eBook

Hello Hyper-Charged B2B Pipeline!

Highlights from the blog series *ABM Like a Boss* on how to build an account-based go-to-market in 6 (no-bull) steps

Prologue

If you're new to ABM, you don't have to sound all the bells and whistles at once.

Do your revenue teams singularly rely on traditional lead-based marketing, but you want to expand your go-to-market with account-based programming? Sweet! Together, lead-bound and account-based go-to-market approaches make for a go-to-market that's holistic and achieves efficient results.

If you're new to ABM, you don't have to sound all the bells and whistles at once. Make it an enjoyable process. Or else you risk overwhelming your marketing and sales teams. Here's a truth we shouldn't lose sight of: Just like with any major shift in strategy, it often helps to start small with a pilot. At Demandbase, we like to say, "Don't try to boil the ocean."

Build out your ABM practice one feature at a time.

With ABM, a pilot program means identifying a segment of your very best prospects and creating plays and campaigns around them. This programming exists side-by-side your traditional, inbound strategy. A pilot is a simple step that can yield eye-popping results. From there, you can add on more account-based features like orchestration, personalization, and customized journey programming.

Let's help you get started

We pulled together the highlights of the popular *ABM Like a Boss* blog series into this compendium. Here, you get the nuts-and-bolts of how to build account-based programming that you can layer on strategically over time in a way that makes sense for your business. You can always dig deeper by clicking on the links that take you to the entire blog posts.

There are six straightforward steps that build on each other. But you can skip around and pull your favorite best practices into your go-to-market programming as you need them. (We won't judge. Actually, we love that you're taking this transformational step for your business. And it is transformational. We promise.)

However you incorporate ABM, do what's right for your business. But don't be afraid to be adventurous—let the spirit of innovation be your guide!

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Demandbase

Section 1

Build a budget

What the research shows

Year after year, business-to-business companies are increasing their ABM budgets. In our recent report, *The 2020 ABM Market Research Study*, ABM practitioners note they've increased their ABM budgets by forty percent year over year (from twenty percent in 2019 to twenty-eight percent in 2020). The rapid success of ABM is clearly driving demand for increased investment.

But even for advanced companies, getting a budget for ABM isn't easy. In fact, in our study, getting a budget was the number two challenge they faced.

How should a B2B marketing leader think about budgeting for ABM? We know this is a common challenge for many B2B marketing leaders. Let's break it down.

Read the blog

Section 1

How much are organizations spending on ABM?

According to SiriusDecisions' *2019 State of Account-Based Marketing Study*, today's average ABM budget is around $350,000. (This does not include headcount costs.) Seventy percent of organizations expect this number to rise.

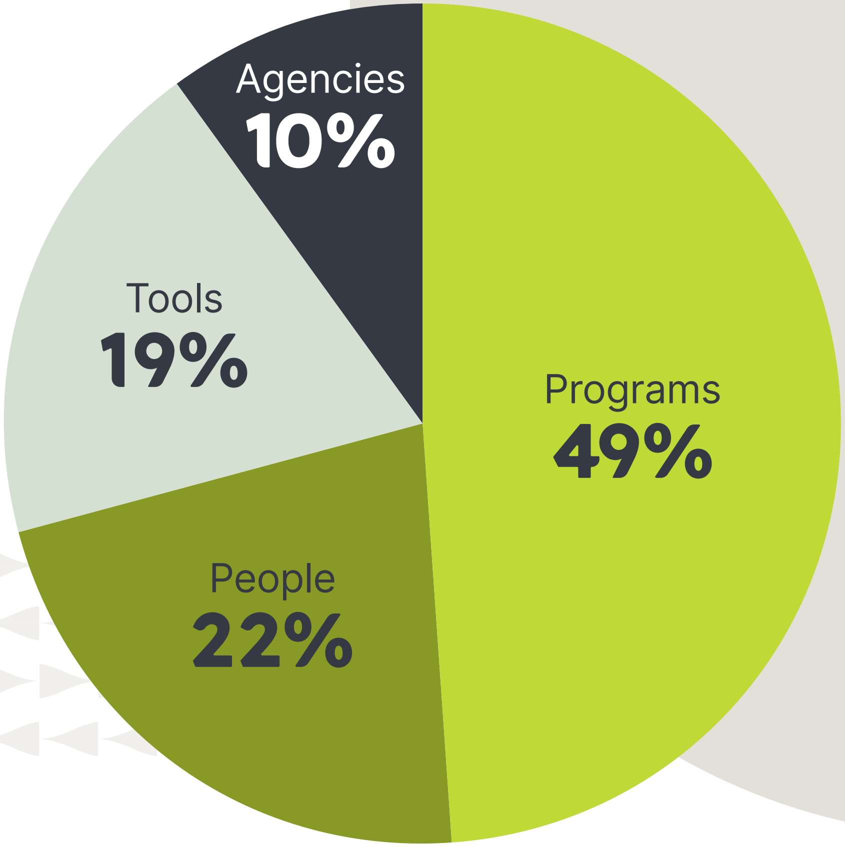
But if you're just starting out with ABM, don't worry, not every company has an extra $350,000. In that same study, SiriusDecisions found that for pilot programs, the budget is lower, averaging about $200,000.

However, there are companies on the high-end that have mature ABM programs and are only doing enterprise deals. Those companies have budgets in the millions for ABM. That said, the number of companies that can make this kind of investment is nominal.

You can spend your budget in programs, people, tools, or agencies. So the natural next question is: How much are organizations spending on each area of ABM?

In the same SiriusDecisions study, they found, on average, almost half (forty-nine percent) of an organization's overall ABM budget is spent on program development and execution costs, with display media spend, events, and content representing the top three spend areas.

Almost 50% of budget tends to be spent on program development and execution.



Where to find the budget

1

Share new budget dollars with sales.

ABM is a team sport. Don't go it alone.

We know sales and marketing alignment is a major component of ABM, so consider splitting the bill. Sharing the cost of an account-based marketing tool with sales re-frames the purchase as a sales enablement process, not only a marketing initiative.

2

Reallocate existing marketing budget to focus on your account-based strategy.

One thing organizations don't realize is that building an effective ABM program doesn't always require a larger budget. You can succeed by using your current tech stack more wisely.

You can look at areas of your budget that are currently allocated to other initiatives and incorporate account-level enhancements to those projects. You can also reallocate budget to ABM by taking it away from any budget spend that isn't generating leads, opportunities, or revenue.

The first step to move budget around starts with taking an honest look at your current marketing performance.

You'll need to make a list of all your marketing programs and tactics to answer the following questions:

- *What marketing programs are you currently running?*
- *How much are you spending on each program?*
- *What's working? What's not working? What's falling behind?*
- *Where can you free up some of the budget?*

ABM offers an opportunity to get more out of your existing marketing budget dollars by spending less time, resources, and effort filling the funnel with prospects that aren't associated with any target account.

How to get more budget to do ABM the right way

Selling ABM internally can be tough. One way to advocate for an ABM strategy is to ask for an experimental budget for a limited period of time for a pilot program. This can take some of the risk out of the equation, rather than asking a big budget (often an ambiguous number) to roll out a full ABM program. This way, you're able to get budget and you're held accountable (which every single function must be anyway).

It may be easier to get buy-in if you identify your ABM champions within sales, marketing, and operations. These will be the stakeholders that amplify the value of ABM across leadership and grow ABM enthusiasm later on when you build out your ABM team.

Final thoughts

Once you've got your budget, you'll want to get started on building out your ABM team. You may already have your ABM champions in place, but it's time to start thinking about rallying the rest of the sales and marketing troops to focus on ABM performance.

Quick reminder, a recent survey by Altera Group found:

56%

of participants said ABM provided a significant benefit to attracting new clients.

84%

said ABM provided a significant benefit retaining and expanding client relationships.

97%

said ABM had a higher ROI than other marketing strategies.

Section 2

Establish an ABM team

Great teams are built with great people

Finding the right person to lead your ABM team can be the difference between success and failure. The research proves it.

In our *2020 ABM Market Research Study*, we identified common characteristics of high-performing companies, and one of them was they “have a dedicated ABM leader with ABM in their title.”

Read the blog

First, create a spot-on job description to find the right leader for your ABM team

The first step is to document the characteristics of your ideal candidate and what is needed for the role. Define precisely what this person will be charged with. **Common responsibilities include:**

- Selecting and prioritizing target accounts based on the ideal customer profile
- Developing the marketing strategy for strategic accounts
- Orchestrating and contributing to the creative and storytelling aspects of ABM campaigns
- Collaborating with sales to plan, execute, and optimize the ABM program
- Managing marketing operations, reporting, and expectations
- Building out and overseeing the ABM tech stack
- Managing your ABM budget

While finding someone with fitting industry experience is a given, the following outlines **relevant background for this position:**

- Strong, proven leadership skills
- Excellent communication and presentation skills
- Experience working directly and successfully with sales teams and managers
- Marketing competency in relation to demand generation, sales enablement, revenue generation

Section 2

Interview questions to assess your candidates

Whether you've identified potential candidates within your organization or from outside, you can gauge their ABM leadership abilities from their responses to the following questions.

Note that you're not necessarily looking for a specific answer, rather you're looking to determine a candidate's thought process. According to Laszlo Bock, Google's VP of People Operations, "**The second-best predictors of performance are tests of general cognitive ability** (26 percent)."

Ask these questions, but also ask for details. Dig into each answer. Find out the specifics. (These are just a few of the questions you can ask. Find more in the complete blog.)

What's your definition of ABM?

This may sound like a basic question, but you'd be surprised how many people fail to ask it. What you're looking for is alignment with your vision of ABM. The answer will give you a good baseline for what to expect from an ABM program run by the candidate.

Why do you think ABM is a good strategy for our business?

Let them ask you questions about your business or tell them to make their best guess based on the research they conducted before meeting with you. This is a critical question because ABM is a time- and resource-intensive undertaking. Anyone who doesn't fully understand the business implications could lead your organization down a costly path that yields insignificant returns.

Describe your process for launching an ABM program.

Here's your chance to find out whether this person could hit the ground running, thinking strategically while overseeing the smallest details. In an ideal world, the candidate will have gotten an ABM program off the ground at another company, and even spearheaded an ABM pilot program. If they had to bootstrap the initiative by working with existing marketing resources, find out how they went about it and pulled together an effective team.

If you had an unlimited budget and could buy any technology to help execute your ABM strategy, what would it be?

Being technologically savvy is important to fully leverage ABM. Once the candidate offers a response, ask follow-up questions to drill deeper, like:

- *Why would you choose those?*
- *What in particular about each of those is valuable for executing on ABM?*
- *Which have you used in the past and to what effect?*
- *What is required to get up to speed on those?*
- *Which other technologies did you integrate those with?*

Make sure this person can really get into the weeds with the technology and not just talk at a high level. They need to be able to get their hands dirty.

How to build your ABM team without having to invest in more headcount

It's not enough to hire an ABM leader and expect them to do everything. You must build the right team around them. Going back to the *2020 ABM Market Research Study*, another common characteristic of high-performing companies is they involve more of their marketing team in the unifying efforts, channels, and tactics.

Many organizations can get overwhelmed by thoughts of building an entirely new ABM team around their new leader. But the reality is you can get started with ABM right away and increase your team's involvement over time.

In fact, integrating an ABM strategy into your current way of working doesn't require a wholesale change. Once you have designated your ABM leader, you can call upon your current marketing team to support your strategy. It's a matter of identifying the required roles, properly structuring your team, and aligning marketing with sales.

Get your team involved in ABM

Here's a more explicit overview of the ways your team members can play a role:

- **Product marketing** can help define the ideal customer profile (ICP) and the segments to pursue, which will in turn inform your predictive scoring model.
- **Marketing operations** can help build out an account foundation, making sure leads and the right information are mapped to accounts so marketing and sales see the same information.
- **Demand gen and sales** can collaborate to get a sense of where target accounts are in their path to purchase. For example, are you focused on the right people for these accounts? Are they aware of your products or services, or are you trying to sell them additional products? Understanding this helps define your objective, which in turn informs the types of programs to run. They can also work on orchestrated programs and examine results.

Align your involvement with results

The heart of any ABM initiative is an aligned marketing and sales team that's dedicated to large accounts. And the more sophisticated your ABM program gets, the more you involve your team.

Apply the crawl, walk, run approach. Start with a pilot, dedicating a certain percentage of your team to the program for a pre-defined amount of time. The goal is to prove that this program will pay off. After racking up some early, meaningful wins, commit a percentage of your team on an ongoing basis so your organization can scale to pursue key segments. Once the ABM program has proven successful in that regard, assign team members to a dedicated ABM team or ABM demand center.

By taking a methodical, well-paced approach to ABM, your team can provide the support and enablement that helps ensure success.

There you have it: you've just built yourself a killer ABM team.

Once you find the right ABM leader, the rest will fall into place. But that is a crucial role, so don't take it lightly, and don't rush it.

Section 3

Get your data ready

B2B markets are evolving at an ever increasing pace. With the rise of technology and the democratization of data, we're able to market and sell more products in less time. This has led to a fundamental shift in the way organizations go to market. ABM is a product of this change and is one of the hottest strategies that the fastest-growing companies are leveraging.

However, with these advancements, we face new challenges. Whether you already have an ABM program in place or are planning to start a pilot, you'll realize that contact data issues are amplified with an account-based approach. With the spotlight on your data, there is nowhere to hide.

Since you have a lot riding on your high-profile accounts, the last thing you need is inaccurate, incomplete, or missing contacts holding you back, or worse, causing you to commit egregious errors in your ABM efforts. Think about the last time someone called you by the wrong name—it's the same thing. That's why we're tackling how to get your data ready.

Read the blog

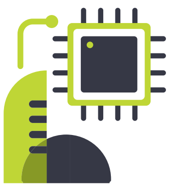
1

Know your data

There are four main kinds of data out there, and it's important to understand and use all of them. Here's the run-down:

Firmographic data

This is the basic information you should know about all accounts in your database. How much revenue do they make? How many employees do they have? What's their industry and their rate of growth? How many offices do they have, and where are they? If you know the answers to these questions, then your firmographic data is sound.

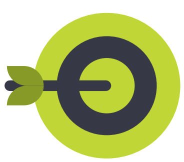


Technographic data

If you are a technology company, you'll want to define which technologies your target accounts currently use or are looking to invest in. Consider what complementary technologies pair well with your solution, and in contrast, which technologies make an investment less likely. For example, knowing that a company uses Marketo, Salesforce, or SAP might just make them a more attractive candidate for your solution.

Intent data

Intent data uses the behavior of contacts at target accounts to indicate a more urgent qualification and fit. Your prospects could be researching keywords related to your business on third-party sites, participating in forums, downloading content, or clicking on ads that you care about. If they are, then intent data will let you know that now is a good time to reach out to them.



Engagement data

This is when accounts start playing on your home turf. If they're filling out your forms, reading your content, and attending your events, then it should show up in your engagement data. Even more than intent data, engagement data lets you know which accounts are walking up to the door and asking for your solution.

2

Identify and tier your target accounts

Once you have sources of all four kinds of data, then it's time to put all that information to use. If you've already identified your target accounts, then you can skip this step. However, this is a critical piece of getting your data ABM-ready, so if you haven't chosen your target accounts yet, then read on.

It's important to understand that target account selection isn't just a job for marketing. You must get buy-in and sign-off from your sales and customer success counterparts. One person or department alone will not be able to decide which accounts your organization should target. It takes the collective wisdom of your entire customer-facing team to effectively select the right accounts. You'll want to start with defining your ideal customer profile, or ICP, and then come up with a list of accounts that match it.

Once you have your list

Split your list into three groups:

1. **1:1** high-priority accounts
2. **1:few** mid-priority accounts
3. **1:many** low-priority accounts

(More on that in Section 4.)

3

Measure your account coverage

To take inventory of your contact data, start by thinking about who is typically on the buying committee for your product. Just as an example, let's say it's usually the CRO, the CTO, and the Head of Sales Development. You'd then want to ask yourself these questions:

- *Is anyone missing?* Maybe you don't have any information on the CTO, for instance. In that case, it's important for your SDRs and AEs to know who they should reach out to.
- *What gaps do you have in your contact data for each person?* (For example, you know their email address, but you don't have a phone number for them.)
- *For those with contact data, which ones do you have permission to email?*
- *Which people are engaged?* If you're great at getting engagement from CROs, but not so great at getting engagement from sales development, then you know where to focus your efforts next.

4

Create a contact acquisition strategy

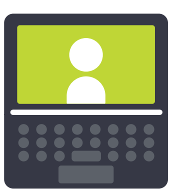
Keeping a healthy account-based sales development operation means providing a steady source of new contacts for each account across all account tiers. There are many ways to get quality contacts, but in order to sustain a healthy pipeline, you need a predictable and reliable source. Finding a method that balances quantity, quality, and price may sound impossible, but here are three ways you can strike that balance.

Manual lead generation

This skill is one that all SDRs and ADRs (account development reps) should learn to develop. Reps can manually find contacts by looking through social networks (LinkedIn and Twitter at the very least), a company's website, meetups or conferences, and blogs, forums, or discussion boards to name a few. The key is to get scrappy. Some of the hardest working reps get creative and learn to exploit tools and hacks to begin to automate some of this manual work.

List buys and technology plays

There are plenty of data firms that have developed their own methodologies for aggregating contact data. However, this approach comes with a caution. You often get what you pay for. In other words, if a list price is too good to be true, you may be purchasing stale data. If you take this approach, be sure to set the baseline data you need, investigate the reputation of the provider, get on the phone with a rep, and diversify your vendors.



Outsourcing

This is a great way to get quality leads at a fraction of the price. It involves working with freelancers (generally overseas). This can take some resources to build and manage, but the results are worth the cost when you're up and running.

You'll want to start by carefully documenting your internal process for manual lead generation. Be as detailed as possible, so that freelancers can follow the process easily. Once you've created this resource, you can go and hire freelancers off of sites like Upwork, Mechanical Turk, and Outsourcely.

5

Implement a continual data quality and discovery strategy

In account-based marketing, you need a system in place to ensure your systems are running at full capacity, which means making sure that the fuel that you pour into the engine is good, clean fuel. As we've been talking about, data is that fuel. However, the shelf-life of data is only getting shorter and shorter. That's why it's imperative that you have a system to monitor and maintain your data.

You can either put in place systems across your organization to internally check the cleanliness of your data, or you can outsource it. For example, Oceanos offers a service where they'll go through your contact data and flag contacts whose data is out of date or incorrect.

Clean your data. It's worth the trouble.

Optimizing your contact data is a process that requires continual attention. If you want an advantage over your competition, you must spend the time and resources to set your ABM foundation and improve the accuracy and completeness of your data. You must identify your target accounts and key contacts within those accounts with confidence. You must have a data strategy in place.

If you do this, you'll be able to orchestrate plays that will build brand equity, grow your revenue, and crush the competition.

Select your target accounts

In this section, we delve deeper into the principles laid out in Section 3: Get your data ready. Why? Because talk to any ABM analyst, read any ABM report, or listen to any ABM keynote, and they'll all give you the same advice for getting started with ABM. The most critical piece in your marketing strategy is selecting the right accounts.

However, this is not how many B2B marketers were trained to think. Traditionally, we always started with WHAT (i.e., content and offers). The image to the right illustrates the difference in thought process between a traditional demand generation approach and an ABM strategy.

But account-based marketing is different. You must start with the WHO. In other words, the starting place is defining your target accounts. This is the most important decision you will make with ABM. It's the lead domino that will create a cascade of positive outcomes through the entire sales process.

Read the blog

Traditional demand generation vs. ABM strategy

Demand gen	ABM strategy
What do we want to say? (offers)	**Who** are we trying to reach? (accounts)
Where should we say it? (channels)	**What** should we say (content)
Who should we say it to? (segments)	**Where** should we say it? (channels)

1

Define your ideal customer profile (ICP) and conduct a “won” sales analysis

The first step in the process of identifying your target accounts is defining your ideal customer profile. Your ICP is a prototypical company that fits the profile of your best customer. This is the customer that would most benefit from your offering or service and provide you with significant value in exchange.

Your ICP isn’t a wishlist of accounts. Rather, it’s a list of accounts that are most likely to do business with you. Here are some factors to consider when defining your ICP:

- *What sector(s) are you winning in?*
- *Are there “look alike” segments similar to those you have success with now?*
- *Alternately, what new markets are most important for your company to develop?*
- *Are these markets growing?*
- *What accounts will deliver the most value (including strategic value, advocates, referral sources, geographic presence)?*

The output of your ICP should be a one-page document that clearly represents the type of companies you are targeting.

Now, let’s take it one step further and pull in additional data to fine-tune the list.

Use data to identify high probability accounts

With artificial intelligence and machine learning, there’s more data at our fingertips than ever before. We can leverage that data to identify the accounts that have the highest propensity to buy. The type of data that you’re going to want to look at are firmographic, technographic, intent, and engagement data. *(Go to Section 3: Get your data ready for more information on identifying the four types of data. See Step 1: know your data.)*

But there’s one more advanced strategy that takes these four types of data and superchargers your selection process.

The power of predictive analytics

Predictive analytics uses data paired with algorithms and machine learning to identify the likelihood of future outcomes based on historical data. It allows us to process far more information than we could on our own. For the purpose of increasing closed-won deals, predictive analytics can help us better predict the account’s propensity to buy.

Predictive analytics uses data about accounts that have progressed to a certain stage of the buying process to highlight other accounts in your market that most look like them. What’s unique about a predictive analytics model is that it gives us the ability to include many more dimensions and data points in the analysis—often in the hundreds or even thousands. In fact, a big part of the value of predictive analytics is that it does the data collection and data cleansing for us.

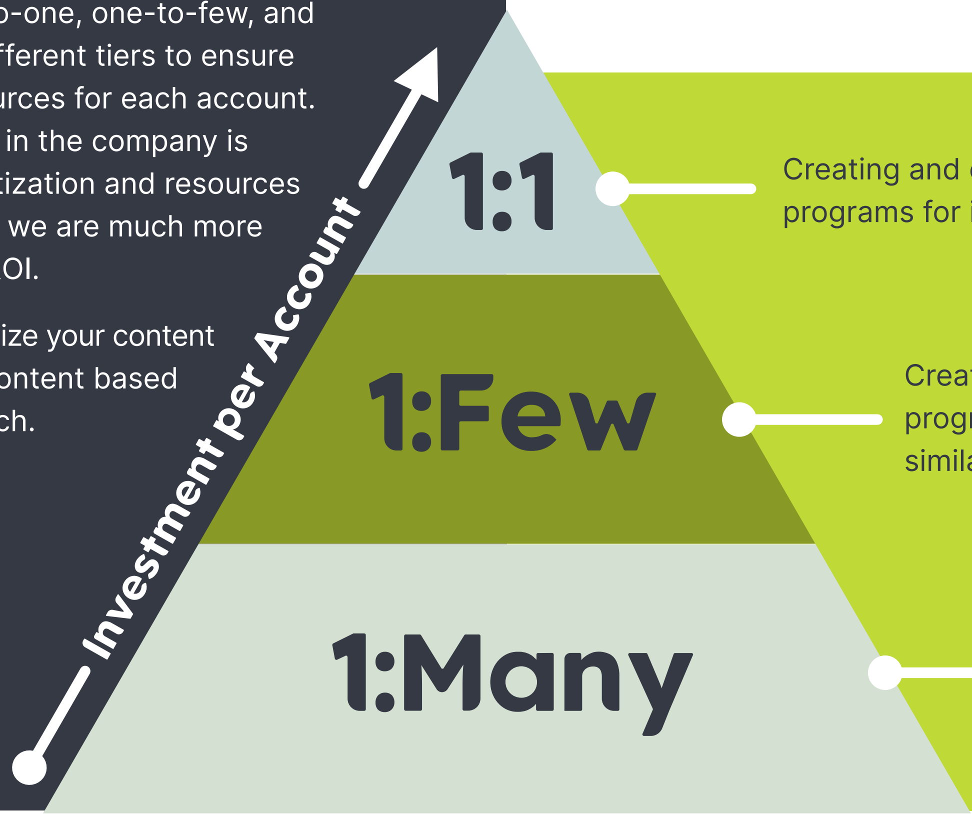
2

Take a three-tiered approach

Aligning how you will go after each account is another foundational step in ABM success. We advise taking a tiered approach to ABM. See, not all accounts in your total addressable market (TAM) are created equal.

Use account tiers (one-to-one, one-to-few, and one-to-many) and the different tiers to ensure the right amount of resources for each account. And make sure everyone in the company is aligned around the prioritization and resources applied to each tier, then we are much more efficient and get better ROI.

(Go to Section 5: Personalize your content for tips on customizing content based on a three-tiered approach.



Creating and executing highly personalized programs for individual accounts

Creating and executing highly customized programs for clusters of accounts with similar issues and needs

Leveraging technology to tailor and personalize marketing campaigns for specific named accounts at scale

3

Calculate the Account Score

Now it's time to apply all of the work you've just completed with the different types of data and your predictive analytics to identify your TAL. One approach is by applying an account score. This section explores one way to do that.

1. **Assign a "fit" score to each account**. Do this by identifying the engagement attributes your company has deemed most important, then assign a score range to each one. For example, if your ideal customer size is between 10,000 and 25,000 people, a company that falls within that range will get a 100. Companies that fall between 5,000 and 10,000 may get a score of 80. Companies that fall between 3,000 and 5,000 may get 60. Perform this exercise with each data point. Then, add up the individual scores for the aggregate. You'll end up with your fit score for that account.
2. **Assign a "predictive" score to each account**. Much like the fit score, the predictive score output is usually a number between 0 and 100, 0 being not a fit and 100 being a perfect fit. Whatever range you use be sure to be consistent across both the fit and predictive score.
3. **Determine your "account" score**. Next, take the average of your fit score and your predictive score to identify a combined score. This is your account score. Then, sort your accounts from the highest score to the lowest score. (We prefer to show one score in our CRM system because it is simpler and less confusing to sales.)

Account	Fit score	Predictive score	Account Score
Red Company	80	65	76.43
Blue Company	70	85	74.2
Purple Company	65	65	71.2
Orange Company	90	70	65.6

Finally, narrow down the list of accounts to those you can effectively pursue. For example, you'll want to consider your budget, how many accounts a sales rep can manage, and how many accounts the marketing team can support.

The result will be your target account list. (That sweet spot of accounts that deserves your most sophisticated plays.) You can do all of this manually or with a software like Demandbase One, which will do it for you. Once you have your ICP defined, your account scored and prioritized, your resources mapped, and your accounts selected, it's time to share your accounts with your teams!

Conclusion (Whew!)

We've said it before, and we'll say it again: selecting your accounts is the most important step in the entire ABM process. That's why we advocate for a measure-twice-cut-once approach.

It's not enough to just pick a list of target accounts, you also need to prioritize how much resource you can apply to each account. Don't spread out your ABM efforts across all accounts evenly like peanut butter; use account tiers and the different styles to ensure the right amount of resource for each account—and make sure everyone in the company is aligned around the prioritization and resources applied to each tier.

Get your team involved and spend some time to complete the target account identification process before creating and executing your orchestrated ABM campaigns.

Section 5

Personalize your content

Focusing on the customer's buying experience with personalized content is more important than ever. But you can't personalize it all. This is where lead-bound and account-based marketing come together and form the perfect balance of a go-to-market strategy.

Read the blog

Nothing is dead

We are all familiar with claims in the market. Cold calling is dead! Email is dead! Social selling is dead! While channels vacillate in popularity, the key really is what fuels the channels. Yes, it's the content. We know that when messages are timely and relevant there is better engagement from buyers. Let's walk through a framework for how we view personalization in ABM.

The content personalization spectrum

There are no hard and fast rules about how much you should personalize your content. If there were, we'd all be connecting with our buyers, and there would be no need for this guide.

Here's the challenge. We all know that the more time you invest to deliver a more personalized message, the more likely it is to resonate with the recipient. However, personalizing content takes precision, which takes time. On the other hand, if we want to deliver a message to the masses, we can use a generic message.

If something reads like it could have been sent out to thousands of other people, then chances are it was.

The trick is finding the balance between low volume/high personalization and high volume/low personalization. We advise having a balanced mix of content, with each piece falling somewhere on the content personalization spectrum.

So, how can you start executing personalized campaigns across the entire spectrum? It starts with tiering your accounts.

Generic

Broad content for all targets, but still relevant to the account

Multi sector

Content targeted to a cluster of related markets (e.g., insurance and banking)

Industry specific

Content targeted to one industry

Customized

Existing content, heavily adapted for one account

Highly customized

Created for multiple personas at a single targeted account

100% personalized

Created just for this account and persona

Section 5

Taking a three-tiered approach to personalization

In section 3, we touched on the three-tiered approach to ABM. As a reminder, using account tiers (one-to-one, one-to-few, and one-to-many) ensures the right amount of resources for each account.

Tiering is important because it helps us start to scale our ABM programs. And scaling personalized ABM campaigns is the holy grail. It may seem like a lot of work at first sight, but innovative tools and technology have allowed sales and marketing teams to automate many tiering tasks we used to do manually, which increases our efficiency and drives more results.

1 ABM classic: one-to-one

This is ABM in its purest form (as defined by the ITSMA). These accounts should get the “full” ABM treatment—meaning each one gets deep research, a full account plan, personalized content, bespoke campaigns, and lot of 1:1 attention.

This definitely means programs and initiatives should be hyper-personalized. Because they have the highest potential revenue, we can afford to spend more time personalizing content. In fact, we must spend more time personalizing content for these accounts because we have fewer chances of closing them due to the fact that there is a smaller universe. In other words, we have to make the most of every opportunity.

Now, you may be thinking, “I can’t do this for every single target account,” and you are correct. At best, you’ll have no more than a handful of accounts you can execute a world-class ABM strategy against with 100-percent-personalized ABM.

2 ABM lite: one-to-few

This type of ABM lets you apply much of the focus and benefit of ABM to a broader list. These accounts also get individual research, but perhaps it’s limited to a few key talking points for each account. Since you have more of these accounts, you cannot afford to spend the same amount of time researching and sending personalized messages.

Since these accounts can be smaller, mapping out individual buying centers may not be as challenging. But no matter what, we still want to spend time making sure we have quality data at the account level, as well as for each of the key people in each persona in the organization and we’ll want a process to keep those insights fresh.

These accounts will not receive 100-percent-personalized content and plays, but they should still get highly relevant touches nonetheless. Think about taking content from their industry. Customize it with their logo and personalize the first and last paragraph.

3 Programmatic ABM: one-to-many

This style covers all the accounts that we want to target but for which we don’t have the resources for rich personalization and customization. These will often be smaller accounts and can be counted in the thousands. To execute on these, we need the help of automation, which is why this type of ABM is often referred to as programmatic ABM.

At times we may target these accounts with specific outbound tactics, sometimes customized by industry or solution, but most of the time we simply use broad demand generation tactics. We still target specific accounts, but we leverage strategies such as ABM advertising, content syndication, web personalization, etc.

The key difference between ABM and traditional demand generation is that instead of scoring leads, we track account-level engagement and wait until the account hits a sufficient threshold to label them a marketing-qualified account (MQA).

We’re not saying that any one style of ABM is better than another. On the contrary. By balancing our approach across the different tiers, we’re able to scale our efforts. Be sure to use account tiers and the different styles to ensure the right amount of personalization for each account so none of your accounts are neglected.

Section 5

Turning theory into practice with account entitlements

Once a tiered approach to ABM personalization is adopted, there is still one thing that must be done before executing on strategy. We must define account entitlements. Most organizations overlook this step in the personalization process. They don't thoroughly answer the question "What is the right amount of time, money, and resource to dedicate to each account in each tier?"

Account entitlements are a framework created by Marketing to make clear what the level of investment should be for each tier of accounts. This ensures teams understand how to invest dollars and time appropriately.

Understanding how your buyers buy

For effective personalization in ABM, we must have a deep understanding of not only our target accounts and ideal customer profiles, but also the customer journey. We must understand how they buy, the structure of the organization, their challenges, the buying criteria, and what they need to do at every stage of the buying process. The customer journey is the complete sum of experiences and interactions that a customer goes through when making a purchasing decision. It should not be seen as a checklist for reps detailing what to say. The customer journey must take the point of view of the customer.

When we acknowledge the buyer's journey and put the focus on delivering an exceptional experience, only then will we be able to deliver a personal, relevant message.

Final thoughts

The bottom line is that to be successful, sales and marketing must align around their target audience, how they buy, and how to engage with them throughout the buying process. In ABM, sales and marketing is done throughout the entire journey.

Not all ABM is created equal, but if you can reach the right level of personalization for each of your target account tiers, you'll be well on your way to scaling your ABM and achieving record growth.

Measure with ABM metrics

In the past five to ten years, B2B CMOs around the world have made great strides in improving marketing analytics. But with the rise of account-based marketing, B2B marketers need new metrics—ABM metrics—to guide how they measure and prove their results.

ABM analytics are different from traditional demand generation analytics.

While leads and opportunities are essential for B2B marketing metrics, they are insufficient to measure account-based marketing. ABM requires account-based metrics. Enough said. (OK, but here's why:)

- **ABM occurs at every stage of the funnel**, unlike lead-based metrics, which are focused on net-new business creation.
- **ABM takes time to show results**, meaning we need metrics that show real progress within big, complex deals throughout the sales cycle.
- **ABM metrics are about quality**, not quantity. As the focus shifts to engaging target accounts, quantity-based metrics (such as leads) may go down.

What metrics matter in ABM?

There are three main categories of tracking and measuring your ABM success:

1. **Engagement**
   Am I creating and deepening relationships with target accounts?
2. **Journeys**
   How do accounts move through my buying journeys to desired outcomes (e.g., pipeline and revenue)?
3. **Attribution**
   Which marketing activities work? What's the return on investment of my marketing programs?

Let's cover each.

Read the blog

Engagement analytics

To measure how you're creating and deepening relationships, measure where target accounts spend time, as well as how engagement increases over time. Don't just look at web data; drill into all activities, including attending events and taking sales meetings.

Deeper engagement means deeper commitments.

Journey analytics

In a perfect world, we'd only need to measure revenue. It's the one ABM metric everyone agrees on. But while revenue is the holy grail, ABM also requires leading indicators to show progress during long sales cycles. For this, B2B marketers define stages of the account journey and measure funnel dynamics using the key metrics of balance, volume/flow, conversion, and velocity. These leading indicators show when, how, and why target accounts become aware, engaged, qualified, closed, and more.

Fundamentally, these kinds of ABM metrics answer one question: How do accounts move through the buying journey to produce outcomes we care about?

Attribution analytics

Perhaps the most common marketing question is, Did my programs have an impact? ABM practitioners use attribution analytics as an ABM metric to make better decisions about budget allocation. By investing in the highest-performing programs, they maximize overall return by answering one fundamental question: What is the return on my marketing investment?

Marketers who use ABM metrics—like engagement, journey, and ROI analytics—speak the same language as other executives.

Four ways to measure engagement

Are the right people at the account spending time with your company, and is that engagement going up over time?

Engagement describes something fundamental about the customer's connection to your brand: Higher degrees of engagement means a deeper commitment. More time. More emotion. More of a relationship. More activity, like buying and advocating. In short: Engagement matters.

But, like awareness, it's not easy to measure engagement.

It's about time.

The number of minutes that someone spends with your brand is a reasonable way to track engagement. These minutes should cover not only when they respond to your marketing programs but also when people interact socially, use your product, and talk with the sales team. By combining these interactions at the individual and account levels, we get a good proxy for engagement.

Here are four considerations when measuring engagement at target accounts.

1

Track activities

Track all the meaningful activities for each of the contacts at your target accounts.

Typically, the data sources will include:

- **Website:** Visits by account using reverse-IP mapping.
- **Marketing automation:** Email opens, event attendance, content downloads, interesting moments, and so on.
- **CRM:** Activities, tasks, and campaign membership.

More advanced data sources include:

- **Product:** Minutes spent using various features of your product.
- **Social:** Who follows you, shares and retweets your content, comments on your posts, and so on.
- **Sales interactions:** Tracking when sales spends time with target accounts. (This is the hardest but one of the most valuable sources.)

Many sales tools track interactions (such as email) as activities in the CRM tool, so those are straightforward to pull in. We can also connect to a sales rep's calendar and corporate email to track when they are having meetings and other interactions with target accounts.

Match activities to accounts. Take each lead's activity and identify which account he or she should be part of. You can manually do a simple match on email domain or automate it with technology like Demandbase that uses more sophisticated methods for lead-to-account matching. Getting this right is a critical step in all ABM analytics.

Count the meetings

A great ABM metric is to count the number of meetings scheduled and held at target accounts. Just make sure you have in place a good mechanism to track these!

2

Assign minutes to activities

Take each of the various activities and assign a number of minutes to each. You often won't have the exact number of minutes, so it's OK to use estimates for each activity type, such as:

- **Email open:** 1 minute
- **Content download:** 10 minutes
- **Webinar attendance:** 30 minutes
- **Dinner attendance:** 2 hours

Visualize all the activities into an account timeline.

It's often useful to map all the key activities for a given account into a visual timeline. This can be especially valuable to have during a quarterly business review to show precisely how marketing has touched the account. It's also useful when a deal closes to look back and see the touches that helped influence the account.

3

Create an organizational heatmap

To create an account heatmap, track which parts of the organization are engaging with you. Add up the number of minutes spent in total from each cell of the matrix and color code for their engagement level. You can also do this for a group of accounts to see broader trends. With this data visualization, you can identify which personas are most engaged (darker areas on your heatmap) and where you need to deepen engagement (lighter spots).

Use the heatmap to see which parts of the organization engage with you and where you may have blind spots. You can also:

- **See where you may need new content to engage different audiences**.
- **Identify potential blind spots**. Although it's always important to focus on your top contacts at an account, it's also important to have the necessary breadth of relationships. By comparing an account's heatmap with your ideal heatmap, you'll be able to see where you may be missing engagement from a key persona.

4

Aggregate engagement at the account-level, and identify marketing-qualified accounts

Combine the minutes for all the contacts at an account to come up with a measure of aggregate account-level engagement. This combination is typically not a simple sum or average. For example, sometimes you'll want to give more weight to senior or important contacts.

From there, track the aggregate engagement trend over time, similar to an electrocardiogram (EKG) chart for account health. Imagine being able to go to the head of sales to show that target accounts spent 4,289 minutes engaging with marketing activities this quarter, up 122 percent from only 1,932 last quarter. And imagine being able to drill into the data to show the specific sales territories, industry segments, and personas with the biggest growth. This is certainly a sign that things in the middle of the funnel are progressing in the right direction!

One of the best ways to demonstrate marketing's impact in ABM, especially in the middle of the funnel, is to show increased engagement from target accounts.

With this insight, you can identify marketing qualified accounts (MQAs). You want to determine which are the most engaged accounts and alert sales about any accounts whose engagement is spiking up or down versus their recent trend.

At Demandbase, we think that account-level engagement is a better indicator of potential buying activity than individual lead scores. That's why we use a new metric, the marketing qualified account (MQA) instead of the person-based metric, marketing qualified lead (MQL).

When you accurately track the minutes from your account-based marketing activities, you'll understand how target accounts are engaging. Over time, you'll gain valuable information about how engagement minutes correlate with your most pro table accounts—so you can refine your strategies and create even more engagement.

Final thoughts

Account-based metrics such as those described here don't replace traditional metrics like leads, pipeline, and revenue. Those are still important, and you should track them for both new and existing customers.

But, as we've seen, traditional metrics are not sufficient for ABM. So marketing and sales teams should be adept at additional metrics to show success.

Time to be a boss

Take it to the next level!

Congrats! If you made it through all six steps of this series and have applied some of the best practices in your go-to-market programming, then you are well on your way to executing efficient sales and marketing strategies that power revenue growth.

So now what? Here are three things that come to mind:

See a demo of Demandbase One to witness exactly how our SaaS platform can support your account-based programming.

Take an ABM certification course and show the world you mean business as a modern B2B marketer who understands the value of ABM.

Subscribe to our blog to get the latest insights and best practices in B2B.

Demandbase™

Demandbase is Smarter GTM™ for B2B brands. We help marketing and sales teams spot the juiciest opportunities earlier and progress them faster by injecting Account Intelligence into every step of the buyer journey and orchestrating every action. For more information about Demandbase, visit www.demandbase.com.