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MQLs Reframed: Why Signals Drive Smarter Sales Conversations

The phrase “MQLs are dead” has been circulating for years. But are they truly obsolete, or simply evolving into something richer, powered by signals that give sellers sharper context into buyer intent?

Let’s break down why signals matter, how ICP alignment is non-negotiable, and what it takes to make them work for sellers.

The First Step Is ICP Alignment

Not every account on your target list is worth chasing.

- One company tagged 3,000 “ideal” accounts.
- After proper filtering, only half could realistically buy.
- Without that filter, every second conversation would have been wasted.

A clear ICP ensures signals are meaningful. Without it, sellers burn time, lose confidence, and derail revenue.

The World of Signals

Not all signals are created equal.

- **3rd-party signals:** Better than random cold lists, but widely available.
- **2nd-party signals:** Richer, sourced from partners/communities.
- **1st-party signals:** The gold standard. Unique to you, shaping your buyer’s journey before competitors can.

Signals highlight moments of pressure (restructures, product launches, executive moves) when sellers can land the right message at the right time.

Keep It Simple for Sellers

The best playbooks are clear and actionable:

Trigger → Action → Value

- A signal arrives.
- The rep knows the next step.
- They respond with urgency, educating instead of hard-selling.

This is how you spark dark social moments, the untrackable conversations inside buying groups that ads can’t buy.

Demand Building Is Still a Long Game

To unlock signals:

- Pair them with valuable content.
- Equip sellers to educate, not pressure.
- Build trust gradually, so when the ask comes, it lands.

So, Are MQLs Dead?

MQLs only matter when intent is contextualised. Signals are what turn intent into a shared language that marketing and sales can actually act on.

When sellers know who to reach out to and why, they stop chasing noise and start converting real intent into revenue.