Adobe

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO

Account-Based Marketing

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Narrowing your focus, expanding your impact

Precision, personalization, and high potential

It's an exciting time for marketers. In the era of digital transformation—where everyone and everything is connected—new channels, strategies, and technologies are empowering us to engage buyers like never before. But these new opportunities also bring new challenges. In today's world, digital experiences heavily influence our lives and our buyers' lives. Consumers and businesses depend on digital communication. To make the most of your connections with potential buyers, brands must compete by offering memorable, relevant experiences—each and every time.

As a result, marketers are turning to a customer experience-first, account-focused strategy: account-based marketing (ABM).

Organizations striving to keep up with buyers and stay competitive in the B2B landscape must shift from a lead-centric to an account-centric mentality by acquiring, nurturing, and retaining high-value accounts. ABM requires a close partnership between marketing, sales, and other internal teams. This collaboration helps you close more deals faster and boost return on investment (ROI), all while supporting C-suite priorities and your organization's strategic goals.

ABM is indispensable to compete in today's B2B world. It's here to stay—and along with it comes the potential for more targeted, personal, and better-orchestrated buyer engagement.

ABM's rise to popularity

In the last few decades, marketing has evolved to play a major role in revenue creation, alongside sales. Shared focus and language have paved the way to a deeper partnership between marketing and sales, and the coordination needed for ABM success.

Today, the technology for ABM has become mainstream. Leading marketing automation solutions include more pieces of the ABM puzzle. This includes account selection and account-based delivery of experiences across channels—both of which are assisted by artificial intelligence (AI)—as well as attribution of revenue from marketing and sales touches. The availability of ABM solutions is good news for marketing and sales teams who go to market using a mix of inbound and outbound tactics. It's also beneficial for teams using account-based and lead-based strategies to address different buyer segments—which is the case for most B2B companies.

Personalizing content and engagement channels is no longer a nice-to-have. Buyers expect it. They demand it. In fact, customer experience has become the competitive differentiator in many industries. Regardless of strategy—ABM or otherwise—people and their experiences need to be the focal point. Of course, some of the accounts where these individuals work have more potential value than others. So, it makes sense to apply more effort and investment (meaning more personalization, more program dollars, and more high-touch engagement) to top accounts. Many marketers are already using marketing automation to build buyer profiles and drive customer engagement at scale. ABM lets marketing and sales show that incremental investment in even greater personalization delivers amazing ROI.

In this guide, we'll explore what ABM really means, how to create a winning ABM strategy, and what to consider when choosing an ABM solution to help your organization grow while giving your buyers an unforgettable customer experience.

To learn more about marketing automation, download *The Definitive Guide to Marketing Automation*.

Getting familiar with account-based marketing

Account-based marketing defined

Account-based marketing (ABM) is a strategy, not a technology. It's an approach centered on customer experience that requires sales and marketing teams to collaborate. Working together, both departments identify the best-fit account opportunities and use relevant experiences to engage specific buying groups inside target accounts.

The benefit of ABM is that it helps sales and marketing generate more revenue, quickly and easily. Rather than marketing broadly to many potential buyers, ABM targets a shared set of specific accounts that are a good fit for a company's products and services. Within each account, sales and marketing orchestrate a personal, coordinated, account-based experience (ABX) for key stakeholders or buying groups.

Successful ABM asks sales and marketing teams to shift their mindsets from "who's interested in our products?" to "who would benefit from our products?" This is important because it helps assess whether your prospects are a good fit for your products or services. As a result, you'll build up quality leads — not just quantity — which builds customer longevity, and eventually brand advocacy.

The objective of ABM is to move an entire buying group toward a specific goal. That goal could be an initial sale, cross-sell, or upsell, renewing a contract, or even advocating for your brand. We'll focus here on the strategies, techniques, and best practices that you can apply no matter what size B2B brand you represent or what stage of marketing maturity you've reached.

Marketers should make the following shifts:

Lead-centered approach → Account-based approach

Reactive engagement → Proactive engagement

Random individuals → Specific personas and buying groups

Sales should make the following shifts:

Manual processes → Technology and automation

Sales-only data → Combined sales and marketing data

Working independently → Collaborating with marketing

Why ABM is essential

Marketers are always looking for new ways to drive revenue for their organizations. Traditionally, B2B marketing teams have followed a lead-based inbound marketing model. This includes driving awareness and engaging the largest number of potential individual leads using content marketing and other digital marketing techniques. Then, marketers nurture those leads and guide them down the funnel toward sales. This represents a lead-based approach—not an account-based strategy.

As marketers have become proficient in digital marketing at scale and analytics capabilities have improved, it's become clear that not all leads are a good fit. As a result, marketers are wasting time, budget, and resources on the wrong opportunities. This has spurred the need for more targeted techniques and technologies.

The goal is not to eliminate lead-based efforts, but rather to find the mix of lead- and account-based strategies that work best for an organization—and produce the best results. Although ABM is not a new concept, it has quickly become the essential foundation for B2B sales and marketing teams of all sizes thanks to recent innovations in technology. According to Alterra Group, 97 percent of marketers achieved a higher ROI by incorporating ABM than with any other marketing initiative.

Benefits of ABM

Both traditional demand generation and ABM strategies have their merits, and organizations need to find the right balance of both to make the most of their revenue potential. By adding elements of ABM to your revenue strategy and using it to enhance your lead-based efforts, you can generate more revenue faster and more efficiently. That's because the accounts you target with ABM are strategic—they're higher value and a better fit for your products and solutions. As a result, these accounts are naturally more likely to generate higher revenue and can help you penetrate new markets and verticals. ABM also uses data to guide how you allocate engagements and resources, which makes success repeatable.

In addition, ABM can be effective for consumer audiences—specifically in scenarios where B2C buyers are considering purchases that involve a high level of investment and time from the buyer.

Let's look at some of the key benefits of ABM and their business impact.

ABM boosts overall sales and marketing ROI
Ninety-three percent of B2B marketers worldwide consider ABM extremely or very important to their overall marketing efforts, according to the Forrester SiriusDecisions 2018 Account-Based Marketing: *The Complete Business Requirements Guide.*

ABM is more efficient and targeted than other strategies
By deciding which accounts to target, you can profoundly impact the way you think about sales and marketing, the types of programs you execute, and the shared resource gaps you fill. Instead of casting a wide net, you can look for ways to target key individuals in specific organizations. By strategically pinpointing your efforts, you spend fewer resources on buyers or market segments with less potential. And because ABM requires organizational buy-in from the beginning, sales and marketing must agree to work toward the same goals.
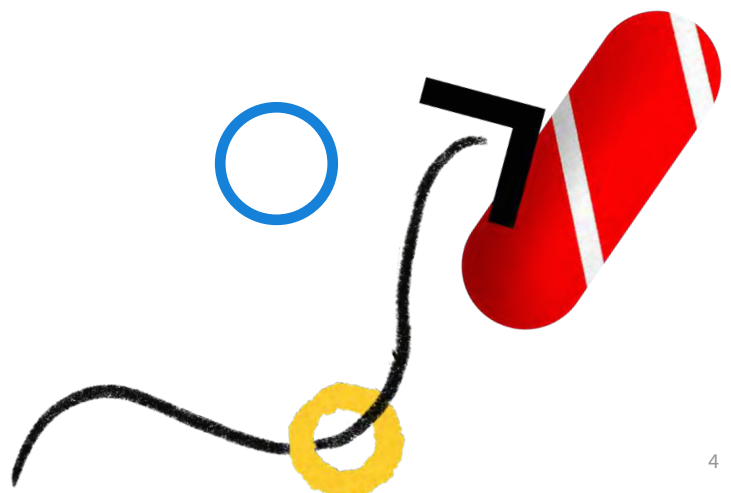
ABM is more personal than other approaches

ABM focuses your sales and marketing efforts precisely on a targeted audience. The strategy requires you to coordinate your messaging and communications for specific personas and buying groups within each target account. According to the 2017 State of Engagement Report by Marketo, "Sixty-six percent of B2B consumers surveyed said they want to advocate for the brands or vendors that demonstrate they care about them personally." Buyers are more likely to pay attention to content that's specifically for them, relevant to their business, and appropriate to the stage in their buyer journey. ABM is inherently personal, so your campaigns are already fine-tuned for the right audience.

ABM shows you what's working

With ABM, you take an account-centered view of measurement and attribution, which makes it easier to show your impact on the accounts that matter most. You'll understand the true value that each activity across channels has on driving the sale. Thanks to close collaboration between sales and marketing, each team can recognize exactly which channels, campaigns, and messages drove the desired results.

ABM increases sales, marketing, and organizational alignment

ABM success requires new working relationships between marketing and sales. Marketers must work closely with sales to identify target accounts and pursue them throughout the sales process, with the goal of landing and expanding those accounts. This collaboration holds each team responsible for working toward the same goal, ultimately creating a positive culture shift within your organization

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ABM improves the buyer experience

Using point solutions to build one-off campaigns can lead to a disjointed experience for buyers. A robust ABM solution that automates delivery of relevant, personal messages across all channels makes for a more cohesive, positive buyer experience. Individuals receive content that matters to them at their current stage in the buyer journey, which builds trust and loyalty over time.

> " B2B marketers who successfully launch and sustain formal ABM programs can improve their firms' revenue growth and profit margins, strengthen connections between marketing and sales colleagues, and enhance interactions with customers and prospects. Success requires new working relationships between marketing and sales.
>
> **Mary Shea and Shanta Samlal-Fadelle**
> *Account-Based Marketing Brings Marketing and Sales into the Same Orbit*, Forrester, 2016

ABM works for companies of all sizes

Traditionally, only large organizations with big budgets and teams used ABM due to the complex implementation process.

ABM today is less about your company size and more about your business model and goals. Given the technologies emerging today, businesses of any size can successfully implement ABM. Smaller companies can also run highly tailored ABM campaigns at scale to help build awareness and credibility.

> " FABM isn't about company size. If there is more than one person in the organization you need to influence to get the deal, ABM applies.
>
> **Matt Heinz**
> President and CEO, Heinz Marketing

The four standard use cases for ABM

1. **Improve collaboration with sales.** When you need connected tools to work better with sales and close more opportunities faster for your shared go-to-market strategies.

2. **Cross-sell or upsell existing buyer accounts.** When you want to close opportunities with existing buyer accounts by selling new or additional products to new or existing buying groups.

3. **Acquire new customers.** When you want to close opportunities with net new or known target accounts by selling new or core products to first-time buyers within your existing vertical or market.

4. **Break into a new market or vertical.** When you want to close opportunities with net new or known target accounts by selling new or core products to first-time buyers within a new market or vertical.

Determine if ABM is right for your organization

Although organizations of all sizes can implement ABM, it's important to determine whether it's right for your business before you decide to move to an account-centered approach. Here are six ways you can tell you're ready for ABM:

1. Your sales cycle involves a research/evaluation phase due to the cost or level of commitment required from the buyer, and it often involves multiple stakeholders.

2. Your sales and marketing teams want to make a bigger impact using a more strategic focus.

3. Your existing buyers who generate the most revenue have distinct characteristics—or you've identified accounts with the potential to generate more revenue that have distinct characteristics.

4. You've identified organizations with needs that your solution clearly addresses.

5. Your organization's goals include expanding into a new segment, territory, or vertical—or going after your competitor's customers.

6. Your organization offers several products or services and has set goals to grow buyer lifetime value through upsell and cross-sell.

Creating a winning account-based marketing strategy

If you're considering implementing ABM or you want to achieve more with ABM, the following pillars can help structure your strategy. We'll cover these in much more detail in the later chapters.

The 3 Cs of account-based experiences

These three core principles form the foundation of successful account-based experiences:

1. **Collaboration:** Marketing, sales, and other cross-functional teams must agree on a shared strategy as one revenue team and create target account lists using the same data and AI. Collaboration is crucial for delivering coordinated experiences because it ensures everyone is committed to the same ABM strategy and that it aligns with business goals. This also ensures that all teams are using the same data from multiple data sources (such as first-, second-, and third-party data, intent data, sales data, and marketing data) to create a data-driven ideal customer profile (ICP) together. The ICP is then used as the basis for a target account list that supports the shared strategy.

2. **Coordination:** Sales and marketing need to coordinate seamless, personal experiences that focus on customer lifetime value and extend across multiple channels. At the same time, they need full two-way visibility into the account activity each team creates. Coordination ensures that your buyers have a consistently relevant experience every time they interact with your brand. This requires sales and marketing to tag-team customer touchpoints and work in harmony to make sure that marketing and sales engagement channels are well-integrated. Each channel must pick up where the last channel left off so that buyers feel seen and appreciated, no matter what type of sales or marketing activity is taking place—online or offline. This also ensures that each team knows the current state of the customer's relationship with the brand and can adapt accordingly. For example, if an account already saw email messaging from marketing, then a sales rep can take that into consideration when calling on the account. Or marketing can adjust messaging on the web or in an email if a sales rep has already had an introductory call with contacts from a specific account.

3. **Continuity:** Your organization must deliver continuous, perpetual experiences that start with awareness and evolve into advocacy and beyond for existing and prospective buyers. Account-based experiences (ABX) should never end—they must always adapt to the current state of the buyer's relationship with your brand. When done successfully, these experiences will not only turn a buyer into an advocate, but will also keep them an advocate. Continuity requires automation across sales and marketing channels to allow always-on engagement, at scale, especially when you have thousands of target accounts.

Map your strategy

An ABM strategy focuses on target accounts. But to successfully market and sell to those accounts, you must engage in a variety of tactics. These ABM strategy pillars will help drive success across all your activities, though they will vary depending on your objectives and the use cases mentioned previously.

Pillar	Description
Confirm business goals	The very first requirement for ABM is to identify goals for adding new business and growing existing business. The goals will help dictate which ABM strategy your teams should select.
Create your ABM strategy with experience at the center	Develop a strategy with sales that has ABX at the center. Create a plan that coordinates continuous experiences—instead of one-off, random touches by sales and marketing—to focus on the lifetime value of each account.
Profitability	Create a team of stakeholders across your organization and get buy-in on an account-based strategy. This includes aligning sales and marketing around business goals, objectives, strategy, and metrics.
Identify personas	Define personas for roles such as influencer, practitioner, decision maker, IT expert, and budget owner. Write down in detail what they're looking for, what they struggle with, and how you can help fulfill their needs.
Choose your accounts	To build the most revenue in the long run, look for an ABM solution that uses AI, fit data, and intent data to quickly rank and select accounts with the greatest potential.
Define your total addressable market (TAM)	Match your ideal customer profile against businesses to determine your TAM and overall revenue potential, assuming you can close a certain portion of the accounts.
Create the right content	Content is the most critical element for any campaign, especially when you're targeting multiple different personas and buying groups inside specific verticals and industries. Successful ABM content is personal, relevant, and timely. Our chapter on content offers tips for developing engaging content at scale.
Engage across channels	No two accounts or buying groups will necessarily consume or share information on the same channels. Make sure you have a solid cross-channel strategy for listening to and engaging your accounts.
Measure, analyze, and fine-tune	Good strategies include a way to demonstrate progress toward your goals. Make sure you start measuring ABM success by engaging with the entire accounts, not by activity with individual leads. Establish the right account-level engagement metrics and check-ins so you can fine-tune your ABM strategy and show the momentum, progress, and account penetration you're driving.
Select the right ABM solution	For organizations that want to effectively implement, track, and measure results from each of these pillars, technology is a must-have. Choose technology that puts ABX at the center of your strategy and your larger organizational goals.

Confirm your business goals

Many companies struggle to create a unified ABM strategy when sales and marketing are zeroed in on their own respective goals. But to build the right strategy, you don't need to start from scratch. When you can align your ABM strategy with your overall business goals, your executive stakeholders are more likely to approve it. Follow the steps here to determine your ABM goals:

Identify your business goals for this year

The first step is to educate your team about your business goals for the year ahead. These goals generally come from your executive leadership and have already been approved by the board of directors. In most cases, your business is focusing on generating new revenue from new business, incremental revenue from existing buyers, or both. Your strategy depends on your main revenue goal.

If you want to generate new revenue:

Option 1: Create a new product
Strategy: Focus on upselling existing customer accounts

Option 2: Sell in a new market or vertical
Strategy: Focus on targeting new accounts and brands that are similar to existing high-value accounts

If you want to generate incremental revenue:

Option 1: Sell to a new user type or buying group within existing customer accounts
Strategy: Focus on cross-selling existing high-value, best-fit customer accounts

Option 2: Enhance an existing product to increase adoption and renewal rate
Strategy: Focus on adoption

Determine the size of your market

After your team agrees on your business goals, size up the market that you'll target. Start by determining the value that your product offers along with the vertical and market for your ideal customer profile. For example, decide whether your offering is relevant for enterprise, commercial, or small business, whether or not the product requires service and support, and whether it's more valuable for retail or auto verticals.

Once you understand the market, you'll begin to get an idea of the number of accounts that are a good fit for your product. Your total addressable market (TAM) will dictate the market and ultimately the number of accounts that you can target, giving you tiered lists of accounts to pursue along with high-level information on deal size and revenue.

Decide which personas and buying groups you should target

Once you've agreed on business goals and the market and accounts you want to target, you'll need to select a buying group for marketing and sales activity. It's vital to know exactly whom you're targeting so you can connect with them personally. Then, you can tailor your ABX for each persona by linking the value of your products and services to their unique needs.

Identify key individuals in each account who will be involved in the decision-making process and will ultimately need to agree to purchase your product. The best place to start is by confirming the department or team that benefits from your product—for example, IT, marketing, or sales. After narrowing in on the team or department, identify the key individuals involved, such as the following:

- **Influencer or practitioner:** This is the actual product user. They typically care about efficiency, ease of use, convenience, and intuitive workflows, with a focus on improving their everyday work experience. Focus on communicating that your product is simple and easy to get started with—and that it will help them do their job better, resulting in quicker time to value.

- **Decision maker:** In most cases, this is the manager of the influencer or practitioner. They care about the well-being of the practitioner, but also about ROI. Their main focus on the end result—both ROI and happy employees. Show them case studies with proven results for similar businesses with comparable needs and challenges.

- **IT expert:** Expect that an IT employee will evaluate whether your product integrates well with their existing tech stack. Your messaging should focus on product attributes—well-developed code, integrated data models, and robust software integrations that work well with other programs, don't disrupt the current tech stack and data infrastructure, and are quick to implement.

- **Naysayer:** Be prepared for influencers or decision makers who advocate for your competitor because they've successfully used them in the past. They'll be looking for your product's differentiators and proof that it's a better fit than other products they've used. Explain the competitive advantages of your product versus other solutions.

The final step of building your ABM strategy is to confirm the needs of each persona—and ultimately, how your product will help each one. This will inform your messaging and help ensure that your is content personal and engaging. When you align your messaging and your personas, you put yourself at a strategic advantage for winning the account that you're targeting.

Getting buy-in across your organization

Although ABM includes "marketing" in the name, it requires input from and collaboration with stakeholders in your organization who work outside of marketing. Share your ABM plans with other relevant teams, such as sales, service, and support. These teams need to be aware of how you plan to engage target accounts and how they come into play.

Define your dedicated ABM team

If you haven't already, put together a core team responsible for developing, tracking, and measuring the results of your ABM strategy. If possible, make sure that your ABM team is 100 percent dedicated to ABM. This will help make the most of your ABM strategy as you move forward.

Individual roles you may want on your team include the following:

- **Executive sponsor:** Acts as a champion for your ABM strategy, offering support and strategic guidance

- **Marketer:** Drives the ABM strategy from creation to execution and serves as the point person to ensure cross-functional collaboration and reporting on ABM success

- **Marketing and sales operations:** Works to evaluate your existing database, identify trends, report on progress, and assist in choosing accounts

- **Account executive leader:** Helps align the strategy around buyers and their needs, creates ABM service-level agreements (SLAs) and leads, and educates the team on best practices

- **Sales development leader:** Guides research on accounts, providing feedback to the group to recalibrate when necessary

- **Services leader:** Looks for opportunities to support current buyers and identifies new opportunities for upsell and cross-sell

- **Support leader:** Strategically monitors target accounts to help retain and prioritize buyers

Beyond these team members, you should define the roles other teams will have as part of your ABM strategy and consider choosing representatives to help you share best practices and training. Other teams to consult include the following:

Individual roles you may want on your team include the following:

- **Solutions consulting:** Delivers information to the buyer during the sales process and often serves as a point of contact with key decision makers

- **Product marketing:** Develops your messaging, position, and go-to-market strategy for target accounts, shares the product roadmap and its relevance to target accounts, and helps provide collateral and sales training for products when closing target accounts

- **Vertical and industry marketing:** Provides industry or product expertise related to target accounts and offers a more targeted message and experience

- **Corporate marketing:** Helps craft a set of relevant messages that are specifically intended for target accounts

- **Content marketing:** Understands what content exists to support your ABM strategy and creates or repurposes content to deliver personal experiences

- **Design:** Integrates creative design elements into campaigns to help inspire the target accounts to engage
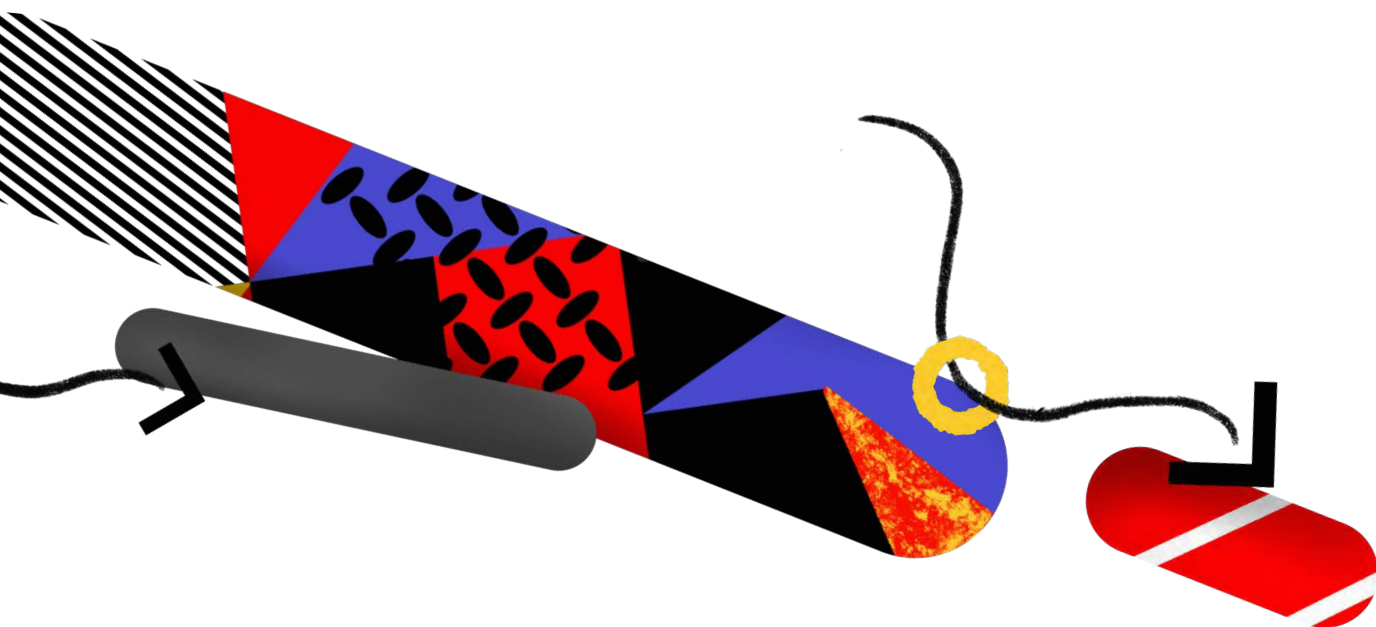
Partnering with sales

Increase departmental alignment

Account-based marketing doesn't just involve marketing. To gain sales buy-in, make sure the sales team understands the dramatic benefits that ABM brings to their lives—including higher win rates, larger deal sizes, and increased velocity.

Getting sales on board with ABM

Most sales reps will take the opportunity to provide honest feedback. Sales organizations are often frustrated by leads they feel are unqualified and insufficient opportunities with closing potential. In addition, the hand-off of leads to sales may create visibility issues, making it hard for sales to know which accounts have already had interactions with marketing. These are all reasons that sales should be excited about an account-based strategy.

In an ideal world, your sales team would only speak with contacts at highly qualified, ready-to-buy accounts. ABM solution can help with this by using fit, intent, and engagement data—along with AI—to quickly profile and select the best accounts. This means your sales team won't spend as much time guessing which accounts to pursue, which can lead to faster revenue generation.

ABM might force sales out of their comfort zone initially, especially if they're used to receiving a high volume of leads, and it might take time before they start seeing new opportunities. But most sales reps won't turn down a much higher percentage of qualified opportunities from accounts with a high likelihood to buy.

Whether you're meeting one-on-one with the director of sales or pitching the entire sales department, the following questions will help prime your audience for understanding the benefits of ABM:

- How satisfied is sales with the target account leads they're currently getting from marketing?

- Is marketing generating leads in the right accounts?

- Does the sales team have enough accounts to meet their quota and drive closed business?

- How are marketing programs specifically helping the sales team break into target accounts?

- Is the current sales and marketing lead handoff causing more harm than good?

- Does sales feel like they have enough visibility into prior marketing activities when they first contact an account?

Agree on definitions

Your teams need to share a language. Marketing and sales need to have the same understanding of which accounts are high priority or the team will work at cross purposes. Sit down with your team and decide exactly what the terminology means to your organization. Use examples when necessary — clarity is everything.

Here's a list of terms to start with:

- Prospect

- Lead

- Opportunity

- Marketing-qualified lead (MQL)

- Sales-qualified lead (SQL)

- Automation-qualified lead (SQL)

Involve other stakeholders

Everyone who impacts the buyer experience needs to be aware of your ABM strategy. Start by educating them about the purpose and benefits of implementing ABM.

Different benefits will resonate with different people in your organization. For example, your professional services team will want to understand how they can help your buyers get the most out of their investment. On the other hand, your CFO will want to understand why investing in ABM will provide greater ROI than a traditional marketing approach. Be sure to tailor your message for the audience.

> " Many people make the mistake of just adding ABM to the market team's day job. If you want to do it well, give the team the capacity to do it properly.
>
> **Bev Burgess**
> Senior Vice President & Global ABM Practice Leader, ITSMA
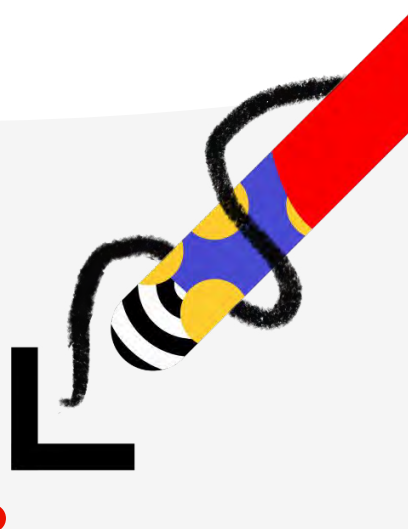
Set shared goals

Marketers and sales teams often have different metrics and short-term goals, but implementing ABM can help them achieve a shared vision.

Both teams have the same goal in mind — driving revenue by converting leads and growing their lifetime value. The process of achieving that goal, however, can feel like two separate processes if marketing and sales aren't closely aligned.
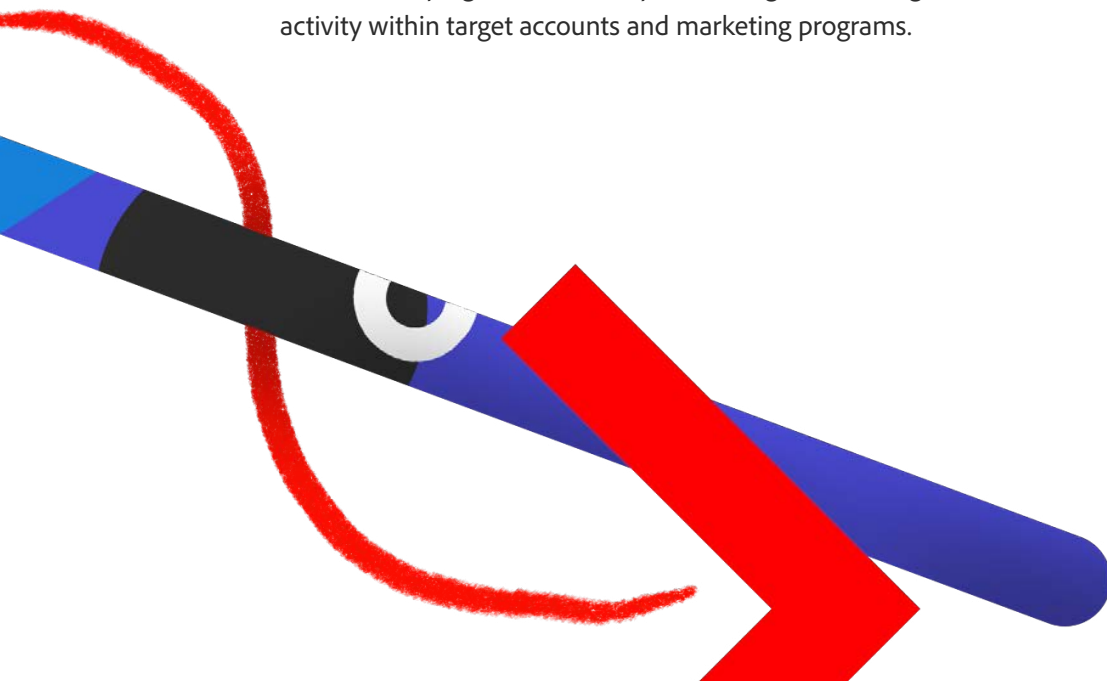
Encourage your teams to think about the sales funnel as one process, not two, and to do so from the start. Marketing should bring sales into the marketing process sooner, and sales should extend marketing's involvement throughout the outbound account qualification process. For ABM, like broad-based marketing, agreeing on the definitions and hand-offs between stages is crucial.

Compensate performance using the same metrics

To achieve a common view of the sales funnel, structure compensation similarly for sales and marketing. For instance, commission for marketing can be tied to target account opportunities created, pipeline generated, and revenue won. This builds trust between the two departments because both teams have a stake in improving target account performance. Marketers appreciate the impact of account selection, and sales teams recognize the importance of timely and frequent follow-ups.

Plan joint activities

Marketers can feel disconnected from what sales reps do. Incorporating the marketing team into regular sales activities can engage them in the sales process and create two-way visibility. Including marketing on forecast calls can help make marketing and sales feel accountable for the same goals. Consider keeping the teams in sync with regular meetings between marketing and sales to review activity within target accounts and marketing programs.

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Ensure full account visibility

Limited visibility into leads and low-lead pipeline can cause friction within sales. Typically, sales development reps (SDRs) research each account to build a list of contacts within them and reach out to establish a relationship. They continually nurture that relationship until the buyer is sales-ready and willing to meet. Then, the lead gets handed to account executives (AEs), who further evaluate the account to understand pain points, demo the products or services, and negotiate the contract terms.

Develop a fair routing engine

With account-based marketing, SDRs and AEs work together to produce high-quality leads within target accounts. This approach can create concern for SDRs because, even though the leads that they receive are more valuable, their lead volume will often be lower and they are constantly under pressure to deliver on the accounts assigned to them.

To prevent or combat this tension, it's best to create extra visibility and guardrails that will clearly show that sales is still on track at the account level. Then, you can route inbound and outbound lead activities to the SDRs and/or AEs.

Account scoring

To ensure that every team focuses on the same buyers, sales and marketing should agree upon scoring—ranking leads and accounts for their fit and sales-readiness.

Before anything else, make sure to score the accounts you want to pursue. This helps you determine which accounts meet your criteria so you can prioritize your resources correctly.

After you've chosen accounts and started delivering targeted marketing, you should score target accounts (at the account level) and lead activity (at the contact level) by tracking marketing qualified accounts (MQAs) instead of traditional marketing qualified leads (MQLs).

Using predictive analytics, you can determine the right account score threshold and weighting based on different data, including firmographic data (revenue, employee count, industry, and location), technology fit, intent data (gathered from a user's behavior across the web), and more. For buyers to be classified as MQAs and passed to sales, they should be a good fit, engage with you, and work at a company that matches your ideal customer profile.

Your marketing and sales teams should work together to determine account score thresholds. This process will help you find the best way to prioritize accounts and contacts.

Qualifying accounts

If your organization has many target accounts, the high lead volume may overwhelm sales. You'll need a different strategy. Use predictive scoring to prioritize lead follow-up based on a target account's fit, recent meaningful activities, activity type, and engagement. To do this at scale, you may want to revise and upgrade your lead scoring to an account-scoring model.

An account score groups the individuals involved in the buying process and provides an aggregate view of readiness to buy. If your buying groups are large, you may want to use sophisticated lead and account scoring to weight each persona differently. Then, the aggregated account score will show different levels of influence and importance for contacts. You can use a sum, an average, or even a weighted average of individual scores. This supports your sales team's efforts to target a set of accounts and focus on the ones most likely to convert.

Effective account scoring requires a way to determine which individuals belong in the same account. You can group by accounts in your customer relationship management (CRM) system or use a sophisticated marketing solution to infer connections based on IP addresses and company names.

Consider an ABM solution that uses AI and allows you to create multiple tiers of target account lists, like the example below:

|	Top 100	Tier 1	Tier 2
Account selection criteria	Strategic accounts selected by sales	Existing accounts in CRM with account score = 100	"Look-alike" accounts with account score = 100

Structuring your organization for ABM

Creating the right structure within both marketing and sales is vital. This means defining roles in marketing and sales in a way that helps you engage and close your target accounts more effectively.

Marketing roles to define include the following:

- Demand generation supports revenue goals by generating more qualified leads to pass to the sales team and focuses on activities like marketing programs, lead nurturing, and analytics for the entire customer journey

- Content marketing creates valuable and educational content to attract, inform, and engage an audience throughout the sales cycle

- Product marketing handles messaging, positioning, deal support, and sales enablement

- Customer marketing supports sales through customer advocacy, testimonials, and references

- Marketing operations monitors service level agreements (SLAs), scoring, and database cleanliness for the entire organization, providing marketing and sales with accurate data that helps the company deliver the right message at the right time

Sales roles to define include the following:

- Sales development representatives bridge the gap between sales and marketing, focus on reviewing, contacting, and qualifying inquiries, and deliver sales-ready accounts to account executives

- Account executives talk to the most qualified leads and work on accounts that have been qualified by sales development representatives (SDRs). Because AEs are generally the best closers in the sales organization, it's most efficient to limit them to only leads with a high potential of closing.

- Sales operations participate in sales commission plans, territory management, account selection, sales administration, deal support, systems and data management, and more. This team is critical to supporting the sales team's success.
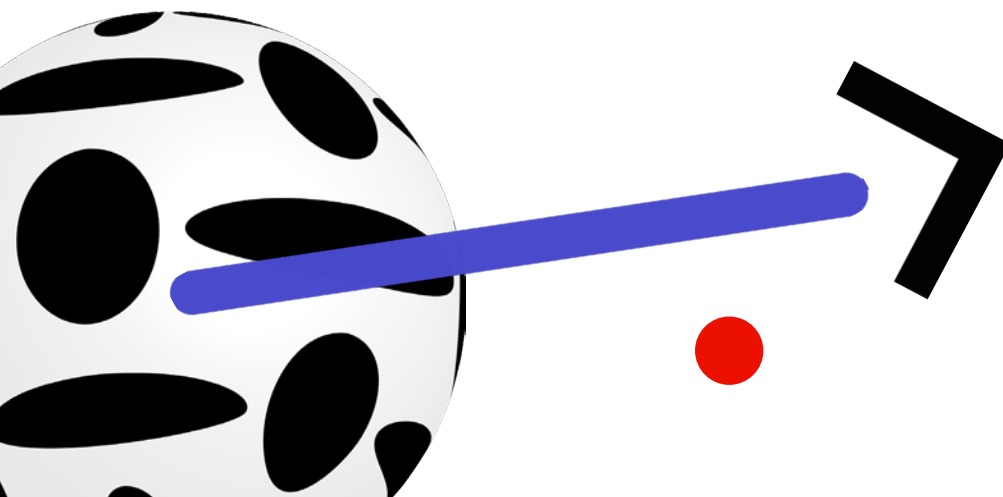
Create service level agreements

Even within a single organization, service level agreements (SLAs) can be an integral factor in your sales and marketing teams' success. An SLA formally defines the expected services one organization or team provides to another. For example, you can have an SLA from your internet provider about how much uptime you can expect as part of your business's contract.

Between sales and marketing, SLAs are critical to the success of ABM. Not only do they set terms for the hand-offs between the two teams, but they also ensure that no qualified lead gets left behind. As an example, you might create an SLA that asks sales to contact qualified leads within 24 hours to make sure the lead doesn't go cold. By doing so, sales can put all of marketing's hard work into play — and marketing can both showcase their successes and optimize their strategies.

In ABM, SLAs are specific to account contacts versus individual leads. They also specify progress toward defined key performance indicators (KPIs), like account penetration and contact frequency.

Ongoing collaboration

Once you have your sales and marketing alignment basics down and have started applying them to ABM, it's important for the teams to keep in close collaboration.

Plan regular communication

Although it will vary from team to team, especially if your teams are not in the same physical location, it's critical that the lines of communication between marketing and sales stay open. Communication can mean anything from an update email to quarterly in-depth sessions, online or in person. As a marketer, you may have to actively solicit feedback from sales. Don't just give communication lip service—plan for it.

You may want to arrange various types of meetings so you can evaluate your progress and make any necessary changes to your ABM strategy. Meetings could include any or all of the following:

- **Weekly updates.** Invite the core ABM team in sales and marketing. Share updates on a program level, brainstorm challenges, and check in.

- **Monthly check-ins.** Include a larger team and your executive sponsor, if available. Evaluate progress in target account tiers and the ABM program as a whole, share metrics from early indicators to pipeline, and discuss issues, like adherence to SLAs.

- **Quarterly reviews.** Conduct a deep dive into the business metrics, program successes, learnings, and overall account strategy. This meeting should involve the larger stakeholder group and is a good opportunity to consider continued investment and expansion of your ABM initiative.

Choosing your accounts

Depending on their markets, different organizations may implement various levels of ABM. Some organizations might focus solely on high-value account tiers, others may target only key verticals, and still others may fold their ABM campaigns into their broad-reaching demand generation strategy. Whatever your objectives are—from acquisition to buyer retention—every ABM strategy requires you to know who your ideal customer is and which accounts to select for your target account lists.

Identifying accounts

With unique goals and strategies, every company will have a different way of selecting their target accounts—and determining the criteria for their selection.

Choose your targeting criteria

Your stakeholders should be aligned on how to identify your company's target accounts. Here are a few factors to consider when developing the criteria for how you will choose your accounts:

- **High-yield:** Identify top moneymakers and their characteristics. They are likely to result in larger-than-average deals for your sales team and generate substantial revenue over the long term.

- **Profitability:** Seek look-alike accounts that match your best buyer profile and search for existing buyers with cross-sell and upsell potential. These accounts are likely to produce the most revenue and highest lifetime value.

- **Product fit:** Look for companies with business needs that clearly match your solutions, which increases the likelihood that they will purchase.

- **Quick wins (high deal velocity):** Search for accounts that typically have a short purchase decision process due to their size or structure.
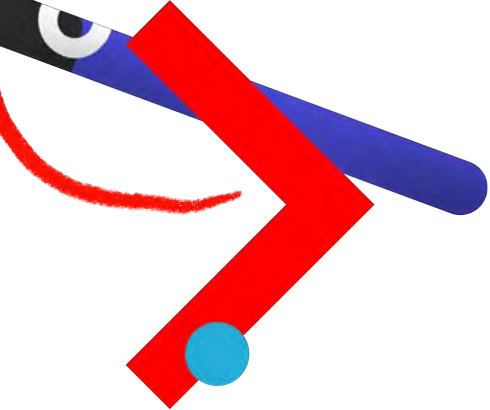
- **Strategic importance:** Target accounts that align with your company's strategy—for instance, companies that fit with your plan to enter a new market or territory. Sometimes acquiring new, big brands is a strategic goal.

- **Territory:** Pursue accounts in a specific region of the country to support sales directly. If your sales teams are segmented by territory, this can help them increase buyers in their region and drive higher ROI.

- **Competitors:** Go after companies using solutions that compete with those your company offers. A marketing solution with a strong partner ecosystem can help you identify companies using your competitor's products. If your competitor is doing well with certain types of companies, consider targeting that profile.

To further identify which accounts to target, do some research to help identify potential targets. Here's how to start:

- **Implement AI:** An ABM solution that uses AI can learn from massive amounts of data, including fit and intent data for your existing high-value customer accounts. These ABM solutions will automatically score and rank your target accounts and provide propensity scores based on which accounts are the best fit and more likely to close faster.

- **Talk to sales:** Your sales team has great insight. They may have had conversations with companies that didn't close, and they might be able to offer you valuable insights into the types of accounts to pursue. Sales may suggest their own list of target accounts, so look for overlaps between the two lists. Then, agree on a system of account scoring and score the remaining potential target accounts to see which are most likely to close.

- **Review CRM history:** Look in your CRM system to see which companies fit into the high-yield or quick- win categories. Determine which factors distinguish these companies and create a profile for the organizations that are most likely to generate large deals. You can also try building a list of companies similar to those who have already purchased your products or services.

- **Discover existing opportunities:** With an ABM solution that's native to your marketing platform, it's easy to figure out whether any of the accounts that match the profile you've developed have already engaged with your company. These accounts may be more receptive to your marketing and show quicker results once you target them with custom campaigns.

Use data to make informed targeting decisions

Before you get started with ABM, your marketing and sales operations teams need to prepare. This prep work will help you make informed choices about account selection and distribution.

Marketing and sales operations can help you get a clear picture of the following four factors:

1. **Sales data (CRM):** Find out which data is included and what it tells you about the accounts in your database. See if your sales and marketing operations teams can identify trends in your highest value buyers today. Determine if you need to fill data gaps before you can get a clear view of your target accounts. Learn how operations organizes and defines parent and child account hierarchies in your CRM system. For example, the corporation that pays the bills may be the parent account and employees who make purchases may be the child accounts under it.

2. **Marketing data (marketing automation and demand generation):** Find out how operations organizes marketing engagement and activity data. Determine what marketing data they value most. Ask if they have lead and account scoring set up, and how these will impact or be used for your ABM programs. Decide how you will share marketing activity and engagement data with your sales team. Start thinking about how you can augment your existing lead-based data structure and programs to empower your new ABM efforts.

3. **Sales territories:** Before you begin to choose target accounts, it's critical to understand the volume and distribution of your current leads. Ask how you are currently dividing leads across territories. It's tough to get sales buy-in if a large percentage of the target accounts fall in one or two territories

4. **Ideal customer profiling:** Make sure you understand what your ideal customer profile is and how you are updating it each quarter. Find out if it's backed up by data. If you don't know which accounts to target or have already exhausted your initial list, consider working with marketing operations to build a predictive model. Predictive analytics uses AI to identify what your ideal buyer profile looks like based on your existing high-value accounts and their common data attributes. Then predictive analytics uses those attributes along with third-party data to scan prospective accounts and determine which are similar. Analytics can take into account millions of data attributes from both internal and external sources (including a company's tech stack, hiring trends, social media activities, funding level, marketing solution, CRM, blog posts, third-party websites, and social media channels). Apply machine learning to identify those showing the highest propensity to purchase.

Account selection

Once you feel confident about your ideal customer profile, use it to select and rank the right target accounts. Selecting accounts is one of the most crucial parts of starting ABM because it dictates how you are going to invest your ABM resources. The original ABM goals that were agreed on between sales, marketing, and the rest of the organization—and your ideal customer profile (ICP)—are what drive successful account selection.

Account selection is traditionally a long, tedious, manual process that is done by sales in a vacuum using gut feelings, opinions, and sales-only data from the CRM system. Use the AI-based profile you created above to help speed up the process. It will make the list more accurate by incorporating additional data and insights faster than any human could process them.

In addition to creating your ICP, a predictive marketing analytics tool can use the input data to train AI models, then scan a list of accounts to find common factors and produce a recommended target account list.

Examples of predictive target account lists

ICP	Strategy	Input data (training data)	Scan data	Output data (account list)
Account selection criteria	Acquire new brands inside existing vertical	Upload a list of recent high-value, closed-won buyer deals	Scan my entire database of account contacts	List of prioritized best-fit target accounts based on recent high-value, closed-won deals
Predictive upsell and cross-Sell list	Upsell or cross-sell existing buyers a new product	Upload a list of recent existing buyers who purchased upsell or cross-sell products	Scan my entire list of existing customer accounts	List of prioritized best-fit target accounts based on recent closed-won upsell or cross-sell deals
Predictive quick-win list	Increase closed-won opportunities to hit last-minute goals for the current quarter	Upload a list of recent high velocity closed-won buyer accounts	Scan my entire database of accounts with open opportunities	List of prioritizedbest-fit open opportunities with accounts that have high propensity to close faster than others

Ranking accounts

Once you have a list of potential accounts, choose which accounts to pursue first. To start, choose two to five lists of potential targets. Fewer lists will let you repeat your process, identify improvements, and implement them so you can optimize your process.

Prioritizing your lists is critical to demonstrate early success and maximize your ROI from ABM. Give priority to the account types that are most relevant to you—the accounts where you have a good understanding of the potential buying journey and already have content to support it.

Most predictive analytics tools have intent data built in. Intent data shows accounts actively conducting research online, which helps you decide which target accounts to focus on first. Intent data shouldn't be the only tool to set priorities. Still, you'll want to identify which accounts are currently expressing high intent and in which areas.

You can also use intent data to see which dormant accounts are starting to express intent again, signaling to your sales and marketing teams that you should re-engage them. In addition, with the right marketing automation solution, you can alert sales development representatives (SDRs) to reach out immediately when intent scores reach threshold levels for target accounts.

If your solution contains both marketing automation and predictive analytics, you can combine the fit and intent data with your marketing engagement data. This will help you see which of your target accounts might have already engaged with your brand on both online and offline marketing channels. This will help you hyper-prioritize your target accounts for ABM.

Thinking in tiers

As you develop your target account lists, you may find that you have many and that their priority differs throughout the organization. You may want to think and talk about these differences as "tiers." For example, your most important list of accounts would be your tier one accounts. These top accounts will get more time, resources, and marketing and sales activities dedicated to helping them close. For tier two accounts and beyond, you may have a larger target list and invest less.

To understand each account's potential for success, you'll need a solution that can combine different parameters into a score that you can compare across accounts. These scores may incorporate firmographics, cumulative behaviors, or even predictive capabilities.

Examples of ABM tactics for tiered ABM account lists

Types of programs	Programs	Target account list size		
		Top 20	Tier 1: ~400	Tier 2: ~1,200
Web personalization	Web personalization for individual accounts	Yes	No	No
	Web personalization based on attributes (such as industry)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Direct Mail	Low-value direct mail	Yes	Yes	Yes
	High-value direct mail	Yes	No	No
In-person programs	Trade show invites and free passes	Yes	Yes	No
	Lunch and learns	Yes	No	No
	On-site visits	Yes	No	No
Database emails	Targeted emails customized for accounts	Yes	No	No
	Mass database sends	Yes	Yes	Yes
Online advertising	Advertising on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, pay-per-click, and Twitter (based on attributes such as industry or competitive solutions) in-house or via third-party tools	Yes	Yes	Yes
Content syndication	Content syndication for target accounts	Yes	Yes	No
	Content syndication based on attributes, such as verticals	Yes	Yes	No
Sales outreach	Calling campaigns	Yes	Yes	No
	Drive attendance campaigns	Yes	No	No
	Target account webinars	Yes	No	No
Webinars/virtual events	Broad-based webinars	Yes	Yes	Yes
Appointment setting	Target account appointment setting	Yes	Yes	No
Contact discovery programs with vendors	Opt-in campaigns	Yes	Yes	No
	Qualified lead discovery program	Yes	Yes	No

Mapping personas to accounts

Effective marketing starts with understanding your audience. That's even more important when your audience makes up an entire buying group or a specific set of key individuals that decides when, what, and where to purchase. ABM inherently requires you to have a deep understanding of your target accounts and their pain points. This is the same foundation that you need for developing marketing personas.

Here are a few critical items to consider about key personas:

- Who they are
- What they care about
- Where they consume information
- When do different types of content work best for them

Once you've selected and prioritized your target accounts, you'll want to start mapping personas to key contacts inside each account that you confirmed earlier. Then, you'll be better able to understand which buying groups you should target. You need to understand what challenges each persona faces, how they make decisions, and who informs those decisions. This information is critical for a successful ABM initiative and should be an ongoing effort.

Build a plan to focus on the right part of the organization. Gather research on the following:

- Financial health
- Business initiatives
- Personnel developments
- Technologies
- Organizational structure
- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis
- Industry analysis

Account mapping tools

The marketing technology landscape is expansive. Here's an example of some technologies you can consider to augment your account mapping.

Account Data

Linked in

InsideView®

D&B Hoovers

REACHFORCE

Account Scoring

leadspace

Anaplan

Lattice

EVERSTRING

Niche Solution Ex. Competitive Data

built with

Datanyze

GHOSTERY

Pilot programs

Once you have decided to implement an ABM strategy in your organization, consider using a pilot program to launch your strategy and demonstrate success.

Think of a pilot as a lower-risk venture into ABM that will help you learn about the model and the strategy you have set up. A pilot gives marketing and sales an opportunity to build trust in each other and work toward the same goal. You'll be able to learn about and get feedback on a number of significant questions, such as the following:

- **Account selection process:** Did your model for choosing accounts work? Are you seeing early indicators of success? If not, what lessons have you learned? What issues have you faced—for example, if reps are churning through accounts, how do you find new buyers?

- **Marketing and sales alignment:** Are you seamlessly sharing information? How is your collaboration working? What needs to improve?

- **Team education process:** Did your strategy go as planned? Were there kinks in the system? If so, how can you educate the team to correct them?

- **Scoring:** Does the account score and the lead's behavior score accurately indicate the buying stage? Do you need to adjust it?

- **Account load per salesperson:** Depending on the size of your pilot and how many reps you have, you may discover how thoroughly your team attends to and nurtures accounts. Do you need to recalibrate? Or have you uncovered a best practice for your organization?

- **Measurement and reporting:** You'll learn many lessons from any good pilot program. But you'll also get hard metrics for benchmarking. Did you see early indicators of success—like account penetration—that show the momentum of your program? If you don't, go back to the drawing board before you invest more.

ABM can have a long sales cycle. You'll need to show the momentum of your ABM activities to achieve the continued investment and buy-in needed to drive sales. As you think about your strategy, identify accounts and metrics that will help you demonstrate early indicators of success.

"
Mediocre marketers think in terms of campaigns. Great marketers think in terms of growth frameworks."

Neil Patel

Marketing expert and author of New York Times bestseller, *Hustle: The Power to Charge Your Life with Money, Meaning, and Momentum*

Creating the right content

Content is an effective way to communicate value to your ABM audiences—and value is what will break through the noise and engage them. Tailoring content for the individuals in your accounts can help give them a fantastic customer experience across every channel, which can lead to more loyal buyers and increased revenue. Using a few key techniques, you can create scalable content that supports your ABM programs across the entire buyer lifecycle.

The insight that you've drawn from your account profiling, persona mapping, and account information (such as fit, intent, and engagement data) will help you create content for target accounts more effectively, especially during the mid- and late-funnel stages. Even if you don't start with persona-specific targeting, understanding the decision-maker personas will help you better track the account or buyer journey.

Content to support your sales team

Your sales team needs content too. Some key materials include sales playbooks, battle cards, thought leadership, pitch decks, email templates, recorded trainings, and journey decks. Be sure to consider selecting an ABM solution that integrates with sales engagement tools. With that, you can keep the sales development team up to date on the latest messaging and positioning, ensuring that they can tailor their outreach for specific accounts.

Map content to accounts and individuals

Consider building your content around one or more of the following ideas:

- Account specifics, like industry, business initiatives, or competitive dynamics
- A specific stage in the sales cycle
- A specific role, such as CFO or CIO

Assessing content

Creating original content takes time and money. Before you start to create new content, take inventory of your current content to see if you already have some that you can use.

As you review your existing content, ask yourself whether it still applies to your target accounts, needs updating, or should be retired. This will help you identify content gaps so you can start planning on creating the content you need. If you don't have any usable existing content, that's okay, too. But without conducting an inventory first, you'll never know how much new content creation work you have ahead of you.

Sales feedback

Although content falls under marketing's responsibilities, you may want to get input from sales as well. Marketing will have data that demonstrates which pieces have the best digital responses. But sales will know what content works best with real people when it's time to close an account.

Developing a plan

Once you've identified your personas, your existing content, and your content gaps, you can start building a content strategy for your target accounts. Use a content and messaging matrix to map which pieces of content—and what specific messages—you'll use to reach your target accounts across the entire buying journey.

Marketing will probably create the bulk of the content—for emails, website, social media, and so on. Sales will work with the content marketing creates, integrating it into personal emails, phone calls, and meetings. It's important to keep your content delivery organized so that no target account receives duplicate or irrelevant messages, so look to your marketing platform and CRM for tools to help you manage your communications.

Test for the best

Iteration is a crucial part of marketing—and content is no different. By building in testing to your content approach, you can refine, optimize, and improve over time. If an asset does not work for your target audience at a specific stage of their buying journey, test another piece. The best ABM, including content for ABM, must continually evolve to deliver value to your target accounts.

> " I feel like as B2B marketers, we don't put enough emphasis on the way you can make human connections but add scale.

Cassandra Clark
Senior Marketing Manager-Demand Generation, LinkedIn

Fill in the blanks on this worksheet with the content you'll use to engage the personas in your target accounts.

Buying stage	Early Pre-purchase	Middle Commited to change	Late Evaluation
Objective(s)	Build awareness and address pain points	Help buyers find you when they are looking for solutions	Deliver company specific information to help evaluate and reaffirm selection
Content types	Blogs, eBooks, research data, infographics, webinars, videos	Buying guides, RFP templates, ROI calculators, analyst reports	Pricing, demos, services info, third-party reviews, buyer case studies
Persona #1 Practitioner			
Persona #2 Decisionmaker			
Persona #3 IT expert			
Persona #4 Naysayer			

Here's an example of a matrix that maps content to the buying journey of a higher education target account.

Segment	Awareness	Internet	Evaluation
Higher education	Empowering higher education relationship management: It all starts with marketing (Frost & Sullivan paper)	Enrollment, engagement, donation: How higher education can improve its grades with marketing automation (eBook)	Marketing Nation Community & Purple Select advocacy program (community and advocacy program)
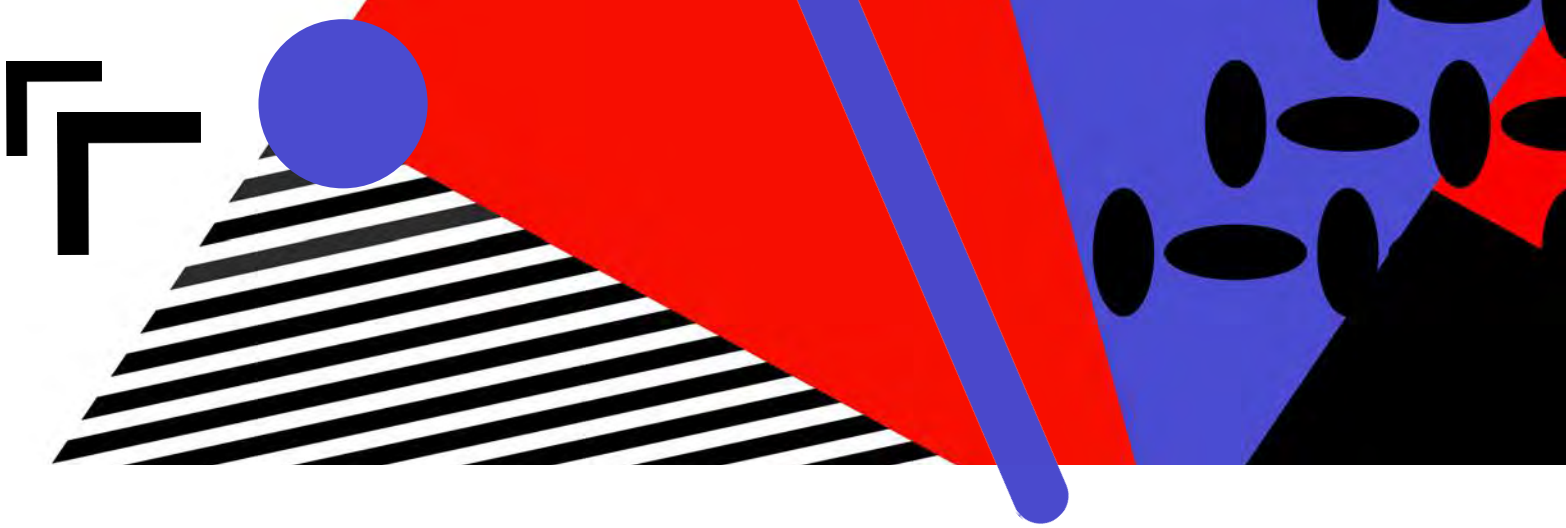
Engaging across channels

Today's buyers are used to switching seamlessly between channels and devices. This means that capturing the attention of your accounts requires you not only to engage buyers with your content, but also to meet them at every touchpoint of their buyer journeys. It's imperative to communicate the right message on the right channel and the right device.

Account-based experiences across every channel

Once you have a solid understanding of the accounts you're pursuing and the stakeholder personas within them, you can engage them with personal content across channels. Every touchpoint of your target buyer's experience should be consistent, complementary, and cumulative—building on the previous touchpoint no matter which channels your buyers use. That means you must think about the channels where your potential buyer engages and, using a systematic approach, coordinate your story across each one.

To do this effectively, you'll want a unified ABM platform—something that covers all your bases and leaves no gaps in functionality. Complete solutions natively offer both ABM and automation, which provides cross-channel marketing and advertising capabilities that give you a foundation to deliver informed and coordinated account-based experiences (ABX) to your target accounts.
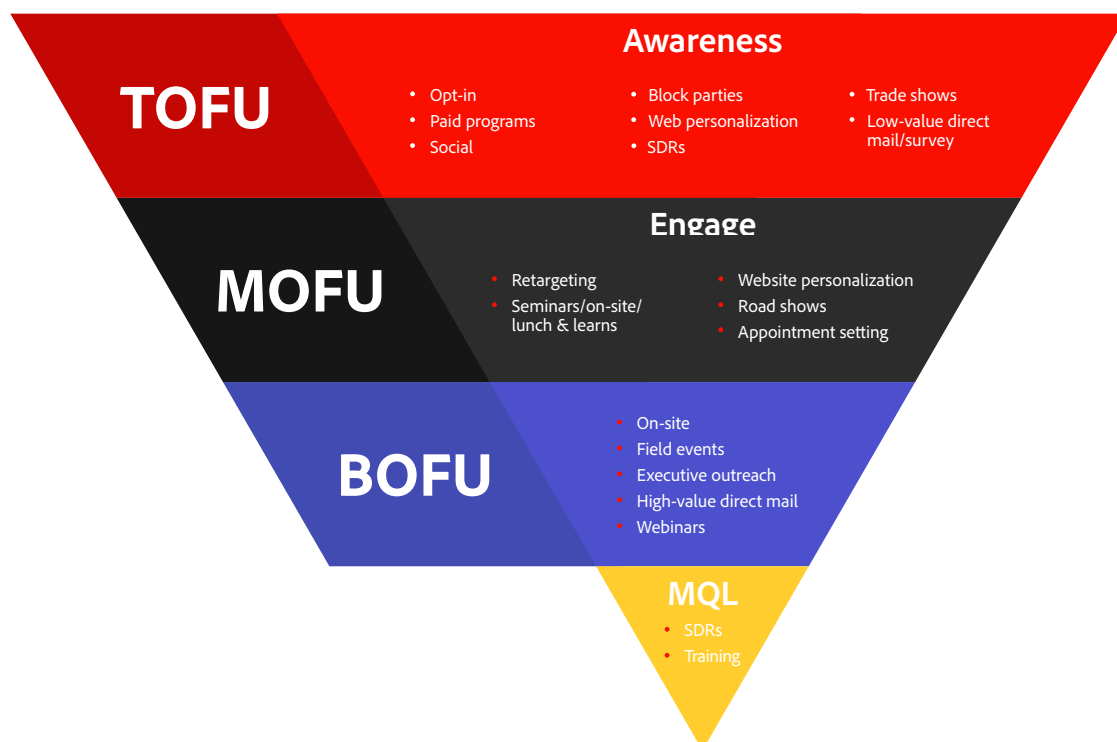
Tools for cross-channel marketers should help them do the following:

- **Listen:** Pay close attention to a target buyer's behavior across all channels to create a single, integrated view of their activity.

- **Learn:** Process all your target buyer's digital signals for a better understanding of your buyer.

- **Engage:** Manage, personalize, and act on conversations with your target buyer across channels.

A funnel approach

Another reason to select a solution that natively supports lead and account capabilities is that, even with an account-based strategy, leads flow through your database like a funnel. Leads that have just become aware of your brand, product, or service exist at the top of the funnel (TOFU). Leads that have engaged with your content or offers are at the middle of the funnel (MOFU). And leads in the process of evaluating their purchasing decisions are at the bottom of the funnel (BOFU). Your objectives vary at each stage, so you may want to use different marketing tactics and channels for personal, consistent messaging across stages.

The tactics and channels you use will differ based on a buyer's familiarity with your company. For example, you might use web personalization to display targeted content and offers to website visitors, allowing you to reach a broader audience from your target accounts. But you may host a webinar, live online Q&A, or other event for select later-stage buyers who are already familiar with your offerings and are worth the investment.

Awareness

TOFU
- Opt-in
- Paid programs
- Social
- Block parties
- Web personalization
- SDRs
- Trade shows
- Low-value direct mail/survey

Engage

MOFU
- Retargeting
- Seminars/on-site/ lunch & learns
- Website personalization
- Road shows
- Appointment setting

BOFU
- On-site
- Field events
- Executive outreach
- High-value direct mail
- Webinars

MQL
- SDRs
- Training

> " Today, marketers can use data to look at an account in its entirety and understand what messages, programs, and timing work best across all decision influencers and decision makers.

Nadim Hossain

VP, Product Management at Databricks

Online channels

Although this isn't a comprehensive list of all the channels available, we'll cover the core online marketing channels you may want to use to target and engage your key accounts.

Web

As you work to engage your target accounts across channels, web personalization can help you create and continue a custom experience. When customers land on your website, you have only seconds to connect and establish relevance.

Account-based web personalization focuses on a targeted and predefined list of accounts and individuals. This technology enables a website to identify a visitor's company, cross-checking them against a named account list in real time. If the visitor is from your list, they can be shown a targeted and specific message, offer, asset, or call to action. With web personalization technology and a marketing solution, you can make this experience even more granular and focused by targeting the individuals within an account, giving them unique and specific messages.

Brands targeting millennials and Gen Z will find this especially critical because these buyers expect personalization. Some ABM solutions use AI to offer relevant content to web visitors at just the right time, which increases conversion rates and provides a better buyer experience.
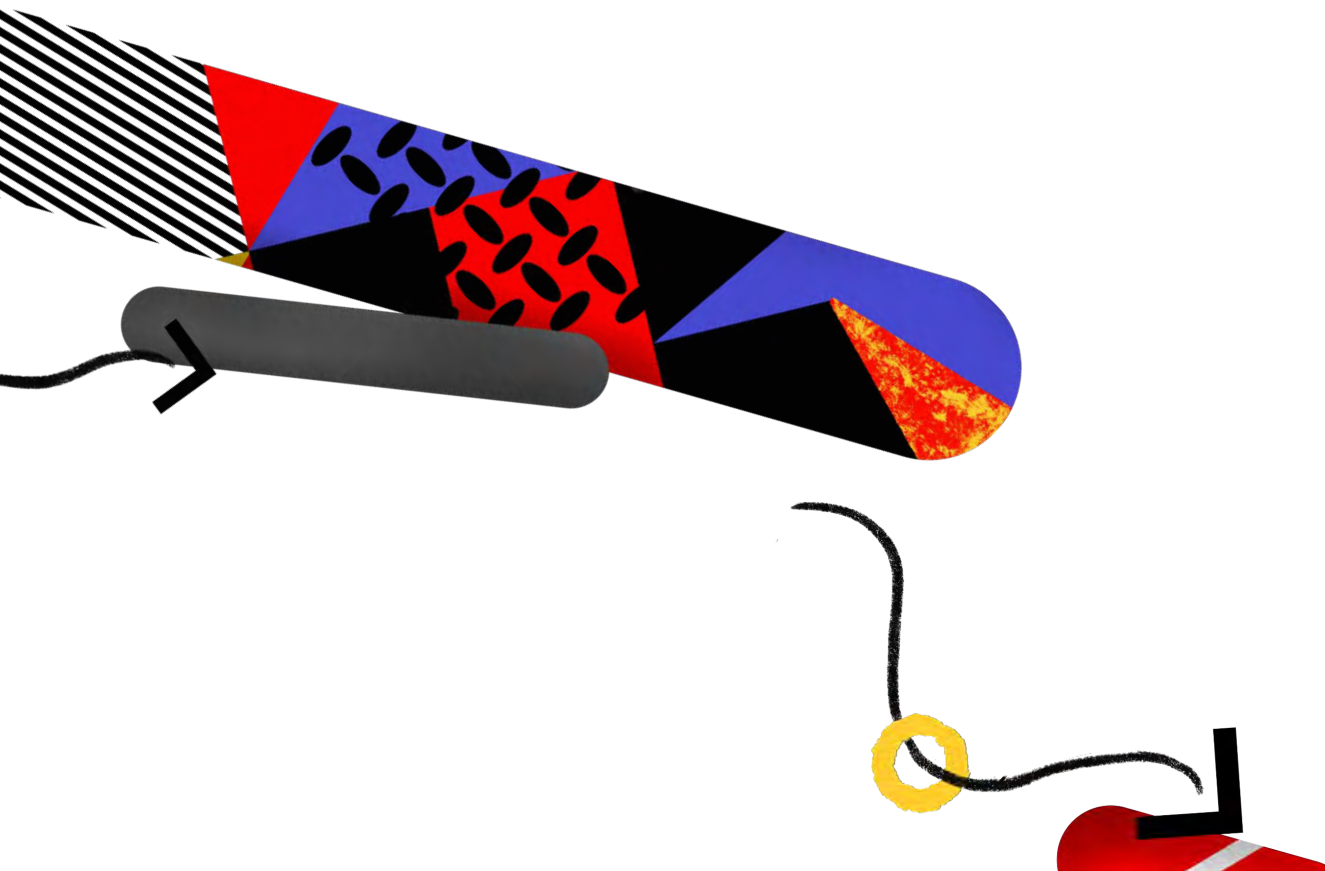
Conversational marketing tools like chatbots are a great way to take your web personalization to the next level. These tools also help keep sales and marketing teams aligned as customers engage with your brand. Chatbots are proven to increase web conversion and daily demo requests, as well as shortening the sales cycle. They provide site visitors with a highly personal account-based conversation that is automated to answer questions, gather needs, and even route to a live conversation with the sales rep for their account.

Use chatbots to recognize if the visitor is part of a target account, and tailor the conversation based on the industry they are in or their challenges. Work with sales to agree on the initial automated messaging for each target account. You can also use the chatbot to automatically look at the sales rep's calendar. If the sales rep is unable to chat at that moment, suggest times for an initial call to the site visitor to boost the chances of connecting them with the sales rep.

Email

Email marketing is still one of the most effective ways to market to prospective and existing buyer audiences that are already known—especially your target accounts.

Account nurturing across the entire buyer lifecycle is better with emails that pick up where the web experience left off. Marketers can send custom emails to their target accounts that continue a conversation or start a new one. Some ABM solutions even use AI to dynamically tailor email content to be hyper-relevant to the account and contact.

AI can further increase your web and email conversions by automatically recognizing which piece of content is working best for certain account-based audiences. AI is ideal to help you scale your personalization efforts for ABM because it analyzes data in real time and can also adjust and improve your campaigns faster than any team of humans could. For example, try offering multiple pieces of content to a selection of your ABM audiences. Then let AI recognize which one is driving the most conversions over time so it can default to showing the most effective piece of content. Use those insights to repurpose your most successful piece of content so you can continue benefitting from the piece that performs the best.

Digital advertising

Digital advertising is one of the most popular channels for online acquisition, because it offers the ability to reach buyers beyond the channels under the marketing team's control. With ABM, it's extremely important to extend your brand's reach beyond your controlled marketing channels because it ensures that your account-based experiences are ongoing and continuous whenever your buyers are browsing the web. Start thinking about the types of ABM paid media you might use—such as acquisition, retargeting, and look-alike campaigns—and be sure to include use cases to discover new accounts.
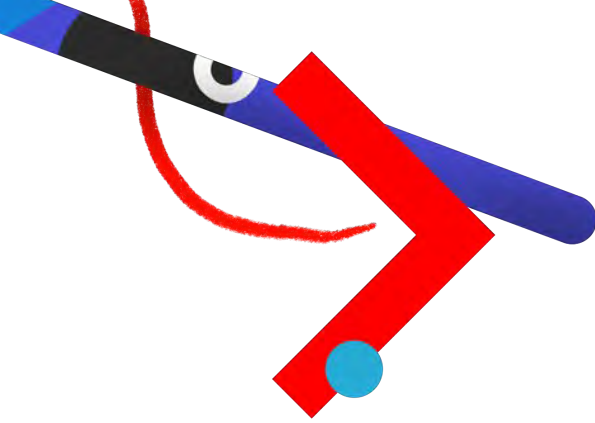
Campaign types

Ad targeting for ABM

There are three common types of campaigns you can run when you're doing ABM — acquisition, retargeting, and look-alikes. By using different campaign types strategically, you'll be able to connect with buyers across the full scope of their customer journey.

Campaign types	Strategies	Use cases
Acquisition Expose your brand across many audiences.	**Target known contacts** Target your known contacts within current customer contacts.	**Nurture** Personalize multiple ad campaigns based on different nurture program streams.
Retargeting Bring buyers back to your website and landing pages.	**Discover more known contacts** Discover new contacts within existing customer accounts or prospective target accounts.	**Events & webinars** Personalize ad campaigns that include forms for registration.
Look-alikes Discover new buyers that look like your best customers.	**Discover net new contacts** Discover new contacts that look like your best customers.	**Web & email** Personalize ad campaigns that include forms for registration.

Acquisition

Paid media is an effective way to maintain brand awareness or keep your brand top of mind, especially for target accounts that you know are actively engaging in a buying cycle or expressing intent. Build ABM audiences using intent data and target them across the web with personal content based on the topics they find interesting.

Acquisition

Paid media is an effective way to maintain brand awareness or keep your brand top of mind, especially for target accounts that you know are actively engaging in a buying cycle or expressing intent. Build ABM audiences using intent data and target them across the web with personal content based on the topics they find interesting.

Retargeting

Website retargeting—which places display ads across an ad network for a website visitor who does not take the desired action—is one way to use intent data to customize content across the web. Another way is to push lists of your key influencers from target accounts to your ad platform and target them with relevant offers. With both web and ad channels communicating with your marketing solution, you can use ad targeting and retargeting to offer a truly personal and coordinated cross-channel experience.

Let's take a deeper look at how this works. By placing a tracking pixel on your website, you can follow your target account contact when they leave. Then you can place an ad on an unrelated website to stay top of mind and either persuade them to come back or offer a relevant next piece of content. This way, you're not just serving ads to target accounts at the right time. You're also retargeting them with the right ad—one specific to their needs and interests.

If your web personalization system is part of an overall engagement solution, you can use a site visitor's lead score, engagement score, or buyer stage to further personalize web experiences and retargeting ads. Showing your ads to the right buyers—those who have already engaged with your brand and expressed interest—is a great way to improve ad ROI. Making those ads even more personal can further increase your results and ROI.

Look-alikes

Another great reason to do paid media for ABM is to discover contacts and accounts. You can achieve this by running look-alike campaigns. ABM paid media networks have pools of contacts already mapped to specific accounts. This means you can match your accounts and contacts with theirs to target contacts you already know and contacts inside a target account that your brand hasn't converted yet. In other words, paid media is great for increasing your target account lists. You can also use B2B networks for discovering net-new accounts. Send them a list of your current target accounts, then use their data enrichment and look-alike models to suggest similar accounts that you could target with ads across the web.

When considering doing paid media for ABM, make sure your solution offers ABM nurturing and automation capabilities. This will help ensure that, as contacts from target accounts convert, you can put them in the appropriate nurture program. Then, you can continue the appropriate ABX with the most relevant messaging based on where they are in the ABM funnel.
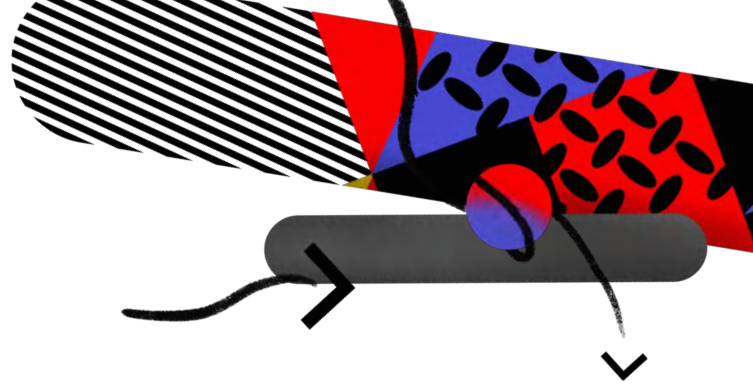
Offline channels

Although this isn't a comprehensive list of all the channels available, we'll cover the core channels you may want to consider as you target and engage your key accounts.

Direct mail

Historic approaches to direct mail largely centered around long hours of preparing one-off mailers painstakingly pulled together and sent to large audiences. However, a digital marketing solution with marketing automation will use existing audience information to dynamically customize assets that are tied to your campaign strategy. Then, you can send your direct mail when the right buying signals arise—allowing you to personalize direct mail at scale. For example, once a decision maker from a target account downloads an asset from your website, it can trigger your system to send them a piece of direct mail automatically.

Direct mail can be costly, so you'll want to start with clean data to ensure that each piece you send is personal and relevant—and sent to the right address.

Events and webinars

Events can help you go the extra mile in making a personal connection with your target accounts, whether it's online or in person. Coordinate the type of event with the stage of your buyer's journey. Buyers who are newer to your brand will respond differently to an event invitation than those who are already familiar with your products and services. Think about how you can use your time with your buyer to provide them with value. For example, inviting a thought leader or influencer to a group event will provide all your guests with new information—and a memorable experience.

Webinars are great for marketing thought leadership and establishing credibility, no matter where your target accounts are in their buyer journeys. Similar to other types of events, consider inviting a thought leader or third-party speaker, depending on your webinar's goals. The most successful webinars tend to be less "salesy" and more inspiring. For ABM, target your webinars by industry or vertical so the content and thought leadership is relevant to the accounts you'd like to invite.

By incorporating both online and offline events into your ABM mix, you can accomplish your objectives for every stage of the buyer's journey.

ABM for outbound prospecting

Multichannel approaches aren't just a best practice for marketing. Sales development teams should use both online and offline channels to drive outbound opportunities. Based on the accounts that marketing and sales decide to pursue, sales can prioritize its outreach and follow up on accounts whose higher scores indicate the propensity to purchase.

Sales should use a variety of channels to research and target different individuals within each account. Informed by data from your marketing automation solution and CRM system, sales can ensure that they're having relevant conversations with their buyers and tracking their progress. Although sales is doing most of the outreach, marketing should still be closely involved, improving sales enablement, coordinating programs and messaging, and providing coverage when needed—all while ensuring two-way visibility of activities across teams.

Here are a few channels you should consider for outbound prospecting:

- **Email:** Email is one of the most effective channels of communication, whether it's for ABM or a broad-reaching strategy. With automated solutions, you can send emails at scale and still have a personal touch. Make sure this is integrated with your marketing automation and CRM systems so you're able to track every communication.

- **Company website:** Browse your target accounts' websites to find information that you can use in your communications, such as product or service information, recent news, or their mission statement. You can also look at specific job openings on their website to see whether they're hiring for somebody who uses an ABM solution, which can give you more information about the technology they are currently using.

- **Twitter and LinkedIn:** These social platforms are great for listening to what your buyers are talking about and sharing with their networks, which can help you customize your outreach. You can then respond and build the relationship on a more personal level.

- **Tech trackers:** Use browser plug-ins like Datanyze or D&B Hoovers to get insight into what the tech stack looks like for your target accounts.

Measuring, analyzing, and optimizing

To gauge just how successful your ABM strategy is and improve results over time, you need to measure how deeper, more coordinated engagement impacts revenue. This calls for more visibility into your marketing and sales efforts. Instead of looking at individual lead engagement, you need to focus on measuring overall account engagement—a critical ABM success metric across both specific and multiple accounts. Your ABM solution must make these results actionable, intelligent, and available in real time.

Your revenue model

An important first step for campaign measurement is defining and agreeing upon your revenue model and its stages. For B2B organizations, the model used to be a broad-reaching marketing funnel. For ABM, the model may look different.

Traditional demand generation works by creating awareness with a large audience. But with ABM, you start by identifying qualified leads within the right buying group, then work on engaging, expanding, and driving advocacy with them. ABM requires you to work in tandem with your sales team to identify accounts, target them, and measure overall account engagement, which removes any uncertainty around revenue attribution.

Measure over time

Some marketers only measure their campaigns immediately after deployment. In doing so, they miss some critical metrics.

Metrics that tie directly to revenue take time to mature, especially for high-value accounts. You'll need to look at different indicators over time. Understanding and agreeing on the indicators for success at different points in time will not only help you measure your ABM strategy and program success, but will also help you communicate momentum to the rest of your organization, making it easier to continue to invest.

Although you set goals and establish initial analytics as a baseline before you launch your ABM campaigns, you need to keep a constant eye on metrics as your campaigns run and once they conclude.

Return to your analytics often to see how campaigns are performing for target account groups. Learning and fine-tuning is easier with ABM because you can focus on a smaller group than you do with traditional demand generation activities.

Look at your campaign performance and ask whether you're appealing to the targeted accounts. You need to know if customers are engaging and taking the next steps you outlined and whether the actual buyer journey is close to the one you laid out.

Establish metrics for all stages

To determine program success, you'll need to look at how your ABM campaigns perform in each stage of the funnel (top, mid, and bottom) to understand whether you're achieving your objectives.

Top of funnel

Although it may take time for ROI-centric metrics to mature, you can easily determine an account's early levels of interaction and gauge future performance. Find out if contacts from a target account have visited your website and if they've downloaded or engaged with content. This information lets you know what you can initially expect from the account.

The most important reason to establish analytics up front is to create a strong foundation for your ABM program reporting. Here are some additional benefits from setting up analytics first:

• Acquire a baseline

• Provide value to sales

• Score quick wins

To understand how your target accounts are responding to your messages, you'll want to track account scores right from the start to understand their overall engagement.

If you aren't seeing engagement across your target accounts, you should revisit and rethink your program mix and content strategy. If you are seeing engagement, you want to look at specific channel metrics to see which channels are performing the best. Some of those channel metrics may include ad views and web traffic.

> " Sixty to 80 percent of the buyer's journey is hidden or pre-funnel. But, intent data and ABM can help you proactively target those buyers when they're showing a propensity to purchase
>
> **Andrew Yee**
>
> Founder & CEO, Triblio

Middle of funnel

You'll also want to look at these middle-of-funnel marketing campaign and channel metrics:

- Web engagement to identify potential buyers

- CRM information that sales logged

- Sales feedback to see how close buyers are to engaging

Bottom of funnel

Although measuring bottom-of-funnel revenue may take some time, you need an understanding of overall revenue to determine project success. Without that metric, you have little way of knowing whether the campaign earned a return on your investment. This information is essential to secure the budget for future campaigns.

Look at late-stage metrics from your ABM campaign, including opportunities created and new buyers.

Analytics that inform

As you set up reporting and analytics, you'll need to see the status and progress of your ABM activities from a high-level program view down to the individual account activities.

Understanding your success at all levels—from account insights to account score to account-level rollup of lead data—will not only help you fine-tune marketing activities and engagement for each account, but ultimately provide sales with the information they need to close the deal.

ABM dashboard

ABM dashboards show marketers and sales leaders a high-level view of the status and results of their ABM campaigns. For example, a dashboard might highlight the top 10 accounts, based on pipeline.

The account dashboard should provide a deeper look at a specific list of accounts. In this example, the list shows marketers the number of named accounts, account list score, and pipeline generated to date.

Named account dashboard

The named account dashboard gives you the most in-depth look at your target account metrics. It provides all the relevant information about an account in one place, showing key metrics such as account score, number of individuals, and current pipeline. In this dashboard, you can view the top ten leads from your target accounts and any notable behavioral or account information. By seeing the target account's activity, sales reps can have more relevant, effective conversations.

Within the named accounts dashboard, sales and marketing can roll up all the opportunities at an account level. This shows the marketer open opportunities, buyer journey stage, pipeline amount, account owner, and expected close date.

In addition, an advanced report builder gives marketers a way to measure ABM program impact on specific accounts using a variety of filters and visualizations.

> " No matter what your marketing strategy is, the primary KPI to track success is always going to be revenue. However, because the time from first touch to closed-won revenue can be lengthy, it is still valuable to measure indicators of revenue at various stages of the funnel— from engagement to deal size, velocity, and win rate.
>
> **Dave Rigotti**
> Director of Account-Based Marketing, Adobe

Additional reports

ABM is a targeted strategy, so you'll need to look beyond metrics that measure marketing-sourced pipeline. Instead, you must demonstrate how your programs influenced deals and improved ROI. Effective ABM programs should result in shorter time from initial contact to sale and more closed-won deals.

This means you need to track additional metrics, including the following:

- **Account penetration:** The number of key people, including decision makers and influencers, that are in your database and opted in.

- **Average selling price (ASP):** The deal size of closed-won opportunities from target accounts. The average deal size of target account opportunities should be higher than that for other accounts.

- **Average rate of return (ARR):** The average revenue generated each year.

- **Win rate:** The number of closed-won opportunities as a percentage of total number of opportunities closed. Like ASP, this should be higher for target accounts compared to default accounts.

- **Velocity:** The number of days it takes for an account with an open opportunity to become a buyer. This number should be smaller for target accounts than default accounts.

Because this data lives in your CRM system, you should set up dashboards that let you track it.
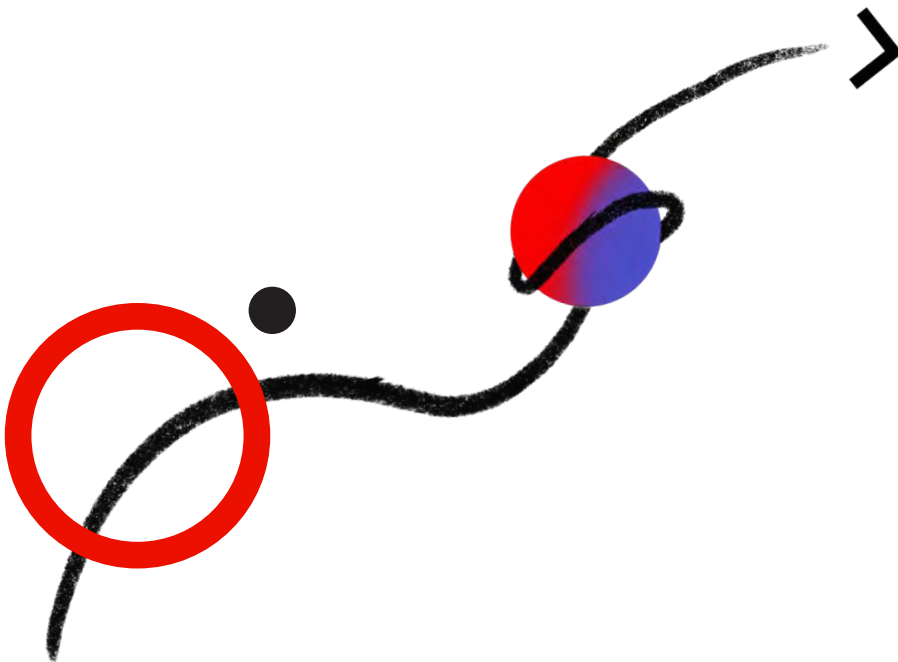
The ABM maturity curve

As you continue your journey with ABM, you'll notice that your organization will move through different phases of familiarity and expertise. We call this the ABM maturity curve, and there are four stages — inception, early-stage, mid-stage, and late-stage. Although these appear to be four separate stages, note that they are fluid and that your organization might be between stages.

To get the most out of ABM, you need to keep moving forward. Assess realistically where you are with ABM. That way, you can make plans to help you progress towards full ABM maturity.

	Accounts	Messaging/Content	Programs	Metrics	Team
Inception	Identify what type of accounts make sense for your business	Identify personas and content gaps to understand if you have relevant content for all personas	Identify optimal channels and programs	Ensure you can measure at each stage of the lifecycle, and that you can track account activity in Salesforce or another CRM	Identify key players and select champion salespeople
Early-Stage	Select accounts with input from marketing and sales, buyer support, services, and other key teams	Develop and repurpose content for key buyers to make it personal	Use some digital programs in combination with other program basics	Track engagement (time with account) and other program metrics, like click-through rate, inquiries, and MQAs in target accounts	Obtain stakeholder buy-in across the organization
Mid-Stage	Use predictive models and/ or intent data to select accounts for additional accuracy Identify whether you have the correct information for the contacts in your target accounts	Ensure you have personal, timely content for all personas	Run programs that are fine-tuned for different personas and channels	For target accounts, track meetings with the right people, velocity, opportunity and pipeline creation, and sales metrics	Ensure the team is closely in sync with your SDRs and sales team
Late-Stage	Mature the account selection process and build out white space and data hygiene	Create and maintain personal, timely, and relevant content for all personas	Run a combination of digital and analog programs (such as AI-powered web personalization and direct mail)	Hit your KPIs, including revenue won in target accounts, cross-sell, upsell, and renewal (stickiness)	Ensure the team is closely in sync with collaborators and regions, including SDRs, sales, support, and services

"No matter what your marketing strategy is, the primary KPI to track success is always going to be revenue. However, because the time from first touch to closed-won revenue can be lengthy, it is still valuable to measure indicators of revenue at various stages of the funnel—from engagement to deal size, velocity, and win rate.

Dave Rigotti

Director of Account-Based Marketing, Adobe

Selecting the right account-based marketing solution

Whether you're an ABM novice or a seasoned professional, having powerful tools can make the difference between short-lived, tedious, isolated interactions and scalable, long-term success. The right ABM solution lets you give buyers in target accounts positive experiences across all channels. Strong lead- and account-based capabilities empower each other, creating the right mix for your business without disrupting your current efforts.

Today's leading marketing automation solutions offer many components of ABM technology, including AI-assisted account selection, account-based channel execution, and multi-touch revenue attribution. These capabilities let marketing and sales teams use both inbound and outbound tactics, as well as account-based and lead-based strategies, to address different buyer segments.

To reap the full potential of ABM, you must choose and implement technology that can grow with your organization and its needs. This chapter includes important considerations in choosing the right ABM technology.

A unified platform with automation

Key benefits of a unified ABM solution with automation include the following:

- **Centralized lead and account data:** Contain all levels of data in the same solution to avoid having your lead and account data in different tools, which causes data inaccuracies, inconsistencies, and ultimately, undesirable customer experiences.

- **Lead and account targeting:** Target specific individuals within target accounts from a single solution instead of managing and syncing accounts and lists between several point solutions.

- **Automated engagement across channels:** Automate coordinated and personalized cross-channel ABM campaigns beyond a single channel, like paid media, from a single platform instead of managing a separate app for each channel (such as email, web, and ads).

- **Account-level measurement:** Roll up all account programs and revenue-based account analytics instead of pulling data from various systems.

- **ABX:** Provide accounts with personal experiences that focus on long-term lifetime value across all channels using an ABM solution that delivers helpful, relevant content at each step of their journey.

Your marketing solution should offer capabilities for account targeting and management, personalizing cross-channel engagement, and revenue-based account analytics in a single solution like ABM Essentials, from Marketo Engage, part of Adobe Experience Cloud.

Built on a proven marketing automation backbone, ABM Essentials includes account-based planning, engagement, and measurement capabilities that are all natively integrated into a single, easy- to-use solution. This solution complements the familiar workflows and lead-based programs in other Marketo Engage programs without unnecessary disruption and additional tools. ABM Essentials uniquely enables sales and marketing teams of all sizes and maturity levels to add elements of ABM at their own pace by creating the optimal mix of account- and lead-based capabilities to quickly close strategic account opportunities.

Integration is key

The best way to avoid a "Frankenstack"—a set of siloed tools that an organization tries to force into working together—is to have a complete view of what your organization needs and wants to accomplish. Without this, you may be tempted to add one-off tools for specific tasks that each team will use in silos.

Your teams must identify, agree on, and understand what the hub of your ABM technology stack will be. Your ABM solution should be expandable, keep your sales data organized, consolidate your metrics, and let you coordinate cross-channel campaigns.

This is another reason working closely with sales is critical. Agreeing on needs and wants beforehand will decrease the chances of mistakenly purchasing tools that don't work best for everyone. Gather with key members of all your teams to answer the following questions:

- Does the technology fill a real need?

- Do people have enough time to evaluate tools?

- Who will manage the tools?

Identifying gaps and adding missing tools is critical to your ABM success. Just as important is a solution that can easily integrate with your other core technologies.

Depending on your organization, you may want to consider evaluating complementary solutions for account data, company insights, competitive intelligence, predictive software, content marketing, direct mail, and event management. Selecting a solution with a vast partner network can help you build the ideal ABM mix for your brand.

A strong framework will help you evaluate your digital needs. By determining your business model, go-to-market strategy, organizational needs, and integration requirements, you can discover solutions that will grow with your company.

> " Invest in a data-driven technology stack that can support your integrated workflows. You want to find the right combination of techniques and tools that give you an edge over your competition and get you into the right deals early.
>
> **Amar Doshi**
> SVP of Product & UX, 6sense

The value of complementary solutions

A variety of new solutions can add useful capabilities to your marketing technology stack. But before you buy, evaluate them by how well they integrate with your existing technologies and whether they truly add value. Here are some complementary add-ons for ABM.

Account data enrichment and contact discovery

These add-ons can provide you with firmographic information and account intelligence on organizations (such as number of employees or all the companies in a specific industry), which gives you additional criteria for identifying target accounts. Account data enrichment tools to consider include those by LinkedIn, D&B Hoovers, and InsideView.

Predictive scoring and profiling

Historic and current data on your buyers can help you identify other accounts that are similar and have a high propensity to buy. Companies with account scoring tools include Leadspace, Mintigo, Lattice, and EverString.

Sales and marketing partnership

ABM depends on a solid partnership between sales and marketing. These tools generally focus on ensuring the greatest visibility between both teams, which helps you work together to decide on the next best experience for the potential buyer. Sales and marketing partnership tools include Bizible, Drift, and Folloze.

Niche solutions

Some complementary technologies don't fit neatly into other categories. This includes account intelligence tools, such as BuiltWith, Datanyze, and Ghostery, which reveal companies that use specific software technologies. This competitive data lets you identify target accounts that have the right product fit and offers insight into what their current tech stack looks like. With that, you can see which activities and programs they are already running.

Selecting the right ABM technology

If you're considering purchasing and implementing an ABM solution, make sure that the software you choose will fulfill your company's needs throughout the entire ABM lifecycle—from forming a strategy and compiling your list of target accounts to distributing personal ABM content across channels and measuring campaign effectiveness. Use the resources below to choose a vendor who will meet your company's short-term and long-term needs.
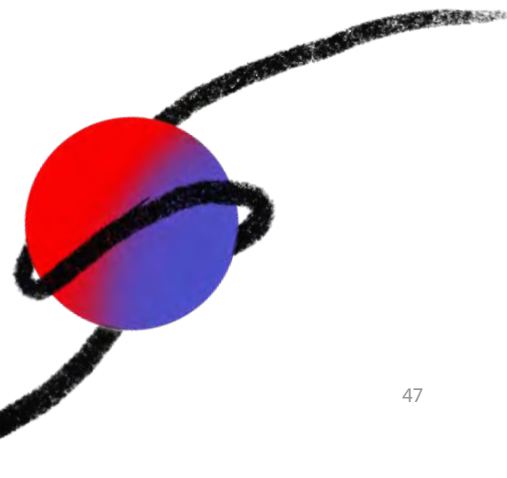
Cross-channel and cross-team coordination

The right technology enables your cross-functional teams to deliver coordinated experiences to grab their attention and relevant content to help them make purchase decisions.
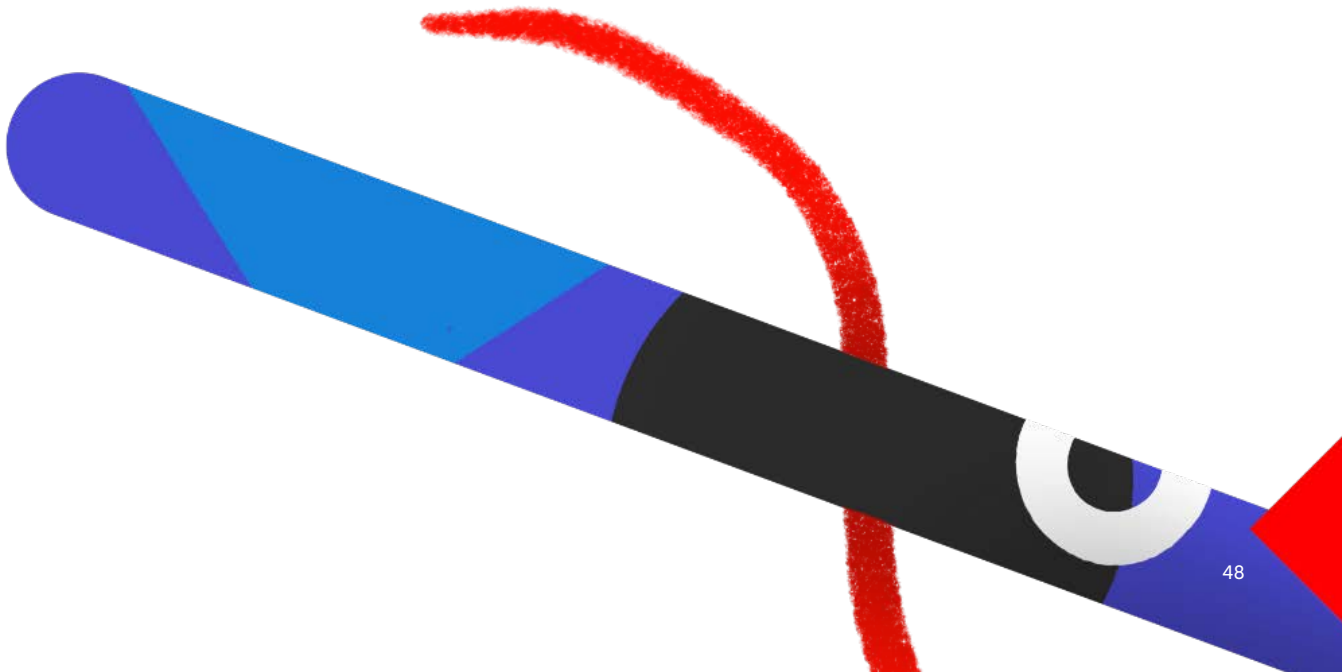
An engagement solution like Marketo Engage offers cross-channel capabilities, helping you track and manage your ABM target accounts and supporting informed, real-time, and coordinated engagement. Your target account's behaviors are captured in the Audience Hub tool, which equips you to deliver highly personalized messages at exactly the right time. ABM Essentials from Marketo Engage includes account-level insights and profiling, contact discovery (including paid media), cross-channel engagement, sales and marketing partnership, and measurement and attribution—letting you deliver experiences buyers love across channels.

A successful strategy also involves close collaboration with people from many corners of your organization, including sales, professional services, and buyer success. You'll need the proper technology to give these groups a real-time, account-level view. With that, all your teams can work together to plan outreach so you can pursue key accounts in a coordinated and collaborative way.

Vendor selection criteria

A sophisticated ABM solution enables strategic decision making with data aggregation, insight management, and real-time analytics. The right tool should simplify your transition to ABM, help you identify ideal target accounts, and enable quick shifting when data and insights reveal opportunities or inefficiencies. In addition, you want to choose a solution based on your ABM roadmap. Think about what technology will be at the center of your growth.

Using multiple tools for implementing, executing, and analyzing ABM campaigns is time-consuming and error prone. Look for a comprehensive ABM solution that will manage all the items below.

Requirement	Accounts	Messaging/Content
Assists with identification of target accounts using AI	Success with ABM starts with targeting high-value accounts— those most likely to drive revenue or have strategic significance.	• Allows you to segment and view accounts by important criteria • Matches existing and new leads to their respective accounts
Connects leads to accounts automatically	Identifying anonymous visitors provides opportunities for relationship building and personalization.	• Identifies anonymous leads • Can match anonymous leads to the correct organizations • Supports lead-and account-based programs
Provides an aggregated view of buyer behavior across all channels	Knowing what actions visitors take after viewing your website or campaigns lets you identify conversion opportunities and provides valuable data that can be used for effective personalization.	• Shows what campaigns and/or channels drew a visitor in • Monitors what visitors click on and what content they view • Tracks visitors' actions across all visits
Orchestrates personalized, cross-channel marketing campaigns	Effective engagement with target accounts requires consistent and complementary messaging across multiple channels, using AI to recommend relevant content at just the right time.	• Manages campaigns across multiple channels from a single solution • Integrates seamlessly with existing marketing automation, nurturing, and CRM software • Serves dynamic content based on a website visitor's origin, behavior, organization, and place in the buying cycle • Delivers highly personalized content and calls to action at the appropriate time
Consolidates comprehensive, real-time ABM analytics and attribution reporting	Critical capabilities for campaign success include measuring the performance of campaigns across target accounts, performing A/B testing, and adjusting quickly when campaigns are underperforming.	• Provides real-time, actionable analytics • Offers summary views of account data and findings, as well as detailed views for deeper dives • Provides revenue impact data (attribution) • Measures key stakeholder engagement
Provides the ability to use historical data from marketing automation and CRM systems	Historical data gathered over time is extremely valuable for scoring and profiling accounts.	• API integration or easy import functionality to access historical data from marketing automation and CRM systems

Key questions to ask ABM solution providers

Once you've determined that a vendor's solution meets your needs, you can narrow your choices further by determining if the vendor's company is one you want to work with long term.

Will the software integrate seamlessly with existing marketing automation and CRM systems?
If one of your ABM goals is to create a comprehensive place to manage campaigns and view data and analytics, you're going to want the new solution to quickly and easily pull in historical information from existing marketing and sales systems.

What plans does the vendor have for improving their product?
Getting insight into the vendor's roadmap will let you determine how dedicated the vendor is to managing and improving the software over the long term.

**What level of support does the company offer?**
Ask if the company offers technical support for its software, what hours the support is available, how long the turnaround time is for support inquiries, and whether the company also provides business support for your company's transition to ABM.

How much training will your organization need to use the software, and how is that training offered?
Getting thorough training for sales and marketing teams will be critical in promoting adoption and achieving success.

What other companies have used the vendor's solution?
Ask for references from other companies that have used the solution in the past or are currently using it. Also, ask the vendor to provide case studies highlighting the successes other companies have had.
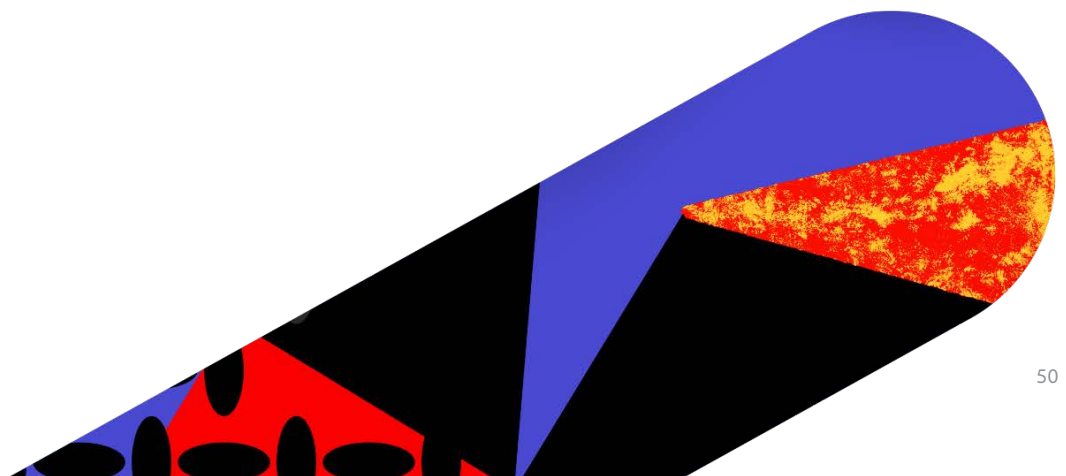
Making the final decision

If more than one vendor satisfies your needs for software, training, and support, you should consider a few additional factors when making your decision.

Price

If you're equally satisfied with more than one vendor, determining which vendor offers the most competitive pricing could help you make your final decision. Make sure you carefully identify what the price includes, including training, support, and upgrades. Think about what your organization really needs from a marketing automation solution and how it fits into your business growth timeline. A more expensive option with more features and services may be a good fit if you anticipate high growth. If your timeline to growth is longer, a lower-tier option might work for the time being. Whatever solution you ultimately choose, be certain that you won't outgrow it in a short timespan.

Authority and credibility

Determine if any vendor stands out as an ABM expert, actively engaging in ABM as part of its own business model and using its own software. Also ask if the vendor is considered an influencer in digital marketing. A company with ABM authority—and digital marketing authority—may be more equipped to provide tools that fit the needs, pain points, and best practices of the industry.

The right ABM solution can help you avoid laborious efforts that lead to disappointing sales metrics. It can help you achieve continued growth and long-term success. So, make sure you spend time asking the right questions to ensure the vendor you choose to work with provides everything you need to succeed with ABM.
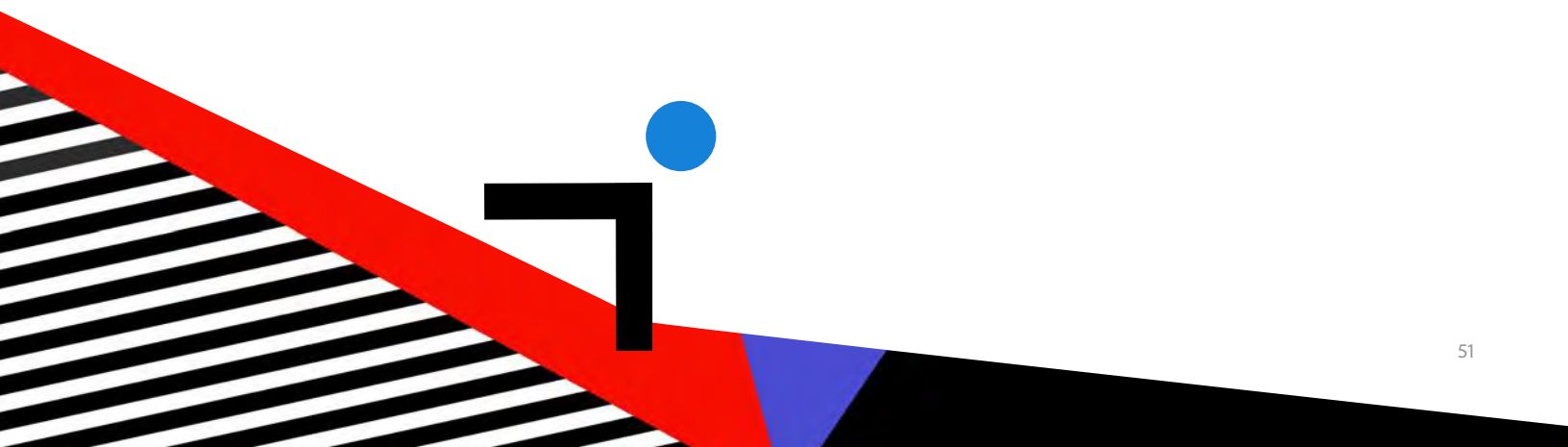
Launch the strategy that's better for buyers—and business

Although ABM is not a new way to market to target accounts, it's now a scalable, achievable strategy. Organizations of all sizes can implement ABM to engage key accounts throughout the buyer journey. By understanding how key personas influence decisions in these accounts and speaking directly to them, you can accelerate close-win.

Marketing, selling to, and supporting your buyers at an account level is not only critical to your success — it's what they expect. Buyers today demand personal content and engagement, and customer experience has become the major competitive differentiator.

ABM works. And it's not going anywhere. The strategy no longer means a massive investment, but it can mean great rewards. With the right tools and awareness of how to implement an ABM strategy, you can create personal and captivating experiences for your buyers—and better focus, stronger partnerships, and increased revenue for your business.

Adobe Experience Cloud

Adobe Experience Cloud is the most comprehensive suite of customer experience management tools on the market. With solutions for data, content, engagement, commerce, personalization, and more, Experience Cloud is built on the world's first platform designed explicitly for customer experience. Each product is infused with artificial intelligence and works seamlessly together, but also integrates with your existing technology and your future innovations so you can consistently deliver the right experience every time.

Marketo Engage

Marketo Engage specializes in customer engagement over complex B2B buying journeys. As a complete solution for lead management, it brings marketing and sales together to nurture leads, orchestrate personalized experiences, optimize content, and measure business impact across every channel. Marketo Engage natively supports both demand and account-based marketing strategies, providing a single, integrated lead management platform from acquisition to advocacy. Build engaging, personalized experiences at scale and prove impact with Marketo Engage.

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