SALES CAPTAIN × lemlist

How to Run ABM Campaigns & Close Enterprise Clients with Signals

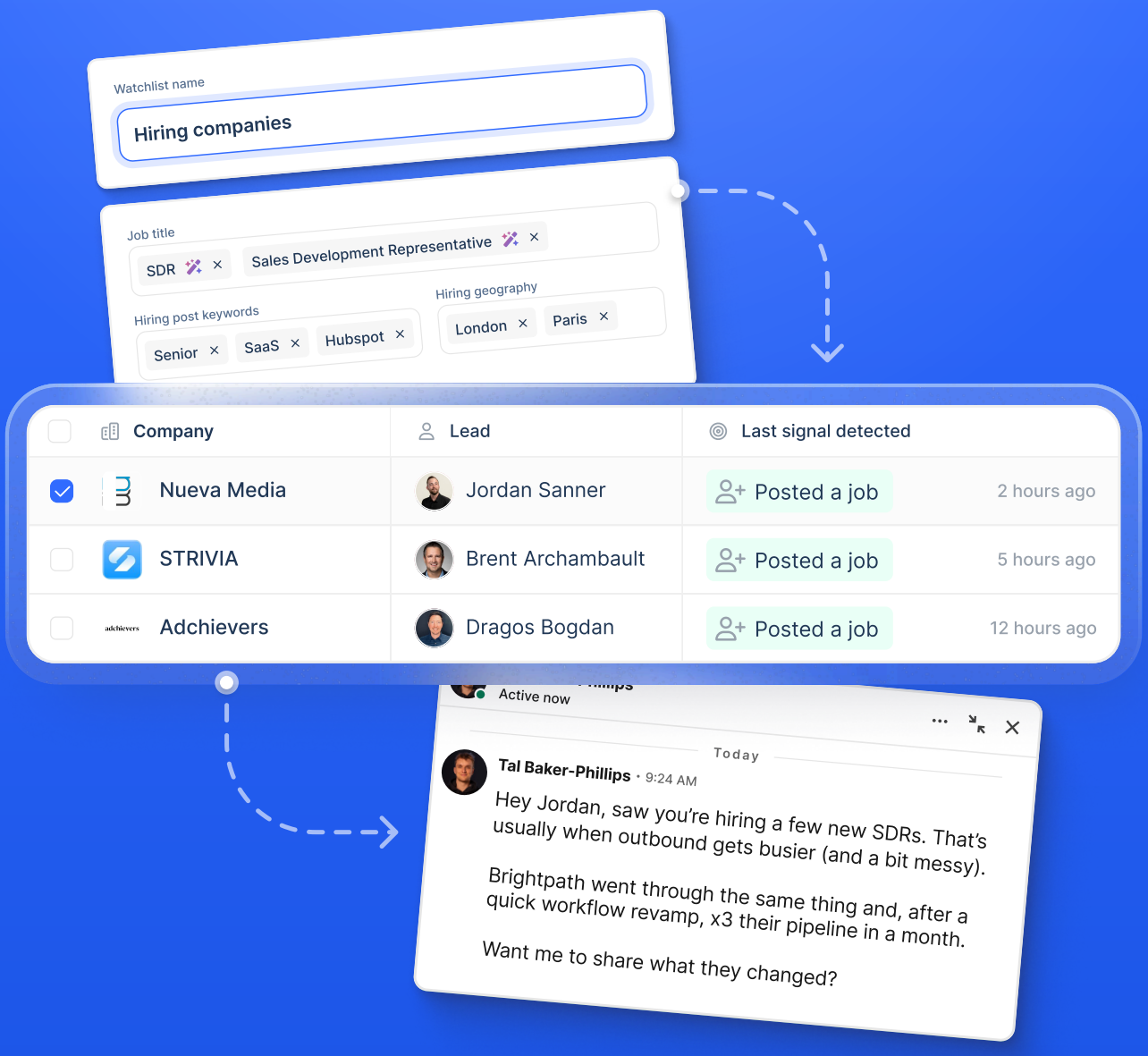


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Why Read This Playbook

About the Author

SalesCaptain is the #1 lemlist Partner Globally and is also ranked as the #1 GTM & Outbound agency by Clutch.

The team has worked with Nestlé, GlossGenius, and dozens of high-growth SaaS companies across the US and EU.

In this playbook, they explain how they operationalize intent signals to enable lean teams to run campaigns that close enterprise clients without wasting months of effort.

This playbook gives you a step-by-step framework to run intent-driven ABM campaigns that will help you:

- Reach buyers sooner by spotting when accounts are actually in-market.
- Boost reply rates with contextual messaging tied to real signals.
- Shorten sales cycles by engaging when urgency is highest.
- Build a repeatable system (Signal → Score → Sequence) that converts signals into revenue.

Many ABM programs never reach this point. They die before the first email is sent, because the "target list" is just a wishlist of logos.

This guide shows you how to fix that with intent-driven campaigns powered by lemlist's new prospection features. You'll learn:

- Which signals matter most (and how to prioritize them).
- How to score and tier accounts with real examples.
- What to do (and not do) when activating outreach.
- Benchmarks from live campaigns run by SalesCaptain & lemlist.

What are Intent Signals and Why They Matter

Account-Based Marketing (ABM) is the gold standard for winning enterprise clients. The logic is sound: instead of spreading resources thin across thousands of accounts, ABM focuses effort on a carefully selected set of high-value companies.

Yet, despite its promise, many ABM programs underperform. Teams build campaigns around companies that look attractive on paper but show no evidence of being in-market. SDRs spend weeks chasing opportunities that will never materialize, while competitors win deals simply because they reached real buyers sooner.

This is where intent signals fundamentally change the game. By monitoring behavioral data that indicates purchase readiness, revenue teams can prioritize accounts that matter NOW, not six or twelve months from now.

Lemlist's new **intent-based prospection** feature is here to change how outbound teams operate. The results are consistent: more relevant outreach, higher conversion rates, and shorter sales cycles.

What Are Intent Signals?

Intent signals are behavioral clues that indicate whether a company or contact is in-market.

There are two main types:

- **Company-level signals:** hiring for key roles, funding rounds, technology adoption, traffic spikes, office expansions.
- **Contact-level signals:** LinkedIn activity, email engagement, job changes, content downloads.

lemlist's new feature begins with **company-level hiring signals** (e.g. "companies hiring SDRs or software engineers"), with more types of signals (funding, tech adoption, web visits) rolling out soon. Contact-level signals (like LinkedIn engagement) are also on the roadmap.

For **enterprise ABM**, company-level signals are especially critical:

- Buying committees involve multiple stakeholders, so monitoring the account is more predictive.
- Deals are long and costly, making misaligned prospecting expensive.
- Competition is fierce; signals give you the first-mover advantage.

How to Prioritize Intent Signals

But not all signals are equal. Here's how to think about prioritization:

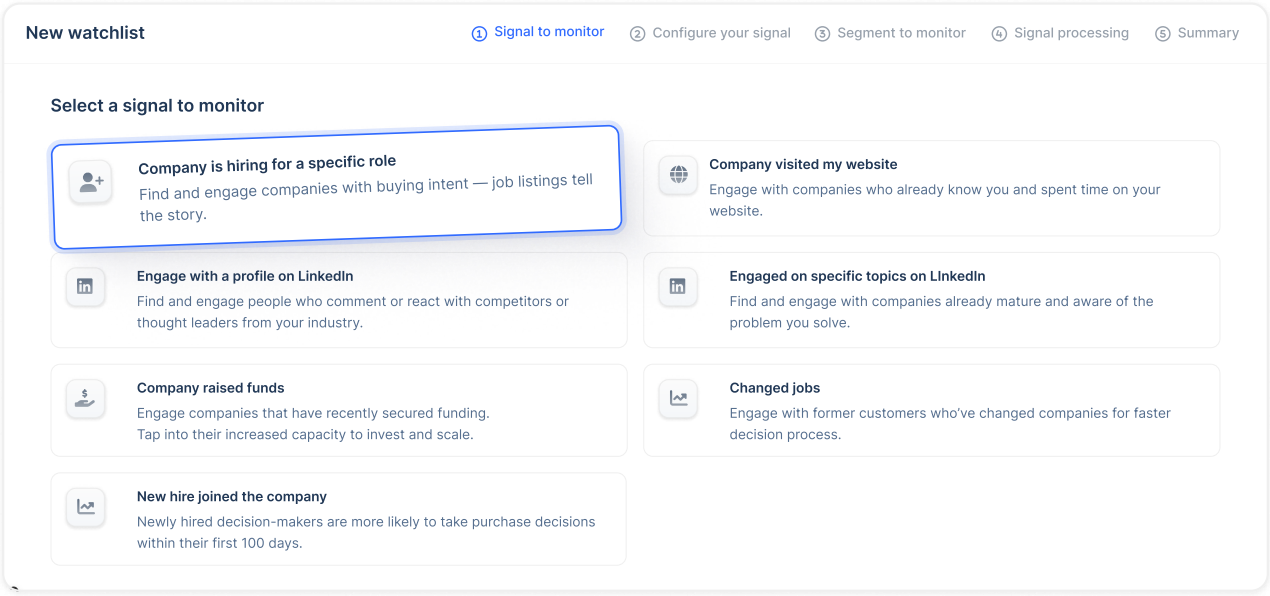
How to Prioritize Intent Signals

🏁 Signal	❓ Why it matters	💡 Best for
Hiring surges (e.g. 10+ SDR roles in 30 days)	Indicates growth and tooling needs (onboarding, enablement, infra).	Sales tech, onboarding tools, enablement SaaS.
Funding announcements	Fresh capital = budget + urgency to scale.	GTM platforms, hiring services, expansion plays.
Technology adoption / shifts	Signals an active project or tool change.	Integrations, competing vendors, add-ons.
Website visits on product pages	Shows direct interest in your category.	Retargeting + inbound-led outbound.
Executive hires	New leaders = budget authority + mandate to shake things up.	Strategic SaaS, consultants, change-management tools.

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The key is to stack multiple signals. A company hiring SDRs and announcing funding is far more valuable than one with only a single weak signal.

Setting Up Your Intent Signal Strategy

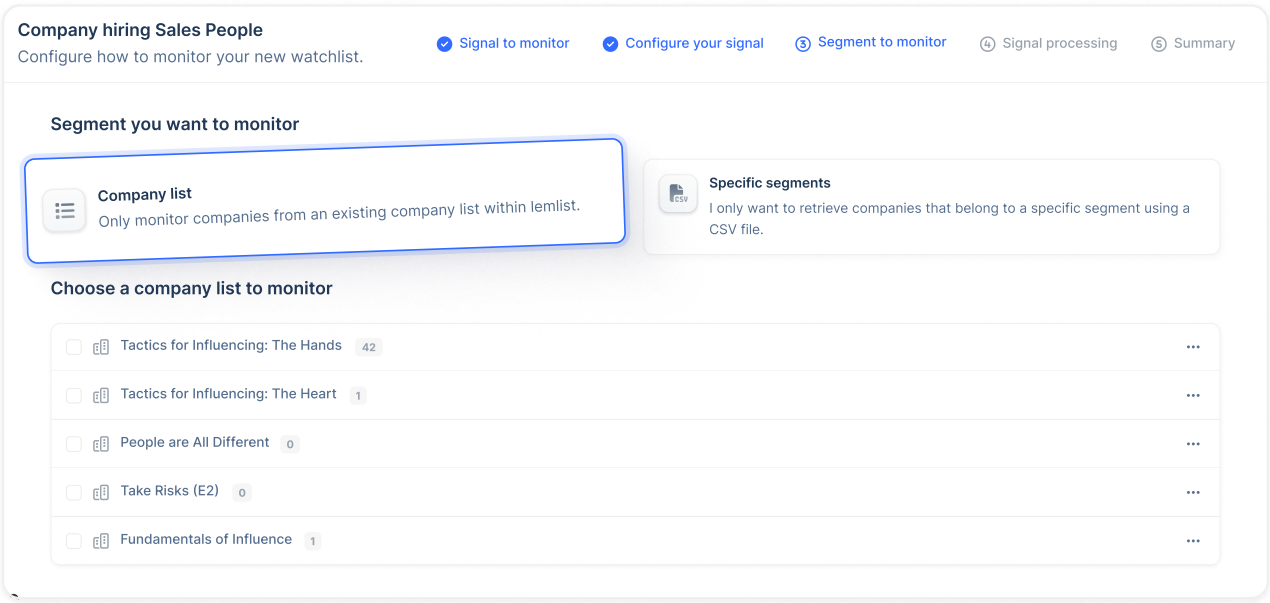


Implementing intent-driven ABM requires more than collecting data. It requires designing a system that turns signals into action. lemlist now makes this simple with a **five-step workflow**:

Step 1: Define Your ICP and Buying Committee

Begin with clarity on who you want to reach. Strong ABM strategies rely on clustered ICPs (groups of accounts with similar challenges) rather than overly broad definitions like "all SaaS companies over $100M."

Equally important is mapping the buying committee. Lemlist allows you to monitor companies as a whole, then drill into decision-makers once a signal is triggered. This ensures you focus not just on job titles, but on the roles that actually matter.

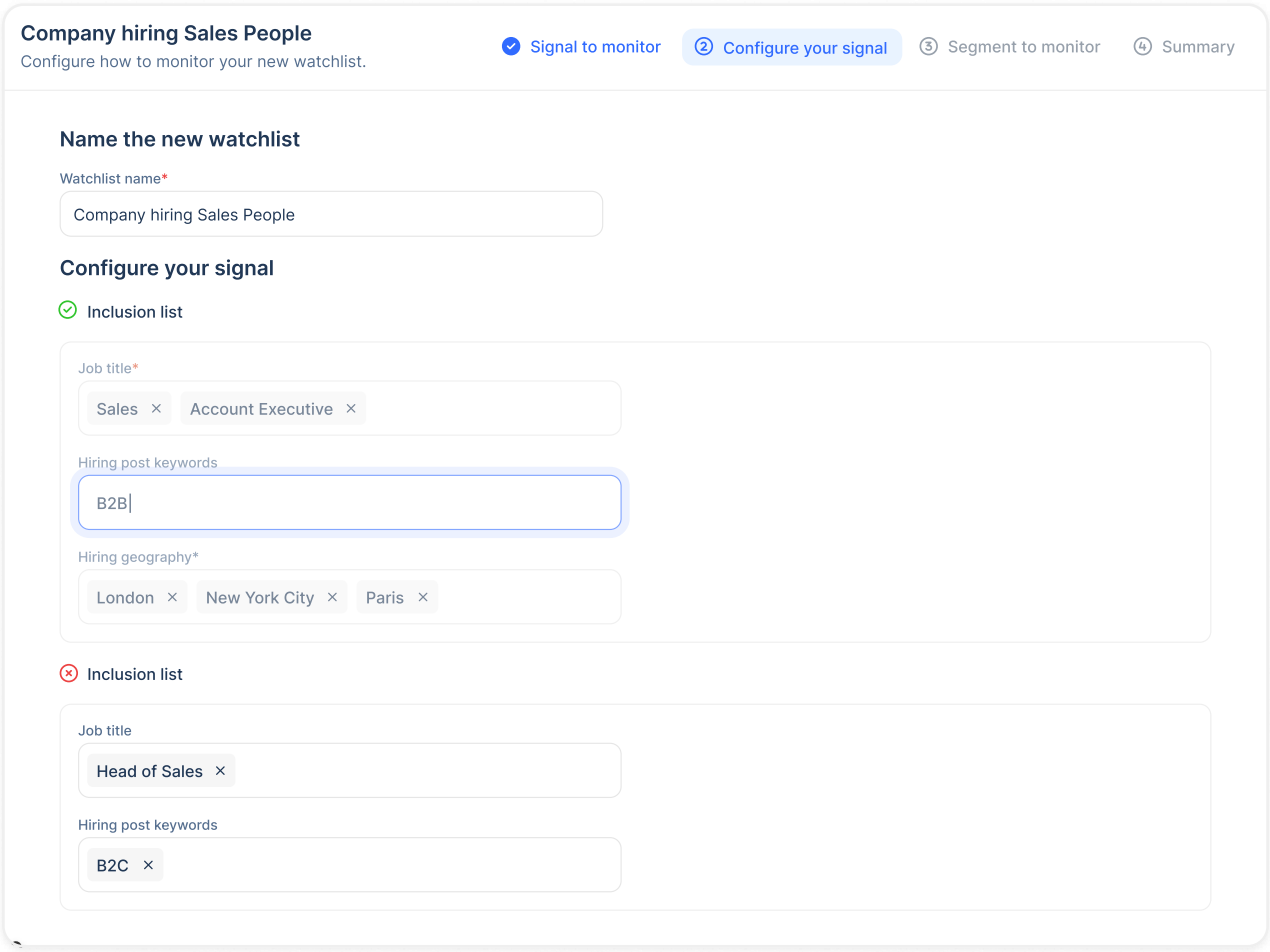


Step 2: Select the Right Signals

Inside Lemlist, the first step is to **select a signal to monitor**. Today, the beta supports hiring-based triggers (e.g. “Sales” or “Kubernetes engineers”), with more coming soon.

Not every signal is equally valuable, prioritize those most correlated with buying intent:

- Sudden hiring surges (e.g. 10+ SDR roles posted in 30 days).
- Funding announcements.
- Website visits on product-related pages.
- Executive hires or leadership changes.
- Custom signals which can be developed using tools like Apify or Unify.



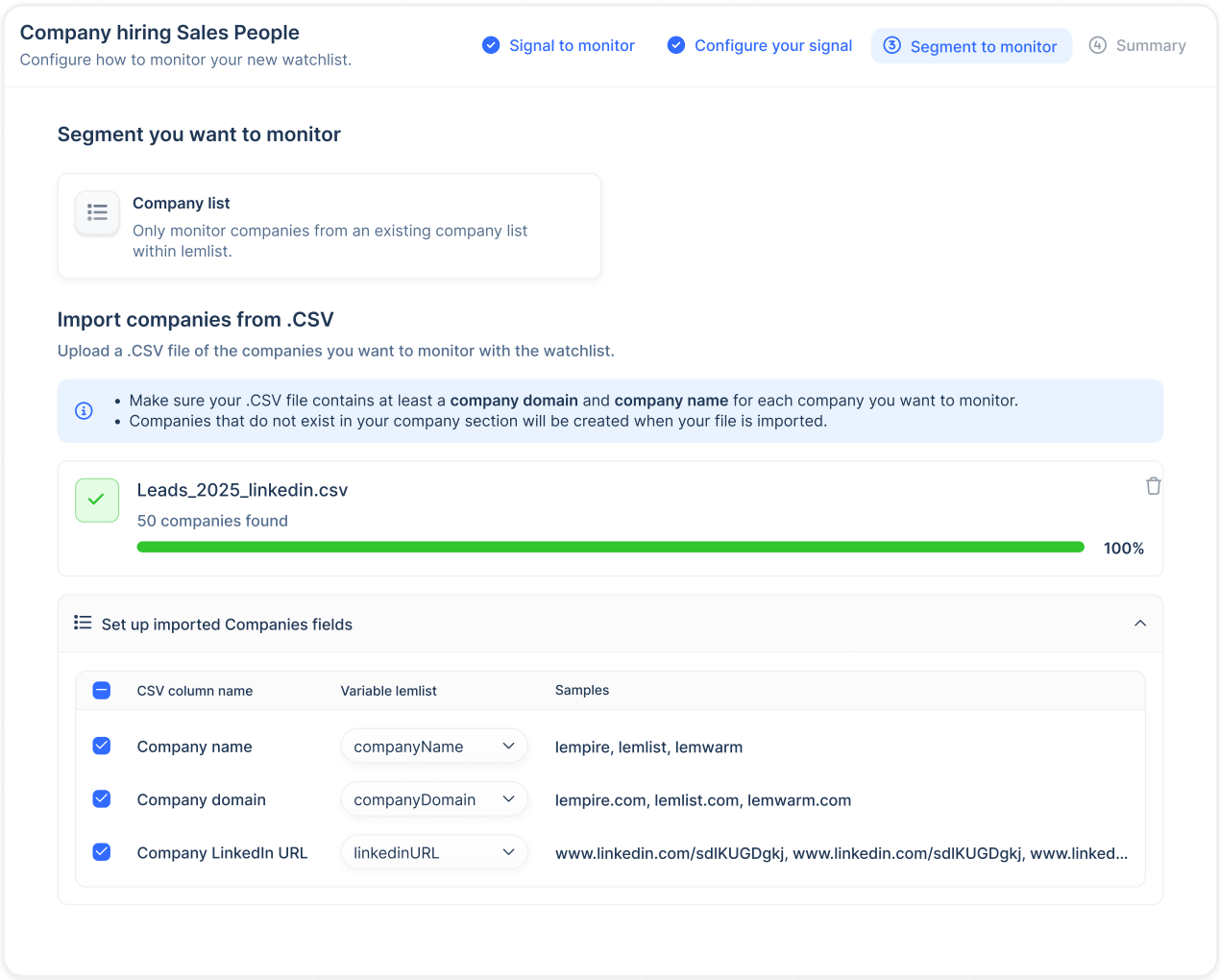
Setting Up Your Intent Signal Strategy

Step 3: Build Watchlists and Segments

The next step in Lemlist is to **create a dedicated watchlist**. You can either:

- Upload a CSV of accounts with company names and domains, or
- Select a list you've already built inside lemlist.

Once added, these accounts are continuously monitored. Within 24 hours, new alerts begin to populate your watchlist whenever a company meets your signal criteria.

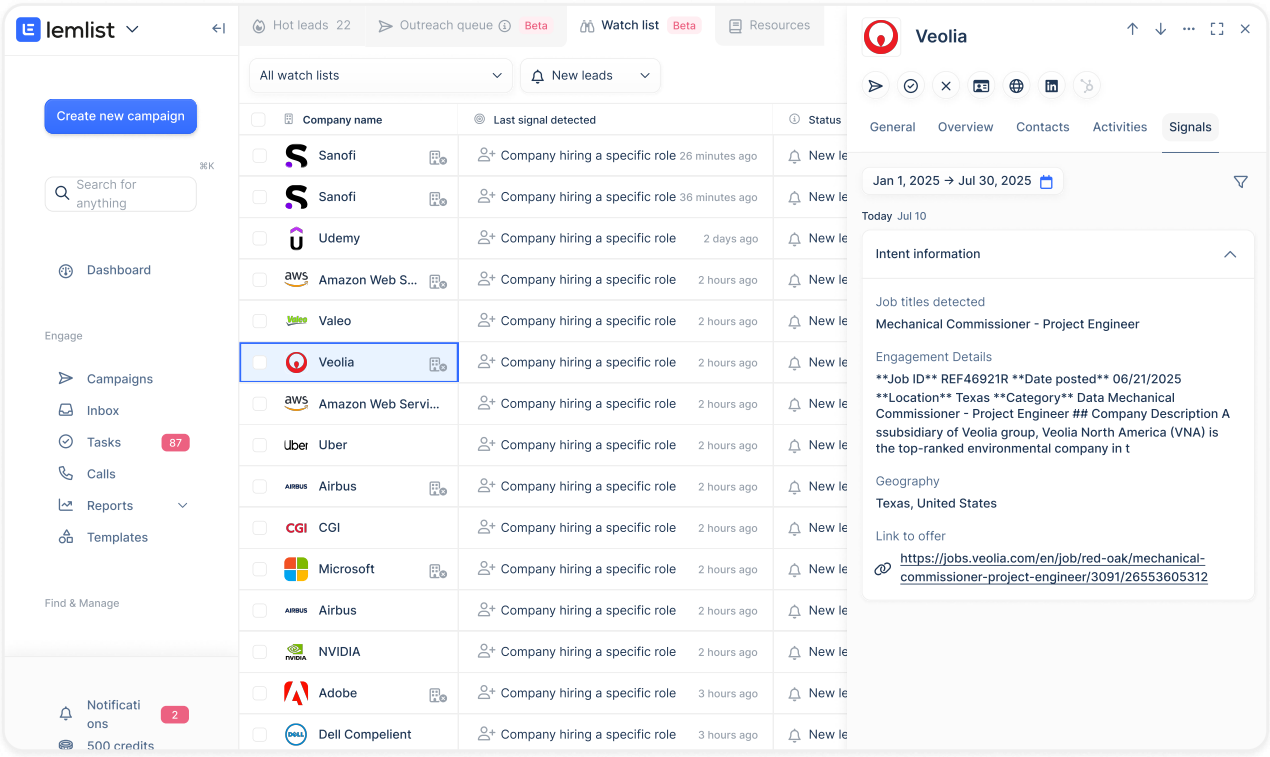


Setting Up Your Intent Signal Strategy

Step 4: Establish Triggers and Alerts

lemlist displays alerts whenever a company meets your defined criteria (e.g. “Company hiring 5+ Account Executives in France”). You can filter by new leads (alerts in the past 24h) or revisit older ones.

Equally important: lemlist gives you the option to **ignore irrelevant leads** and log a reason, preventing wasted effort and keeping your pipeline clean.



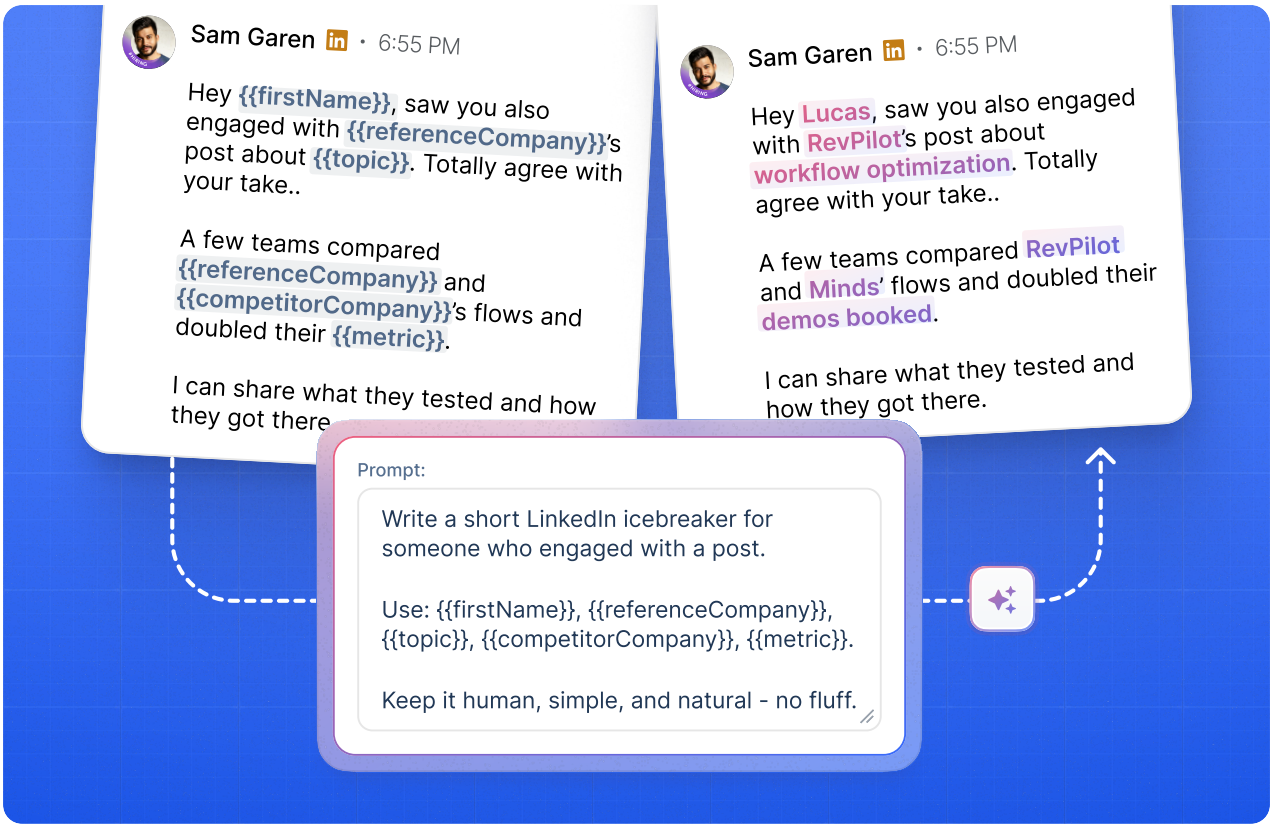
Step 5: Connect Signals to Outreach Campaigns

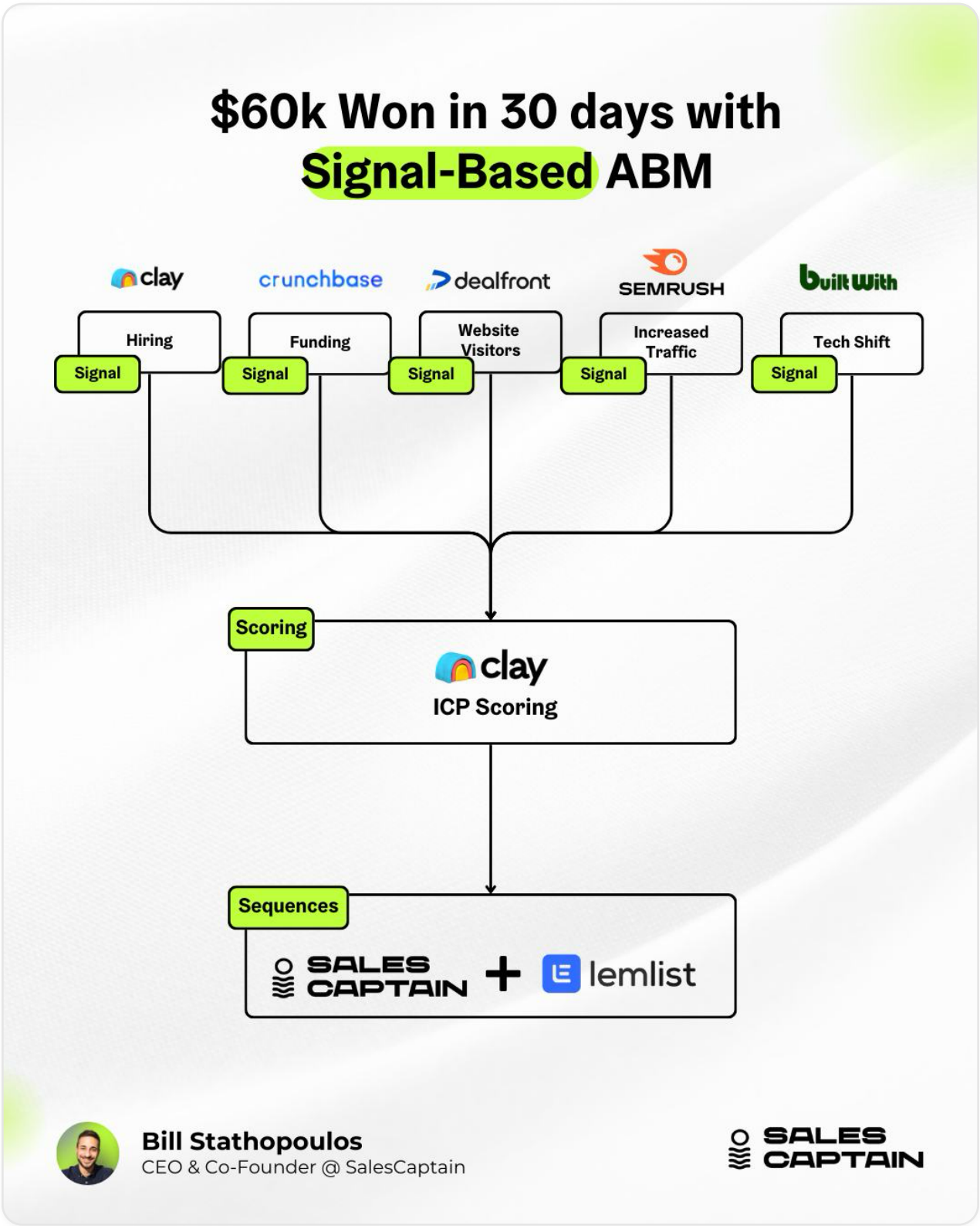
This is where intent becomes action. From any alert, you can click **Engage Leads** to see all available contacts at that company. Pick the relevant decision-makers, then push them directly into a campaign.

lemlist lets you:

- Preview the selected campaign.
- Personalize the first touch with context from the signal (e.g. “I noticed you’re hiring Kubernetes engineers...”).
- Launch outreach immediately.

This ensures outreach is timely, contextual, and automated, without losing the human touch.




$60k Won in 30 days with
Signal-Based ABM
clay
crunchbase
dealfront
SEMRUSH
BuiltWith
Hiring
Signal
Funding
Signal
Website Visitors
Signal
Increased Traffic
Signal
Tech Shift
Signal
Scoring
clay
ICP Scoring
Sequences
SALES CAPTAIN
+
lemlist
Bill Stathopoulos
CEO & Co-Founder @ SalesCaptain
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The SalesCaptain Framework

At SalesCaptain, we simplify intent-driven ABM into three stages:

1. Signal

Detect intent in real time using tools like **lemlist** (hiring, funding, visits), **Clay** (enrichment + data stitching), Dealfront, BuiltWith, Apify, and Semrush.
Signals aren't static lists, they're live triggers that show you where urgency exists right now.

2. Score

As discussed above, not all signals are created equal. Scoring ensures your team spends time only where it matters.

We score across three dimensions:

- **Fit** → Firmographics (ICP match, industry, revenue, tech stack).
- **Intent** → Signal type and strength (e.g. 15 SDR job posts in 30 days > 1 job post).
- **Timing** → Recency and frequency (signal triggered this week vs. six months ago).

Once enriched in **Clay**, accounts are automatically tiered:

- **Tier 1:** Strong ICP fit + multiple fresh signals (e.g. Series B SaaS, just raised $20M, hiring 10 SDRs). → Routed for immediate SDR action with 1:1 personalized outreach.
- **Tier 2:** ICP fit + one moderate signal (e.g. 2 new engineering roles) → Enter semi-automated Lemlist sequences with light human review.
- **Tier 3:** Weak/outdated signals or poor ICP fit → Nurtured or disqualified to avoid wasted effort.

In pilots, Tier 1 accounts converted **2.5x faster** than Tier 2, and generated **80% of pipeline** despite being a minority of the list.

3. Sequence

Once accounts are scored, Lemlist activates outreach instantly. From a signal alert (e.g. “Microsoft hiring Kubernetes engineers”), SDRs can:

- Preview decision-maker contacts.
- Push them into a live campaign.
- Personalize the first touch with context from the trigger (“I noticed you’re hiring Kubernetes engineers…”).

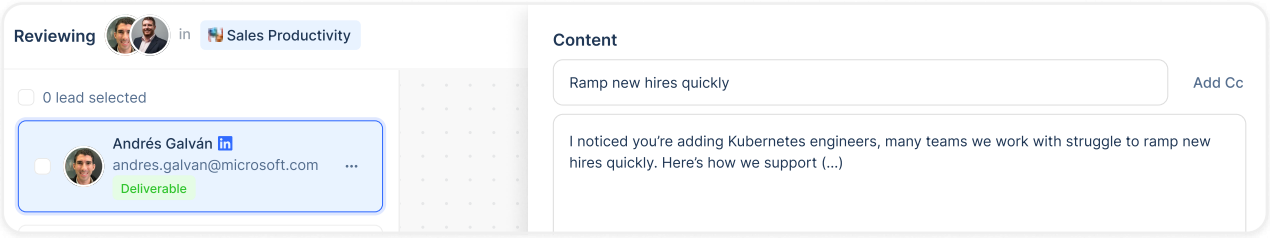
This creates **multi-threaded, contextual outreach** (email + LinkedIn) that balances AI-scale with human approval.

The impact of this framework:

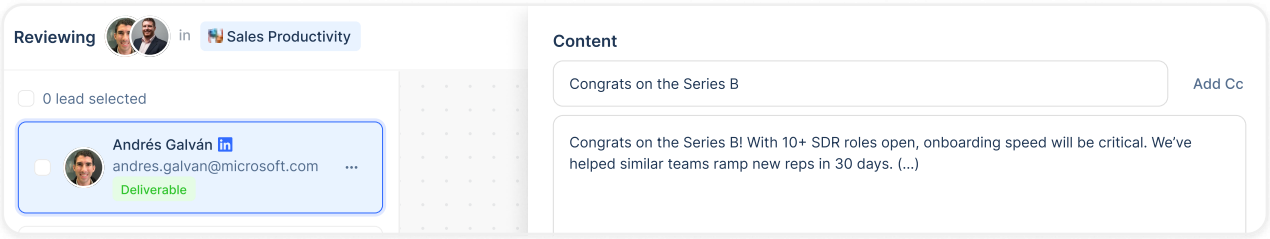
- Positive reply rates increased **6%+**
- Contact match rates improved from **40% → 80%+**
- SDR handoff times cut in half
- ACVs doubled by focusing only on Tier 1 accounts

Practical Examples

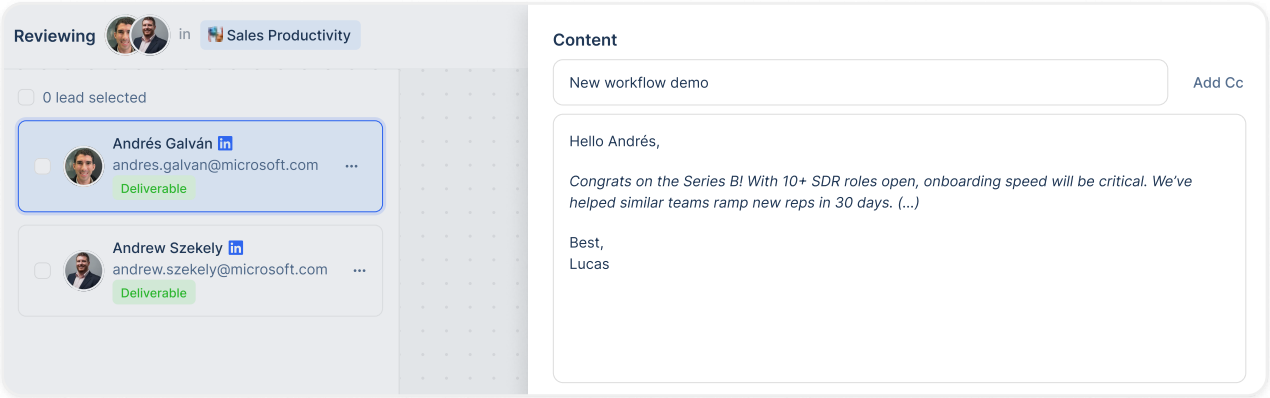
- **Hiring Demand at Microsoft**
  Signal: lemlist flagged Microsoft hiring Kubernetes engineers.
  Action: Instead of sending a generic pitch, the SDR built messaging around helping new developers ramp faster.
  Result: Higher engagement because the message tied directly to their current priority.



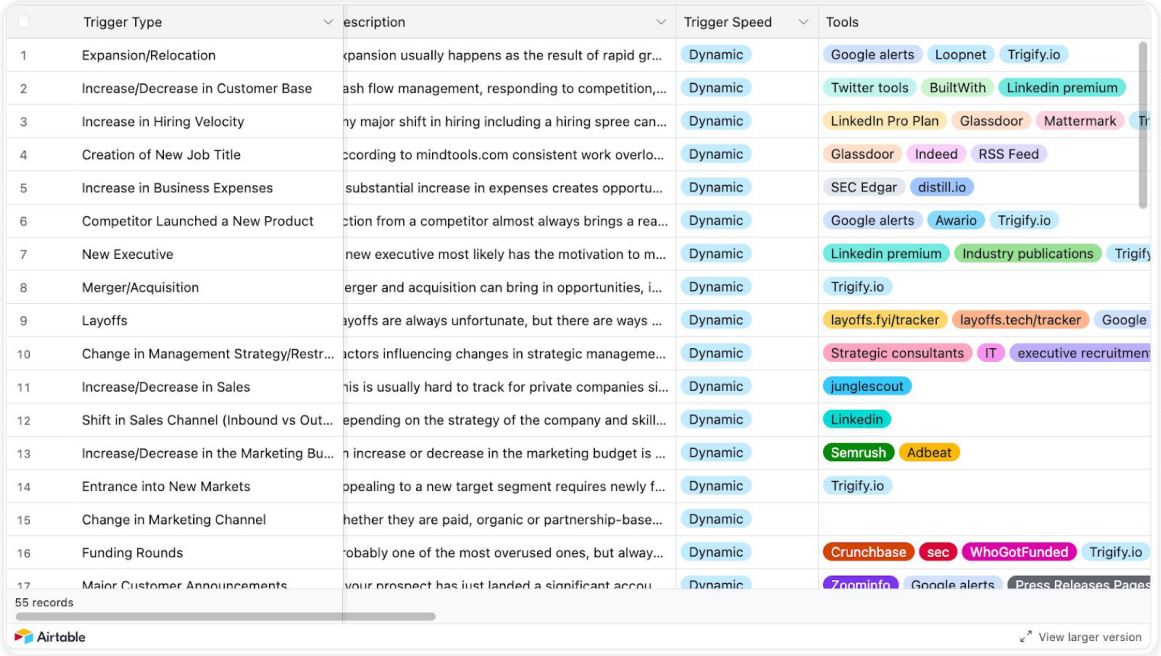
- **Series B SaaS Company**
  Signal: Funding alert revealed a SaaS company scaling its GTM team.
  Action: Outreach focused on SDR hiring and onboarding, a pain point tied to their growth.
  Result: Soft approach that helps building rapport faster



- **SalesCaptain Client Campaign**
  Signal: Hiring surge + funding alert combined.
  Action: lemlist "push to campaign" activated outreach within hours of the trigger.
  Result: $60,000 in pipeline generated in just 30 days.



Dos and Don’ts of Intent-Driven ABM



	Trigger Type	escription	Trigger Speed	Tools
1	Expansion/Relocation	xpansion usually happens as the result of rapid gr...	Dynamic	Google alerts, Loopnet, Trigify.io
2	Increase/Decrease in Customer Base	ash flow management, responding to competition,...	Dynamic	Twitter tools, BuiltWith, Linkedin premium
3	Increase in Hiring Velocity	ny major shift in hiring including a hiring spree can...	Dynamic	LinkedIn Pro Plan, Glassdoor, Mattermark
4	Creation of New Job Title	cording to mindtools.com consistent work overlo...	Dynamic	Glassdoor, Indeed, RSS Feed
5	Increase in Business Expenses	substantial increase in expenses creates opportu...	Dynamic	SEC Edgar, distill.io
6	Competitor Launched a New Product	ction from a competitor almost always brings a rea...	Dynamic	Google alerts, Awario, Trigify.io
7	New Executive	new executive most likely has the motivation to m...	Dynamic	Linkedin premium, Industry publications, Trigify
8	Merger/Acquisition	erger and acquisition can bring in opportunities, i...	Dynamic	Trigify.io
9	Layoffs	ayoffs are always unfortunate, but there are ways ...	Dynamic	layoffs.fyi/tracker, layoffs.tech/tracker, Google
10	Change in Management Strategy/Restr...	actors influencing changes in strategic manageme...	Dynamic	Strategic consultants, IT, executive recruitment
11	Increase/Decrease in Sales	his is usually hard to track for private companies si...	Dynamic	junglescout
12	Shift in Sales Channel (Inbound vs Out...	epending on the strategy of the company and skill...	Dynamic	Linkedin
13	Increase/Decrease in the Marketing Bu...	n increase or decrease in the marketing budget is ...	Dynamic	Semrush, Adbeat
14	Entrance into New Markets	ppealing to a new target segment requires newly f...	Dynamic	Trigify.io
15	Change in Marketing Channel	hether they are paid, organic or partnership-base...	Dynamic	
16	Funding Rounds	robably one of the most overused ones, but alway...	Dynamic	Crunchbase, sec, WhoGotFunded, Trigify.io
17	Major Customer Announcements	your prospect has just landed a significant accou...	Dynamic	Zoominfo, Google alerts, Press Releases Pages

55 records

Airtable View larger version

Don’t:

- **Don’t act late**
- **Don’t treat all signals equally**
- **Don’t rely on a single signal**
- **Don’t over-automate**
- **Don’t send generic messages**

Do:

Engage within 24h

Intent decays fast. Outreach within the first 24 hours converts **2-3x higher** than waiting a week.

Score and tier leads

Scoring ensures you focus only on Tier 1 accounts. In pilots, **80% of pipeline** came from the top 20% of scored accounts.

Stack at least 3-5 signals

A funding round alone might not mean readiness. But funding *plus* hiring *plus* new exec hires? That’s high intent.

Keep it human

AI and automation should scale outreach, not replace judgment. SDR validation prevents chasing irrelevant accounts.

Personalize to the trigger

Example: Instead of a vague “we help companies grow,” reference the actual event. *“Congrats on the Series B! With 10 SDRs joining, onboarding speed will be critical, here’s how we help + (example with proven case study)”*

Results You Can Expect

When intent signals are operationalized in Lemlist, the impact is immediate:

- **Pipeline grows faster** → you reach accounts before competitors.
- **Conversion rates rise** → contextual outreach beats generic messaging.
- **Sales cycles shorten** → engagement begins when the need is active.

In pilots run by SalesCaptain + Lemlist, the difference was clear:

- Positive reply rates: Median ~12% → Top performers with intent triggers hit **30-35%** (3x lift).
- Meetings booked per 100 leads: Median **2-3** → Top performers **6-8**.
- SDR-to-AE handoffs: **50% faster** with pre-scored, enriched accounts.
- ACVs: **Doubled** by focusing only on Tier 1 intent accounts.

Don’t measure yourself against outliers. Compare your motion to both median and top-tier benchmarks, that’s how you know whether you’re progressing or not.

From Wishlists to Workflows

Here's what to keep in mind:

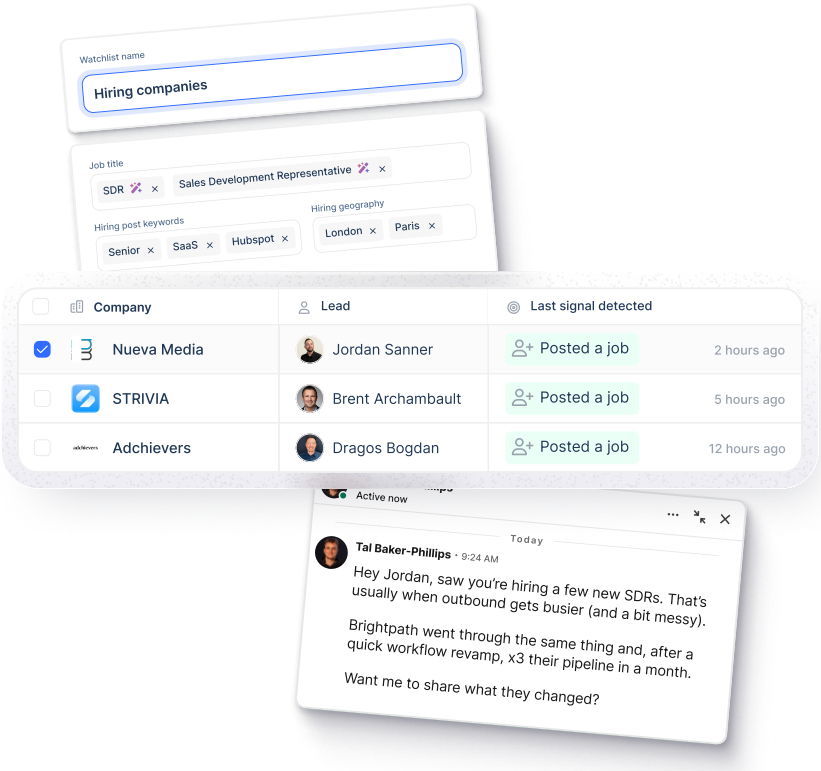
- **Company vs. Contact signals:** Enterprise buying happens at the account level, monitoring accounts is more predictive than chasing random contact activity.
- **Disqualification is a strength:** Saying "no" to low-fit accounts keeps your pipeline clean and your SDRs focused on what matters.
- **Signal → Score → Sequence:** This framework ensures signals move seamlessly from detection to activation, without adding bloat to your workflow.

lemlist's new intent-based prospection feature makes this shift possible. With watchlists, signal updates, and direct campaign activation, teams can move from monitoring to meetings booked in hours, not weeks.

At SalesCaptain, we help companies operationalize this feature into repeatable workflows that generate real revenue.

The next steps are clear:

1. Build your watchlists
2. Define your triggers (3–5 minimum)
3. Launch your first intent-driven ABM campaign with lemlist today



Spot signals with lemlist →