to arm your sales team with ungated content that actually engages buyers to skillfully deploy as they need it. Case studies, blog articles, podcast episodes–all of these are great ways to help your sales team create personalized and unique buyer journeys.

Ungating your content isn't just a marketing strategy–
it's a sales strategy.

CHAPTER 4 RECAP

Ungating your content is the first step to creating an ungated buyer experience–but it comes with a huge mindset shift. Once you set the proper expectations for yourself and your team, you're ready to drop the content gate.

5 CHAPTER

UNGATING YOUR WEBSITE WITH THE FULL PIPELINE CLOUD APPROACH

Once you've decided to ungate your content, the next step is to carry it through to your entire website experience, and your sales team, by leveraging the power of the Salesforce-connected website.

This is the exciting part for you: ungating your website is an opportunity. By replacing your painful three step forms with a pipeline generation platform, you can start to offer the experience buyers want. And rather than dropping them into a lengthy, generic nurture, or forcing them to wait 42 hours for a response, you can answer their questions in the moment.

How does the right salesperson on your team know to be there in the chat and ready for them? That rep got an alert the second a buyer landed, or even before, when the prospect clicked an ad. This is only possible with intent data, which is a big part of why forms are so irrelevant.[7]

Intent data on visitors upon arrival:
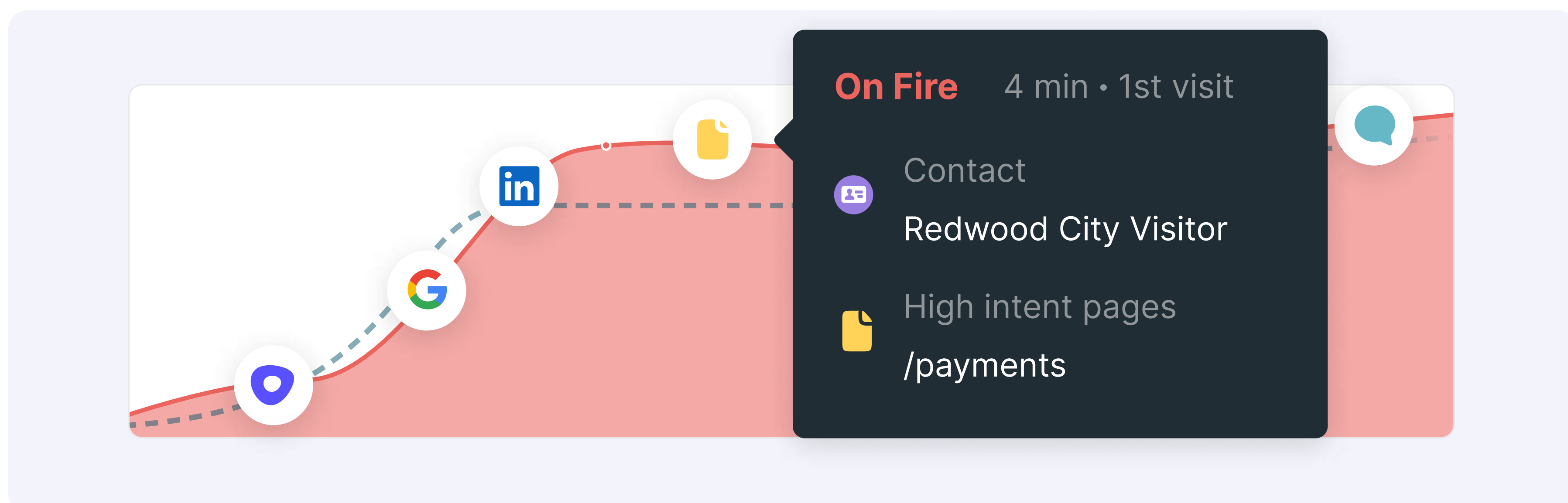
In the 1990s, companies had no way of knowing who was browsing their website. Today, intent data gives you that intel without requiring them to fill out a form, or accept cookies. If you already have permission to have their data, your system recognizes them upon arrival. If it doesn't, the chatbot can "wave" at them, get them to engage, and give them an opportunity to share information in return for a better buying experience.

[7] Qualified https://www.qualified.com/signals

If that buyer wants to chat with a salesperson, that salesperson is just one click away from a live chat, voice call, or even video call, all without leaving the website. Real, human connection is easier than ever for both the buyer and the sales representative.

Suddenly, your website has become a place where buyers can drop by for a brief, pressure-free chat with their account manager, not just a random respondent. Your most engaged leads have a way of skipping the wait, and that accelerates your pipeline—they convert then and there.

It provides value in a way forms never could, in a way that's on-demand, privacy safe, and easy. And it can power the rest of your pipeline activities.

| Real-time conversations | Outbound outreach | Advertising campaigns | Buyer intent data |
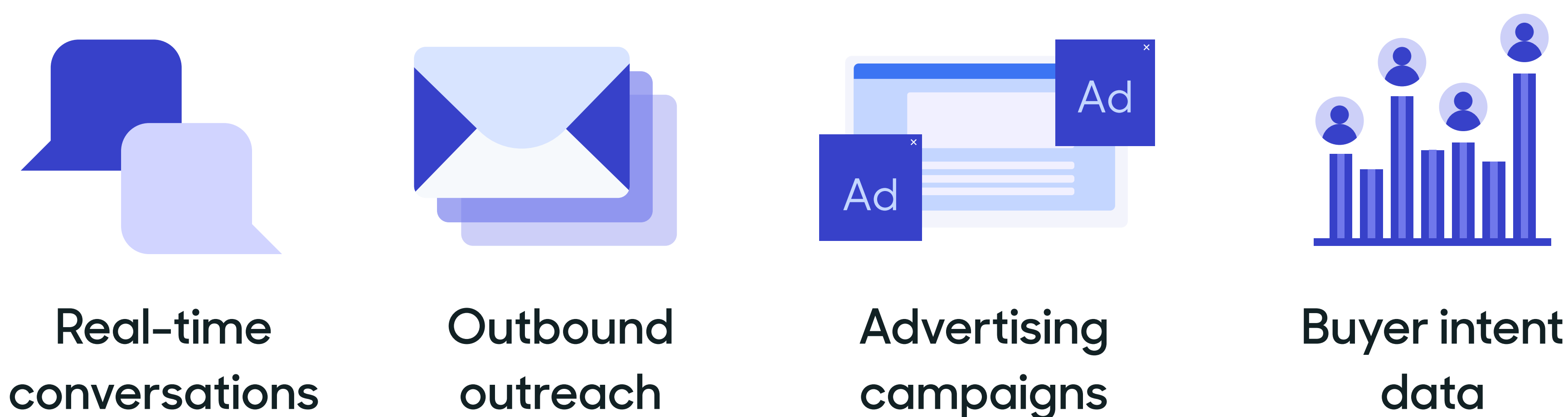
Real-time conversations: Your sales team can capitalize on website traffic–from ads, outbound, and more–with real-time conversations on your website. And if your reps are offline, buyers can schedule a meeting in just a single click.

Outbound outreach: With advance insight, your sales team can send tailored, timely sales outreach, which drives buyers to the website.

Advertising campaigns: Your team can use that data to run personalized ads across Google, LinkedIn, and more, driving more traffic to your website.

Buyer intent data: As prospects research online, on and off your site, Qualified gathers intent data.

In this strategy, Qualified provides several tools to help:
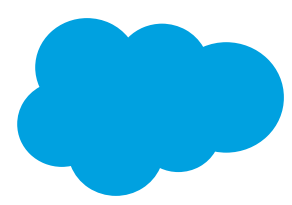
Salesforce-connected website is the foundation to the full Pipeline Cloud motion. When you connect your website, you supercharge it with all the data from your Salesforce instance, getting crystal-clear insights into each visitor on your site.

Qualified Conversations allows your team to see who's on your site right now, and enables your reps to quickly prioritize VIPs. Sellers can automatically segment visitors into categories like target accounts, company size, or industry then fast-track them for a conversation with chat, voice, and video in real time.

Qualified Meetings generates more meetings from the corporate website by giving qualified buyers a direct path to sales. With a single click, buyers can schedule a future meeting and sales reps automatically receive appointments with accounts that fit their ideal customer profiles.

Qualified for Outbound gives your outbound teams the tools they need to craft hyper-personalized messaging that converts. These targeting strategies lead to more engaged buyers, converting visitors with timely, contextual conversations the moment they arrive to your site.
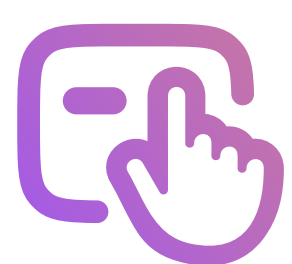
Qualified for Advertising allows your marketing teams to segment audiences and create targeted ads to stay top of mind for the accounts that show the highest interest in your product, ensuring your team can engage buyers with relevant conversations as they click through to your website, generating more pipeline.

Qualified Signals connects first-party website activity and third-party research intent data with Salesforce data to tell your sellers which accounts are demonstrating buying intent—helping them prioritize their prospecting efforts and crush their quota.

See it in action

When Adecco, a global HR solutions company, dropped forms from their site in favor of human-centric conversational marketing with the Pipeline Cloud, they saw a 46,000% ROI when they generated $57.7M in pipeline and $24.4M in revenue. Prior, they saw such low interaction with their forms and gated content, they weren't even measuring their impact.

"

Qualified is a way to have human contact through technology versus putting technology between us and our customers. That's what made Qualified stand out.

Melissa Robinson Phillips,
Head of Marketing

Adecco

You have to rethink your distribution strategy.

Buyers find web forms painful, slow, ineffective, and deceptive—not to mention retro, and not in the fun, kitschy way. They are space junk left over from the early days of Web 2.0 when dialing the internet made a noise, and buyers had few options.

Imagine two banks offer you a loan, but one doesn't require a credit check. Imagine two companies are trying to recruit you, but one doesn't ask you to complete an application. Imagine two vendors are trying to offer you a guide, but one says here, take it, it's free. Which do you choose? And which do you trust?

Forms are defunct and it's time we all gave up the gate.

Give up the gate with Qualified

Faster pipeline and happier buyers await.

CHAT WITH A SALESPERSON

Meet Qualified

The leading pipeline generation platform for Salesforce, designed to help you engage and convert your target buyers.

Trusted by the world's leading brands

Matterport™ · dremio · braze · KORN FERRY

poly · talkdesk® · talend · VERITAS™

Sendoso · bitly · vmware® · HashiCorp

sodexo · Staffbase · Gamma · DEMANDBASE

The trusted enterprise platform

SOC 2 CERTIFIED · GDPR COMPLIANT · ISV CERTIFIED · 99.99% UP TIME

QUALIFIED