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Ideal Customer Profiles (ICPs)

A successful outbound strategy begins with clearly defining **whom you should be contacting** in the first place. In the context of SaaS marketing and sales, this means developing an **Ideal Customer Profile, ICP for short**. This profile guides your outbound efforts so **you target the right accounts, and it informs your messaging so you say the right things to win them over**.

Let's take a look at how to craft an ICP and how to use it to shape compelling messaging.

So, an **Ideal Customer Profile** is essentially a **hypothetical company (or account) that embodies all the attributes that make someone an excellent fit for your SaaS solution**. Think of it as a firmographic and environmental checklist of your best customers. This is not the same as a buyer persona because ICP is defined at the **company level**, not the individual level. It answers questions like: "What type of organization benefits most from our product?" or "Which accounts are most likely to become high-value, long-term customers?"

Now, let's see the key elements typically included in Ideal Customer Profile.

Firmographic attributes

The basic characteristics of target companies: industry, size, geography, stage of the company

"US-based tech companies with 100–500 employees that are in growth mode and have no internal HR system yet."

Firstly, we have firmographic attributes. These describe **the basic characteristics of target companies**. Common firmographics include: industry such as fintech companies, retail, healthcare. Then company size, often measured by employee count or annual revenue. Next

there is geography, meaning specific countries or regions where you operate or see demand. And finally, the stage of the company which can be a startup, SMB, enterprise, etc. You might also include details like **the number of customers the target company has** if your product is more useful to companies with a certain customer base size.

Technographic attributes

The technology stack and tools a target company uses

“We are selling a marketing automation software - our ideal customers might be those using Salesforce CRM.”

Secondly, there are **technographics attributes** which refer to the **technology stack and tools a target company uses**.

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Users often have to fit new software into their existing ecosystem, so if you know what tools they already have, you can predict need and fit.

For instance, if you sell a marketing automation SaaS, your ideal customers might be those using Salesforce CRM, meaning they likely need a marketing tool that integrates with Salesforce. Or you might target companies that use a competitor’s software. This indicates both need and an opportunity to replace that competitor. Including technographics in the ICP helps outbound teams build prospect lists and personalize messaging.

Other factors can enrich an ICP as well, such as **pain points or challenges** commonly faced by those ideal accounts, typical **budgets** or willingness to spend, and any **regulatory or compliance needs**.

If you skip the ICP step, your outbound efforts can become inefficient – you could waste time on poor-fit prospects who are unlikely to ever buy or succeed with your product. By contrast, a well-defined ICP focuses your sales and marketing resources on leads that are more likely to buy. When you reach out to companies that fit your ICP, you should see

higher response rates and better conversions because the value proposition truly resonates for them.

Ideal Customer: "B2B SaaS or tech-enabled company in Canada with 50–500 employees, growing >20% year-over-year. Uses a cloud CRM (Salesforce) and has a dedicated sales team of 5+ people. Likely pain points include managing a high volume of inbound leads and needing better lead qualification. Typically Series B or later if a startup, or established mid-market firm. Key stakeholders: VP of Sales or Director of RevOps."

Let's examine how we can create an Ideal Customer Profile in practical steps.

1. Examine Customer Data:

A great starting point is to analyze your **best existing customers**: which ones have the highest usage, longest retention, and greatest revenue contribution? What traits do they share? Look for patterns in firmographics and usage. You may find, for example, that your top 20 customers are all in the financial services industry and have at least 1,000 employees. That's a strong hint that similar firms belong in your ICP.

2. Talk to Sales and Customer Success Teams:

Your front-line teams like sales or customer success teams know which prospects tend to be a "hit" or a "miss." For example, the Sales team might say "manufacturing companies have been tough for us, but biotech companies always seem very interested." The Customer success team might note that "clients with 200+ employees struggle to implement our software, but those with under 50 employees do fine". This indicates a size threshold for ideal fit. Incorporate these qualitative insights.

3. Identify Common Pain Points:

Next, identify common pain points. Why do your best customers buy your product? What problems does it solve for them? These pain points can become part of the ICP description and will definitely feed messaging.

4. Research Market Data:

Then also use external data sources to validate your assumptions. Tools like **LinkedIn Sales Navigator**, **Crunchbase**, or **ZoomInfo** can pull lists of companies that match criteria. If your product is targeted by let's say a finance department, you might research how many companies of a certain size have a dedicated Finance department, etc.

5. Make it Specific but Not Too Narrow:

And finally an ICP should narrow your focus, but not be so narrow that only 10 companies qualify. You might have a **primary ICP** which is the dream customer profile and **secondary segments**. You might also consider whether you're going after new markets or expanding in existing ones. Finally, you can document the ICP in writing, including all these attributes.