Agent3



ABM: What's Next? A Playbook for Account-Based Sales & Marketing Success

In partnership with:

EMISSARY

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Foreword

There's a lot of hype around ABM. According to our 2018 ABM Benchmarking Report, conducted in conjunction with the ABM Leadership Alliance, it's possible to more than double return on investment (ROI) with ABM compared to more traditional marketing activity.

In other words, we can believe the hype. Along with ROI, ABM is delivering broader business benefits, including greater customer success, more advocates for your business and a surge in innovation. It's no surprise then that ABM is increasingly on the CMO agenda. Over the past five years, investment into ABM has doubled and now stands at more than a quarter of the marketing budget. As ABM matures into a mainstream strategy, it is revolutionizing B2B marketing as marketing teams apply ABM principles more widely to raise their game.

And yet it's still early. Most companies are still proving the concept, designing and aligning their processes, educating their marketers, investing in technology, or trying to scale their approach to meet demand.

Scaling what is, at heart, a resource-intensive marketing strategy, can be a challenge. But it's one that ABM practitioners are overcoming by adopting a blended approach. When ABM was pioneered back in the early 2000s, it was geared to drive growth with strategic clients by treating them as markets of one. Over time, as it increasingly proved its worth and enabling technologies multiplied, new forms of ABM emerged. Specifically, companies began to experiment with 1:Few and 1:Many ABM.

The increasing popularity of blended ABM strategies, where companies adopt more than one approach, allows ABM-ers to scale while optimizing their investment to achieve key business outcomes. These can include more engaged clients, larger pipelines, better win rates, and increased revenues. 1:1 ABM is still about getting personal with your most important clients and relies on offline tactics, with seasoned practitioners leveraging executive engagement and innovation initiatives. 1:Few is a more balanced approach to reach new and existing accounts through on- and offline channels, with sophisticated marketers adopting intelligent clustering and buyer persona research. And 1:Many is about targeting at scale, relying on the identification of an ideal customer profile and the curation and customization of relevant content, mostly through online channels.

As companies plan for 2019, the top three skills they want to build within their ABM team are around data and analytics, sales and marketing collaboration, and content creation and tailoring. Many will invest in and deploy technology with an eye on using Artificial Intelligence to generate continuous insight and recommend the next best actions for their campaigns.

But the best technology in the world won't deliver the kind of ROI we've seen from ABM without the right strategy and skills in place. Simply using technology to identify and send content to a list of named accounts is not ABM – it's just marketing to accounts. Given the ROI benefits ABM can deliver, which would you rather do?

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ITSMA

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ABM: What's Next? A Playbook for Account-Based Sales & Marketing Success

As adoption of Account-Based Marketing increases, marketers are faced with a mountain of solutions, and a resulting mountain of hype.

With so many vendor options and competing solutions on the market, it can be difficult to determine where to make investments, and how to thoughtfully execute your ABM strategy to drive real results.

Winning with ABM requires far more than purchasing an off-the-shelf platform and sending your marketing team on their way. The path towards success requires a thoughtful, strategic approach (aligned to your business goals and fueled by inside insights), combined with the right talent, smart execution, and a new breed of marketing technology.

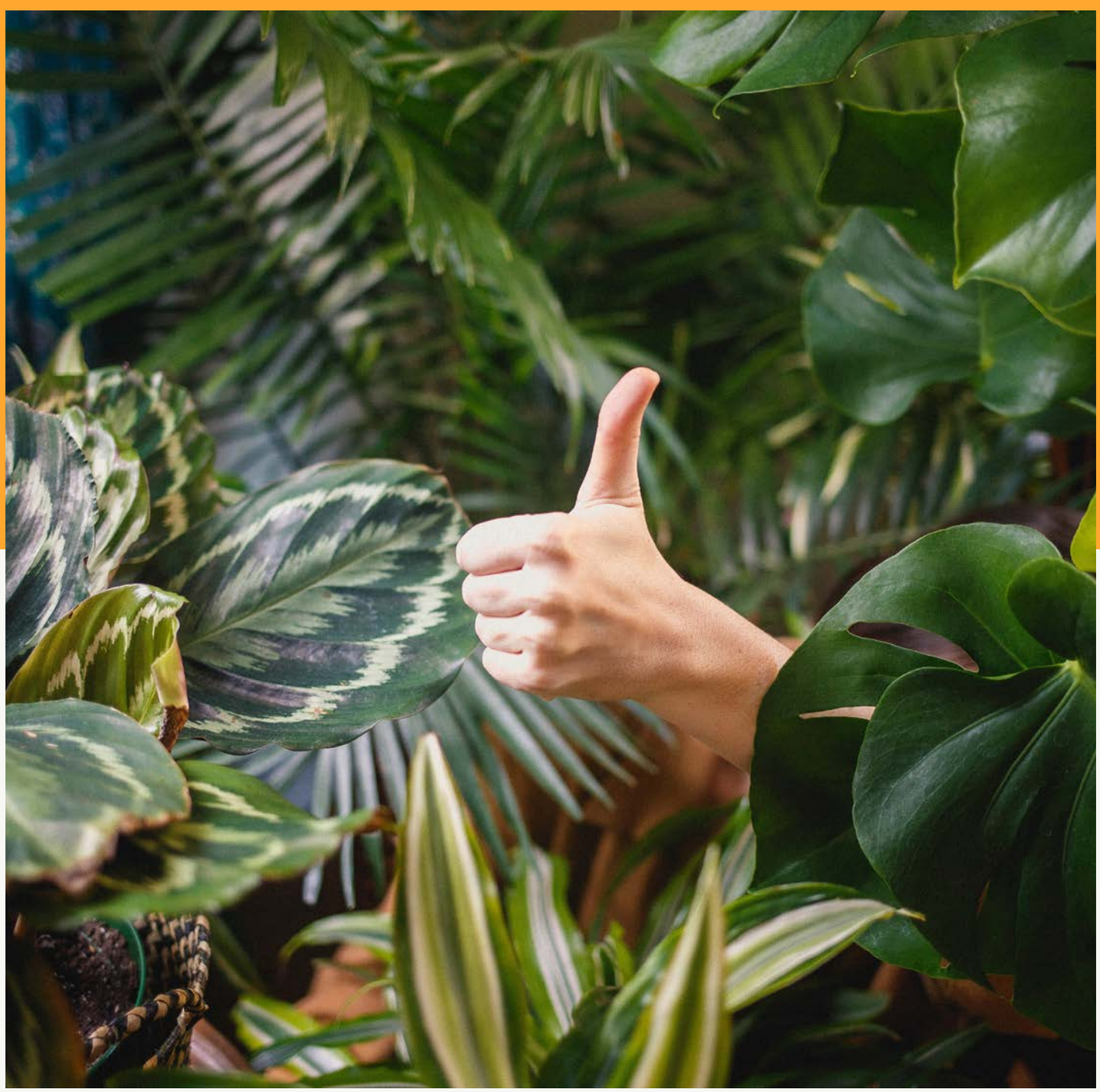
ABM is a team effort that requires a coordinated effort between your marketing and sales teams from beginning to end, with a healthy dose of strategic help from friends on the outside.

In this guide, we'll dig deeper into this model and provide an overview of some of the most innovative strategies, tools, and frameworks on the market.

We'll get insights from some of the leading ABM experts in the industry, and provide real-world examples of how companies have succeeded with this approach.

Chapter 1:

What is ABM, Exactly, and Why Should You Care?



Where ABM came from, and why it's suddenly so popular

What if there was a way you could closely align sales and marketing so that both departments were deeply synchronized and working in concert?

You would probably say, "Yeah, right. Marketing hasn't talked to sales since 'Breaking Bad' went off the air." But what if you could also get more value out of your marketing spend, increase account relevance, and drive revenue?

There is a way to achieve all of this—and it's called Account-Based Marketing, or ABM. It should be your go-to strategy for closing enterprise deals going forward. Here's what you need to know.

What is Account-Based Marketing?

ABM is a B2B strategic sales and marketing approach that focuses on custom-tailored strategies, campaigns, and execution focused on the unique needs of your accounts. Unlike typical funnel-based demand gen, which treats buyer personas at different accounts as all being the same, ABM focuses on individual stakeholders within the context of their role at the account.

While similar tactics have been in use for many years, ABM was first popularized by the Information Technology Services Marketing Association (ITSMA) back in 2004 as a way to cut through the noise of generic sales messaging.

The organization suggests 4 core pillars that define the movement: client-centricity and insight; true marketing and sales partnership; prioritizing reputation, relationships, and growth beyond near-term revenue; and tailored programs and campaigns.

How does ABM differ from more traditional B2B marketing approaches?

Typically, when a marketing department tries to chase down leads for sales, they cast as wide a net as possible, which can have the adverse effect of creating unqualified leads. But if you're fishing for something specific, as Engagio says, you don't use a net—you use a spear.

Except, when it comes to ABM, it's not fishing with a spear, it's fishing with a thousand spears. You're not just focusing on one person making purchasing decisions. You're reaching their support staff and multiple departments across the enterprise with precise, targeted content.

Since enterprise companies have multiple decision-makers with purchasing power spread out across several departments, you can't just direct one message at a buyer and cross your fingers—you need to get buy-in across the board. Again, you're not just talking to the head of a department. You're talking to the entire account.

Best of all, sales and marketing work together on generating the right leads, so they can focus on the right clients every single time. In fact, companies that have adopted ABM are 40 percent more likely to have their marketers closely aligned with sales.



Why should you care about ABM?

You've probably already incorporated elements of ABM into your marketing strategy, but there's no better time to go all-in, as the benefits are clearly measurable:

You'll get better ROI

97% of marketers who have implemented ABM found they had a measurable ROI

Most effective

87% of marketers say that ABM delivered better ROI than any other type of marketing[1]

Better targets mean bigger sales

Targeted accounts have 40% higher contract value with mid-market accounts and 35% with enterprise accounts

Close-rates go through the roof

Any company would move mountains if they could increase their close-rate to 165%. And that's just for mid-market accounts. High-level enterprise accounts were said to have seen an increased close-rate of a whopping 285%

Clients will love it

84% of ABM supporters have seen a noticeable, improved change in their customer relationships

45% achieve double ROI

77% of ABM leaders achieve 10% greater ROI and 45% achieve more than double the ROI from ABM[2]

Customer success

67% of ABM leaders achieved greater customer success with their ABM accounts compared to other accounts[3]

Positive references

66% of ABM leaders say that their accounts are more likely to provide positive references and be advocates than other accounts[4]

Blended strategy

58% of ABM leaders are looking to scale ABM by adopting a blended ABM strategy[5]

On trend

Nearly 60% of B2B organizations say they are currently using ABM and another 27% intend to start using ABM strategies this year[6]

In short, this hyper-targeted approach to enterprise sales and marketing works—and it works exceedingly well.

It's more effective than the traditional approaches to revenue generation, and since it has a measurable impact on client satisfaction, your customer success team will thank you, too.

[1](ITSMA, 2017), [2–5](ITSMA and the ABM Alliance, 2018), [6](Dun & Bradstreet, 2018)

Chapter 2:

Who are the Major ABM Players?



An overview of the major technology vendors, how they differ & how they play together

So now that we have a basic idea of what ABM is, let's examine the major players in this rapidly growing space.

Keeping up with ABM vendors can feel like a daunting task, and as soon as analyst reports from groups like Forrester come out, they can feel outdated. In the same way, this list is far from exhaustive, so it's useful to keep your eye on dynamic market overviews like TrustRadius' TrustMap.

Complicating matters further is the fact that many sales intelligence vendors who specialize in account identification and account intelligence position themselves as ABM platforms. While these solutions are a pivotal piece of the overall ABM puzzle, they are far from all you need for full-cycle ABM.

Not surprisingly, the field of ABM vendors has grown exponentially in the 14 years since its inception, and several platforms have emerged as leaders in the industry. Here are some of the major players in the world of ABM:

Demandbase

Demandbase is one of the most comprehensive ABM platforms on the market today. Forrester singled out the company as the best ABM provider in Q2 of 2018—and you don't have to squint to see why. For one, the company is working with one of the largest B2B datasets around. It's also using AI and machine learning to get a leg up on the competition. Beyond that, it's one of the only end-to-end platforms and has a proprietary database that's a veritable murderer's row of raw information—700 billion page views, 280 million keywords matched to companies, and 14 million company records.

Demandbase offers what comes closest to being an end-to-end ABM solution, from audience selection and segmentation, to engagement and analytics, and that all comes at a premium price tag not suitable for small to medium sized businesses.

Engagio

Engagio is relatively new to the scene, but that hasn't stopped it from securing clients like VMware and New Relic. If you're a company with a robust marketing tech stack, then Engagio might be a perfect fit, as an ABM platform tends to work best when a company already has the assets that can speak to a powerful B2B campaign. Plus, the company's Marketing Orchestration Platform unifies existing company data so marketers can act upon high-level insights into their sales leads.

Their latest update lets B2B marketers determine if they want to run a program at the account or person level and take action across multiple channels based on intelligent real-time triggers.

Terminus

A more affordable option for organizations not yet ready for an enterprise offering like Demandbase, Terminus offers the ability to upload your existing accounts, target contacts within them by department and level (primarily via banner ads), then track engagement of those accounts on your website.

With closer integration to your CRM and marketing automation systems, the ability to develop account-based campaigns triggered by specific activity, and enhanced dashboarding and analytics, Terminus aspires to be an "ABM Command Center for B2B Marketers" which means a focus on execution first

Agent3

Agent3 (joint author who contributed to this guide) provides a wide range of solutions and services to enable end-to-end ABM. At the heart of their solution set is the Agent3 Platform. This web-based Platform curates a number of unstructured data sets and news about key accounts, executives, sectors, and competitors, as well as monitoring changes in buyer behavior on the B2B web via intent data.

All these data sets are aligned to one common proprietary data taxonomy and smart filters allow users to match their company's portfolio of solutions and services against their clients / prospects' business drivers. This allows sales and marketing users to identify timely opportunities to engage in order to drive revenue growth.

With a focus on actionable insight, the Agent3 Platform has been built specifically to support all key personas in sales and marketing roles and offers a web based user dashboard, email and intent alerts, native CRM integration, and a newsletter curation function. Added to this, users have the option of a managed service and a series of supplementary solutions from deeper blended intent analysis (1st and 3rd party) through access to Agent3's Analyst Centre of Excellence (ACE), where a team of experienced analysts provide on-demand, in-depth desk-based analysis of accounts, competitors, executives, and markets.

Triblio

As Eric Martin of SalesLoft puts it in his review of the ABM platform for TrustRadius, "Triblio is well suited for ABM programs that are nascent or growing, and want to make some quick wins...You should not invest in Triblio until you have a high level of data integrity in your CRM, a clear go-to-market strategy, and a defined list of target accounts selected to and agreed to by management."

The more affordable ABM platform can help you customize messaging, content, and CTAs by account segments including product interest, content topic interest, firmographics, or funnel stage. Founded by Andrew Yee, former SVP of Product Development for Eloqua, Triblio is a newer market entrant that definitely falls into the "one to watch" category.

DiscoverOrg

DiscoverOrg has become one of the largest and reliable sources of firmographic sales intelligence data on the market, particularly after their acquisition of RainKing last year.

They provide org charts based on publicly available data, along with contact info for account targets and tools to help aid in account prioritization. Their partnership with Bombora helps with proactive identification of accounts looking for specific solutions.

Emissary

One of the co-authors of this guide, Emissary is the world's first sales intelligence network.

The Emissary platform connects enterprise sellers and marketers to a network of over 6,000 senior executives who have recently worked at their most important accounts, helping them gather inside insights so that they can open up opportunities, shorten sales cycles, and close more deals.

Emissary works with marketers on developing account strategies and messaging, as well as leveraging inside insights to build and execute 1:1 account-based marketing campaigns.

Everstring

Like DiscoverOrg, Everstring falls squarely in the sales intelligence side of ABM, providing a robust suite of tools allowing you to build highly targeted account lists based on which segments and company types you are most likely to be successful with.

Emissary uses it to help build out account lists and to define marketing qualified leads, using a scoring model that leverages external research, predictive intelligence, and search data to define when a prospect is "in market."

D&B Hoovers

D&B and Hoovers have been providing companies with deep background on their primary accounts for decades, but they kicked it up a notch when they acquired Avention (makers of OneSource) last year.

While trying to keep up with the varying brands that this borglike corporate entity has taken on over the last few years has been a little dizzying, it is still the largest and most reliable one-stop shop for company names, descriptions, size, and demographic data, as well as helping understand company relationships.

Leadbridge

Formed back in 2006, Leadbridge is an ABM sales intelligence firm that provides customised deep-dive account profiles on key and named accounts. With a heritage in tech, LeadBridge provides a tiered insight model that combines outbound phone prospecting with custom in-depth ABM account research. Over half of the world's 20 largest software companies use LeadBridge and we work alongside LeadBridge at Agentʒ with clients such as Salesforce.com and Veritas.

MRP

Founded in 2002, MRP looks at ABM not as a marketing gimmick, but rather as a "customer engagement strategy." The idea is that when you have insights into customers' purchasing history, you can accurately fulfill their business needs and create content they'll engage with.

When your partner wants you to do the dishes, you can usually get the hint long before they ask you directly. Well, MRP not only does the dishes without being asked, the company also scrubs the baseboards, takes out the trash, and throws in a load of laundry to boot. That's because MRP specializes in predictive analytics. They know how to find the best targets for your marketing and sales departments, and leverages analytic strengths to generate first-class workflows that will engage prospective clients.

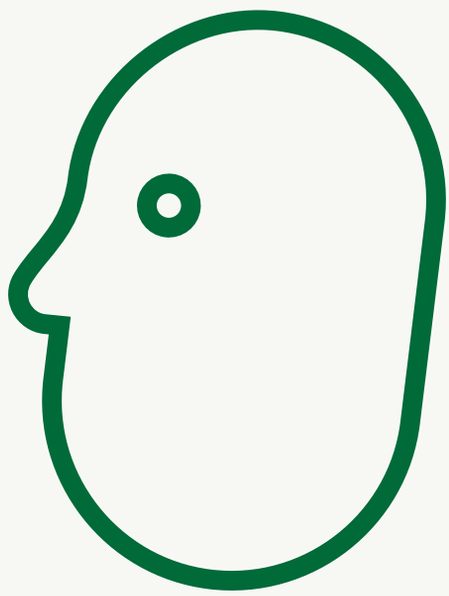
TechTarget

TechTarget proves that not all value comes from shiny new things. Originally known for the "problem solving content" they host on a network of over 140 websites, TechTarget has evolved over 20 years into one of the leading sources of insights around purchase intent based on content consumption and buying behaviors.

They offer a whole slew of services, from market research and custom account-based demand gen campaigns, as well as tech-based solutions like their Priority Engine, which promises sellers direct access to potential new accounts interested in their offerings.

Emerging Players

The eight companies above lead the pack, but they're far from the only players in the space. Platforms like LeanData, DataFox, 6sense, and Madison Logic are all emerging contenders that occupy various corners of the ABM marketplace. While, as Forrester notes, they still have critical pieces missing that prevent them from truly competing with the power players in the space, each offers an aspect of ABM functionality that may be attractive to growing revenue teams.



Chapter 3:

Understanding Your Accounts



How companies are using inside insights to fuel strategic account plans and execution of ABM outreach strategies

Understanding your accounts

According to CSO Insights, when account planning is left to individual salespeople, win rates average around 42.9 percent. But when teams have a strategic plan in place for individual deals, the win rate for those deals is a healthy 46.2 percent.

The fact is, Account-Based Marketing starts with a clear account strategy rooted in a deep, accurate, up-to-date understanding of your best possible prospects. Getting there will likely require the use of several platforms, as well as crucial qualitative, private data from insiders.

Finding your ideal clients

Getting started with an ABM strategy requires defining your Ideal Client Profile (or ICP). Start by looking at your 10 best clients, and ask yourself what measures you define as being most strategically beneficial to your organization.

- Which types of clients are most likely to renew?
- Which have the highest NPS scores?
- Which are the most likely to refer others?
- Which are the most likely to grow their account along with you?
- Which use your product in the way it is really designed to be used?

Define the size of company you work best with, as well as their headcount, revenue, industries they compete in, the type of customers they sell to, growth stage, global composition, and even where they reside amongst their competitive set in analyst reports.

To find and understand this data, you can use the internal data within your CRM, public data from sources like LinkedIn Navigator, or more detailed firmographic data from vendors like Everstring.

Defining your ICP is a useful exercise for defining what makes a good client and help you know what kind of customers to pursue in the future.

Building your account list

Now that you have a clear idea of what your ideal customers look like, there are a number of ways you can acquire a list of accounts that align to your ICP. Tools like Datafox, Everstring, and even public data sources like Crunchbase can help you build a long list of potential targets.

From there, you can prioritize your list of targets based on how well they fit in your ICP. Tools like Everstring are helpful, but it can also be useful to develop your own scoring methodology to help whittle down a large group into a tight list of focused targets for your sales team to go after.

In the end, you want a specific list of very strategic targets that your team will be more likely to succeed with.

Prioritizing accounts

Now that you have a list of accounts, it's time to segment them. Different companies approach this differently based on their organizational structure. One method we recommend is dividing accounts by size and setting quotas for each size in every territory.

Taking a balanced approach to company size can help manage the need to close on shorter-term deals (typically smaller companies have shorter sales cycles) and longer-term, higher LTV enterprise deals.

Activity-based metrics from your marketing automation system can also help you prioritize your most engaged prospects, and tools like Bombora can be helpful to gauge external signals of buying intent.

If you're prioritizing your accounts right, you should end up with a high-value list of strategic targets who are likely to be great clients. The list should be long enough to provide ample targets for your existing sales team to meet revenue and growth goals, and focused enough to make sure they are not wasting time on accounts that are not likely to convert.

Buyer personas

Now that we have a very clear idea of what type of companies to go after, we need to make sure to develop an understanding of what types of titles and personas we should be going after within those companies. What ICP is to an organization, buyer personas are to the individuals you sell to.

Buyer personas should clearly define who you want to focus your marketing, sales, and messaging efforts on at a personal level. At Emissary, some of our personas are based on Chief Revenue Officers, Field Marketing Leaders, Regional VPs of Sales, and CMOs.

For each of those personas, we identify their backgrounds, motivations, shared goals, and biggest challenges based on interviews with actual customers, their backgrounds (found on LinkedIn profiles), and from the experiences of our sales and customer success teams.

Developing clear buyer personas for accounts within your ideal client profile is a great way to make sure that what you have to say aligns directly with what someone might actually buy.

Account insights: cutting to the chase

For the most direct, in-depth, and specific background on your accounts that fills in the major gaps in your account plan, it's hard to beat a smart human who's in the know. Services like Emissary can connect you with a former employee of your target accounts to conduct 1:1 conversations that fill gaps in your knowledge.

Working with this type of advisor allows you to develop a more informed targeted account strategy by helping you unearth hidden decision-makers and influencers, providing you with the unofficial, political org chart so you can determine the best points of entry for opportunities.

In these guided, strategic discussions, marketers and sellers work with advisors to help them tailor their marketing and outreach materials, honing their sales pitches based on the buyer's personality. They can help you understand key pain points and objectives so you can come away with a clear-cut plan for how to best communicate all of this information within your account.

From there, they can help you prepare for upcoming meetings, allowing you to better understand critical internal buying processes and helping you understand how to expand your relationships into longer-term partnerships.

You can get to the meat of what's most vital to your major accounts by asking your inside advisor questions like the ones on the following page.

Step 1: Information Gathering

Questions to ask		
What	Who	How
What are the account's goals?	Who are the account's decision-makers?	How do internal conflicts play out at the account?
What are its pain points?	Who are its influencers?	How do its procurement and buying processes operate?
What initiatives does it have currently underway?	Who are its end users?	
What does its tech stack look like?		
What is the organization's culture like?		

With a clear idea of the strategic direction and an informed understanding of the opportunity that is realistically in play (and hopefully backed by budget), you can now move forward with determining which messages to focus on to open the door for new business.

Working with your Emissary, you can explore questions like these to align your messaging to a real need.

Step 2 : Alignment

At Agent3, in addition to working closely with Emissary we also pull on our Analyst Centre of Excellence (ACE); a team of experienced, dedicated analysts who, working to a clear bespoke brief, create account and executive 'dossiers' for our clients.

Dossiers provide a deep dive analysis of an account or cluster of accounts, including organizational structure / overview, competitor analysis, deal analysis, sentiment analysis, stakeholder identification and mapping and ICT landscape / contract analysis. Importantly, they also provide a clear point of view as to where an opportunity exists aligned to the client's brief.

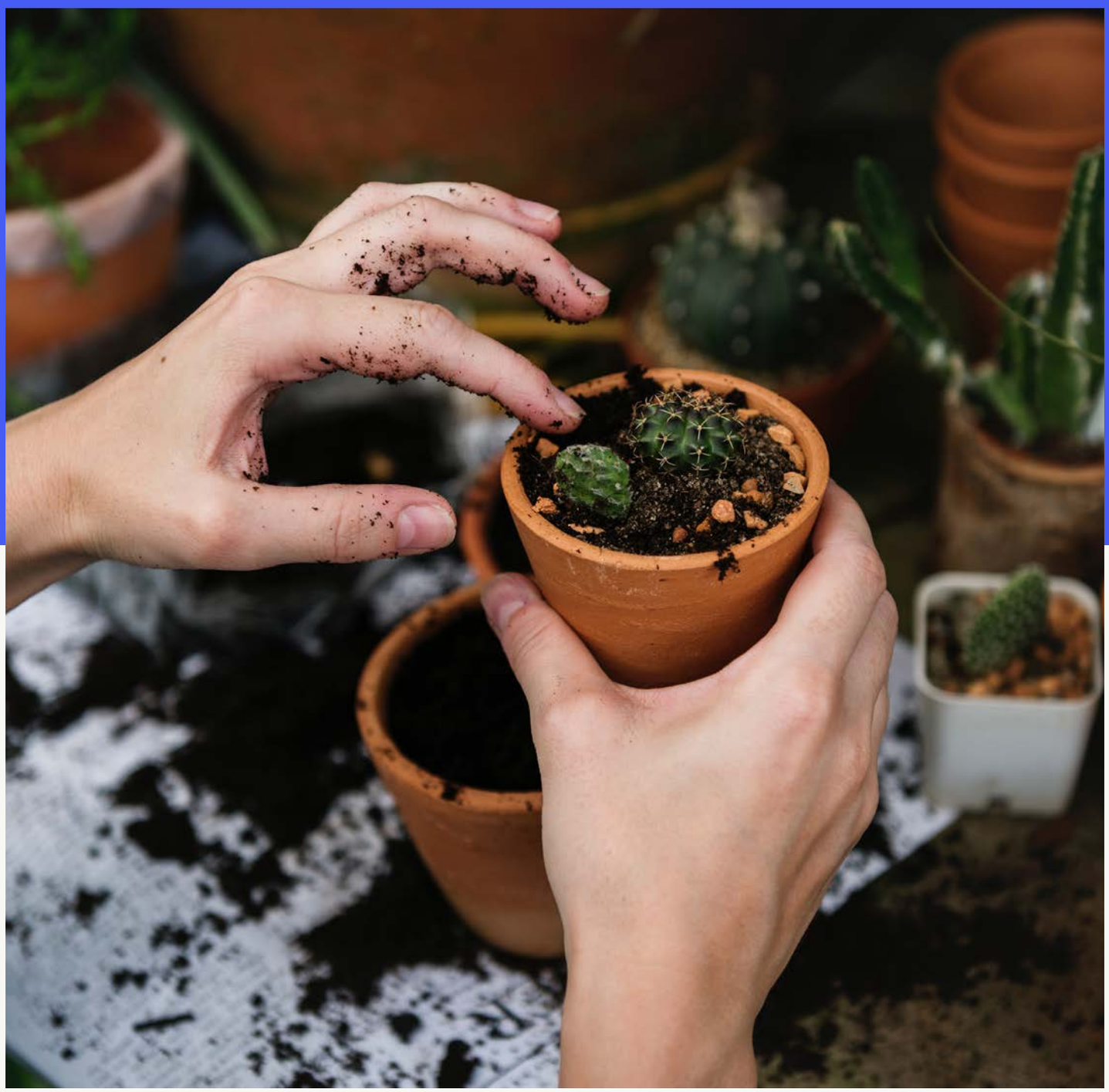
Delving deep into the specific pain points of your account, defining how to align with those pain points, and understanding the hyper-targeted audience within the account will help your message resonate more deeply.

Topic	Question
Pain points	Why and how does your solution solve for these major pain points?
Differentiation	Why is your solution better than competitors in the market?
How	What messaging will make this pitch resonate most?

Speaking of deep, take a deep breath, because we're ready to move on to how you can actually use all of this account-based intelligence to market effectively at scale.

Chapter 4:

Developing a Winning ABM Strategy



1:1, 1:Few, 1:Many, and a more evolved vision for practical success

At this point, there's little doubting the benefits of ABM. Research from ITSMA states that 87 percent of marketers said ABM delivers higher ROI than any other marketing approach. Other studies have found unanimously that it better aligns marketing with sales, and can significantly improve client retention and relationships.

But if ABM is indisputably good at driving pipeline, enhancing connections, and helping unite sales and marketing, then why isn't everyone doing it?

The answer is because ABM requires a different approach to other forms of marketing and therefore can be time consuming, at least to start with.

Initially, it can be complex and resource intensive, which can make it a risk some organizations aren't willing to take, even when the rewards could be so high.

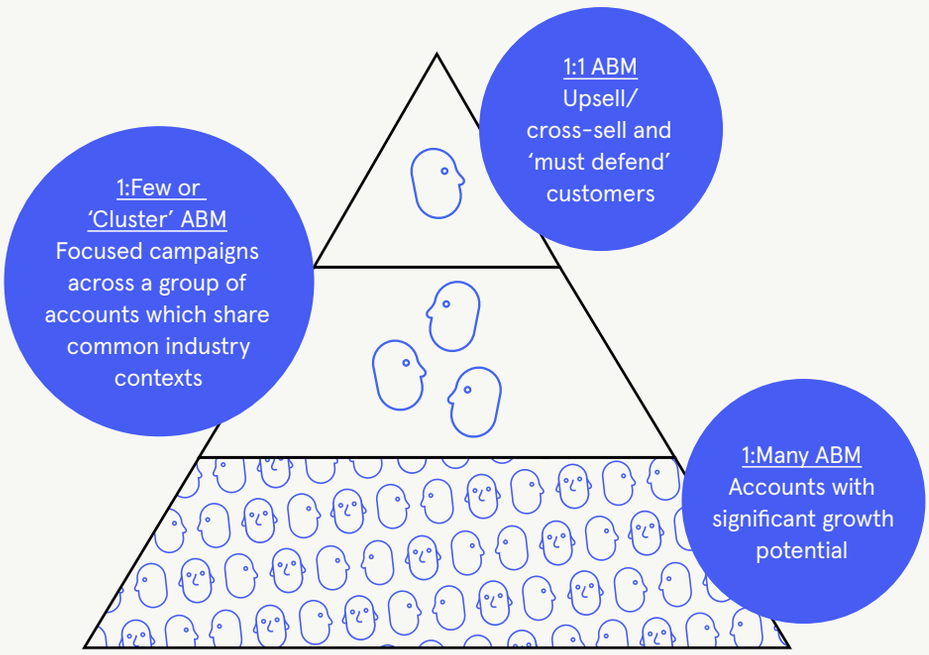
But by developing a well thought-out strategy, ABM represents a huge opportunity with multiple stages and approaches.

When looking at types of ABM, there are broadly three types:

1:1 ABM: where you focus budget and resources on marketing to a single large "must win or must protect" account. This involves very high levels of account insight, personalization, and knowledge.

1:Few or 'Cluster' ABM: where you focus on between two-10 accounts that share characteristics, show propensity for a similar proposition, or are in the same sector. This involves lighter personalization than 1:1 ABM and is often based upon industry insight that's relevant across those accounts and includes personalization only for specific tactics.

1:Many ABM: where you focus on more accounts—between 50-500 or maybe more—but with much lower levels of personalization and insight. This stage uses automation technology to target named accounts at scale and is morea case of marketing to accounts than ABM, per se.

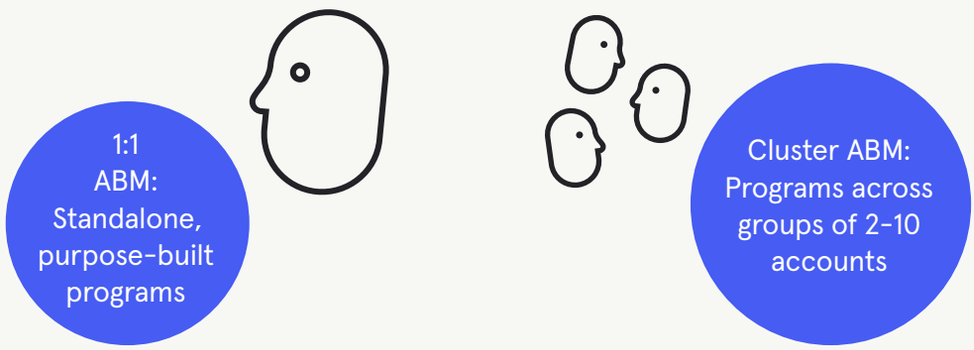


With each type, multiple channels, tactics, and resources are deployed, and as you move down the triangle, insight and personalization are reduced, lowering the impact of your campaigns, but expanding your reach. While each approach has its own time and place in an overall marketing strategy, a blended approach will increase the breadth and depth of your marketing program.

The challenge is being able to either scale up your 1:1 strategy into a cluster approach or scale down your 1:Many approach to be less automated and more targeted and personalized.

For many, a mixed or blended strategy that combines 1:1 with Cluster ABM, provides the perfect solution because you can target your most vital accounts, while simultaneously scaling your approach to focus on other top accounts.

The difference between 1:1 and Cluster ABM



Planning program	Dedicated workshops and engagement plans created for individual accounts	Combination of virtual 1:1 'Discovery' sessions and group-wide face-to-face workshop discussions
Account intelligence	'Deep' account insight development based on organization strategy and tech initiatives	'Lite' account profiling and sector/ topic-wide dossiers; ongoing little-and-often insights
Program goals and measures	Specifically-tied to driving commercial success around named initiatives/ pursuits	Combination of account-specific and Cluster-wide: 'Commercial', 'Relationship' and 'Conditioning' KPIs
Content and messaging	Unique/custom messaging and content marketing into each account	Cluster Value Proposition messaging based on common themes, then personalized in the 'final yards'
Tactical execution	Dedicated execution plan integrated in Account Development Plans	Content (re)creation; account- specific targeting and activation; sales enablement; ad hoc insights

What team do you need to support ABM?

Vital to getting this process right is the team you have supporting you. It's not always about having huge numbers of resources of multi-talented people—although obviously this helps. What's important is buy-in from senior stakeholders, aligning sales and marketing to joint KPIs, and having a focused team who have the necessary skills and resources when they need them. We discuss more of this in the following chapter.

Measurement

The final part of the jigsaw is measurement. Measurement in marketing has often been a contentious issue. What to measure, how to measure, and the best ways of actually doing the measurements have generated thousands of blog posts. ABM is not a place for vanity metrics—unspecified "engagement" measurements will not be what drives the success of your strategy. You need to prove that ABM generates real pipeline growth and, ultimately, revenue.

Instead, consider measuring across the buyer lifecycle, focusing on different aspects of the journey and constantly evaluating and adjusting your strategy to get the results you need. For example, short terms goals could include web visits or downloads, relationship goals such as stakeholder awareness and engagement could be in your medium-term objectives, with commercial impact and sales velocity in your long-term measurements.

How to choose the right strategy

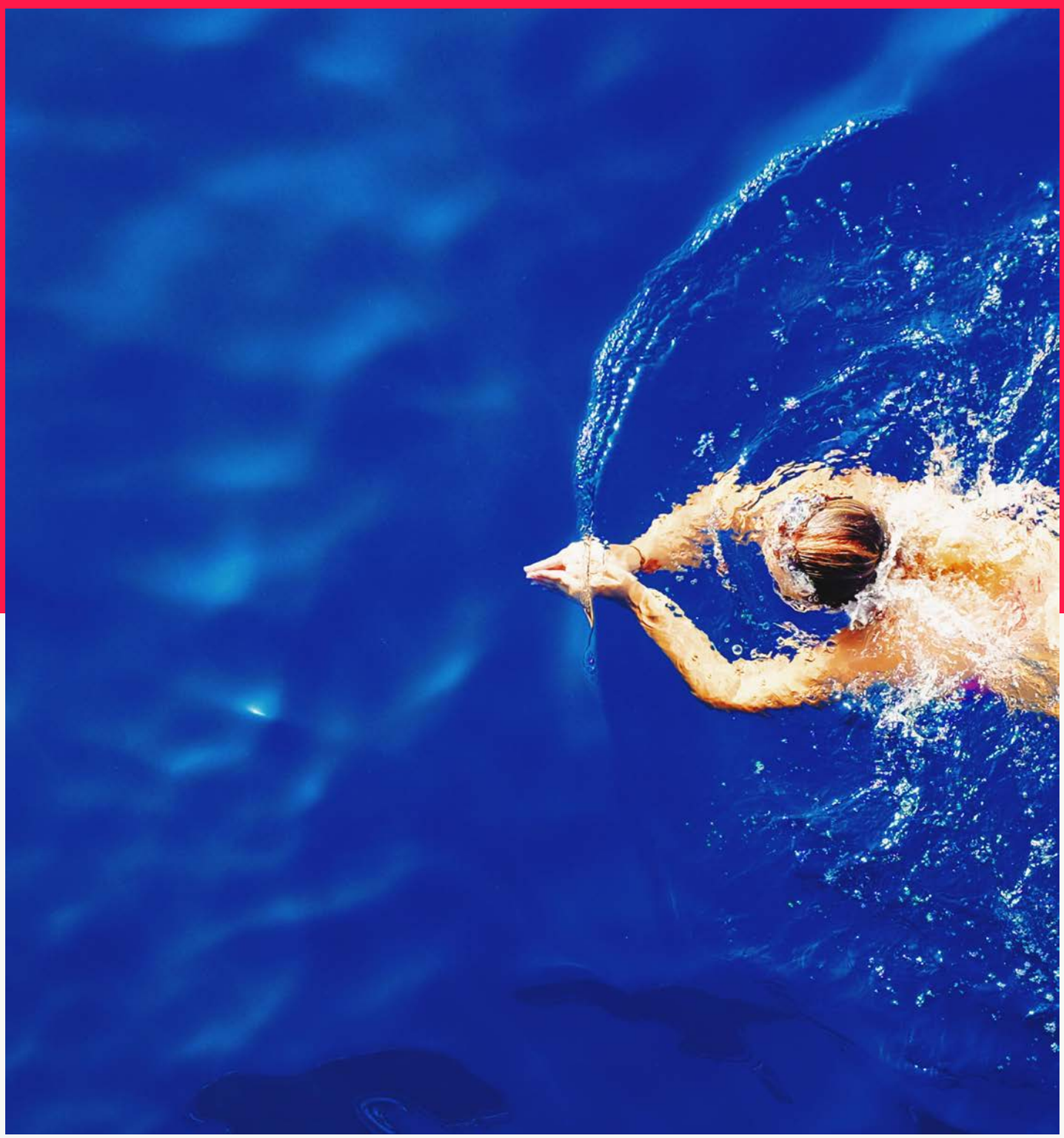
Which strategy is right for you? The place to start is working backwards from the opportunity or accounts you're trying to win, and aligning your ABM strategy and resources/budgets accordingly. By looking at what revenue you want to drive and the potential growth you need to achieve you can segment your accounts and then proceed with the right ABM strategy.

Example measurement framework

Outputs	Planning program	Higer volume of quality account engagements: accumulative interactions across the named account	Improved content engagement: higher CTR, improved page stats, email open rates, etc	Increased time-to-lauch: dynamic activities take place within days, not weeks and months
Outcomes	Account intelligence	Change in stakeholder relatonships: % of decision makers at target customers moved from 'unknown' to 'known', to engaged	Increased customer preference: increased awareness, perception and sentiment	
Impacts	Program goals and measures	Larger sales pipeline: attributed, qualified opportunities	Competitive performance deal win rates, share of wallet etc	Sales velocity: time to bid and close	Account retention: increased renewal rates

Chapter 5:

Your ABM Team: Talent & Training



How do you get your existing team up to speed on ABM and executing together towards results?

The greatest misconception about ABM is that it's a marketing strategy. It isn't. It's a sales and marketing strategy with both teams working together under the shared goal of winning or expanding a relationship with a customer. Aligning the two teams around a common set of goals and targets is the first step to getting the right people in place for a successful strategy.

This united team also needs to have a shared understanding about how important actionable insight is. A solid ABM strategy is built on a foundation of insight—knowing the customer and using this in-depth understanding to get under the skin of their business to target them appropriately—as well as having the ability to act on a trigger or customer interaction and engage with the account at a time when it would be most receptive to your tactics.

New skills?

The skills required for ABM differ from those in a traditional role. It's not just about getting your sales and marketing teams together—it's about creating a team who can support across strategy, research, deliverables, and execution. This might involve upskilling your existing team and training them to develop the expertise you need as well as bringing new people on board or working with a third party for the capabilities you don't possess.

It also might be about making some tough decisions. There's always going to be those team members who, for one reason or another, are unsuitable as you move from a transactional style of marketing to a more strategic one. A fundamental question to ask is whether your current marketing team has the ability to be consultative and strategic to support the sales team and can genuinely get inside the mind of the customer.

Developing an integrated and personalized customer journey based on actionable insight is a strategic approach that needs to be supported by a variety of skills and tactics. For example, in-depth client profiling of your chosen 1:1 or cluster accounts needs someone who's methodical and deep-thinking.

Coming up with creative ideas and campaigns to heighten customer awareness and then producing the content requires altogether different skills, whether that's video, written, online, or offline. Digital and social skills, as well as automation execution capabilities might also be on your wish list. In addition, as part of a genuine nurture track, you might want martech and adtech skills that can augment your other tactics.



The role of frameworks and tools

While these skills might exist within your company, working on a single or few account strategy might be a new challenge for those individuals. Having the processes, frameworks, and tools to support them ensures the methodology they're following is consistent and continuous, and helps to avoid 'patchy' ABM. One way to achieve this is with a third party.

With ABM increasing in popularity, you can partner with any number of organizations for all aspects of your strategy, from in-depth insight and deep account profiling to content creation and automation or strategy and training.

One of the advantages of working with a third party is the benefit of their experience. As experts in their field, your partner should be able to guide you on best practices and deliver insider knowledge to help avoid pitfalls. Independent organizations, like the ITSMA, can also help with training programs and frameworks.

Regardless of the skills your team or extended team possess, one of the most crucial attributes must be the ability to collaborate with everyone around the business, from senior management for buy-in and support and finance teams for altering remuneration policies for sales, to web developers and events organizers.

Your ABM program—if done right—should touch the width and breadth of your organization, with sales team collaboration being the most vital of all partnerships.



Chapter 6:

Executing Your Strategy



Everything is in place, now how can you be sure to execute efficiently at scale?

With your strategy, team, and resources all aligned, it's time to build and execute your ABM program. But where to start? And how can you scale the program to realize the rewards that ABM can deliver?

In the diagram below, we looked at a Cluster ABM program as an example. By the time you get to planning and execution, you should have used insights to build a strategy, agreed-upon measures, and finalized a value proposition.

The focus of this phase is to build a program framework and plan focused on driving the most impactful and relevant interactions with key executives across the account or accounts of most interest.

In doing so, all efforts will be made to repurpose and cross-pollinate existing messaging, content, and activities from other marketing plans which suit the requirements of your ABM program.



Key Insights Across the Cluster	ABM Goal-Setting and Engagement Strategy	Cluster Value Proposition Messaging	Tactical Engagement	Measurement
Snapshot view per account: • Existing relationship summary • Key strategic initiatives • Priorities and strategies • Key stakeholder identification Summary SWOT outlining the organization's position in targeting the Cluster of accounts	Summary of commercial and relationship goals per account: • Short-term goals • Medium-term goals • Long-term goals Aggregated Cluster ABM engagement strategy summary	At-a-glance cluster value proposition architecture Industry context The organization's vision for the sector The organization's unique value proposition for this group of accounts Key messages and supporting proof points	Overarching engagement plan Tactical detail; content and activation touchpoints ABM execution timeline	KPI dashboard Example measures include: • Quality & quantity of account engagements • Driving change in the customer's thinking • Enabling relationship growth • Supporting commercial success • Marketing-Sales alignment

Build a framework

A framework needs to clearly link your account goals to your strategies, objectives, and activity workstreams.

An example framework is below:

Commercial aim	Overall commercial goal		
Key challenges	Challenge #1	Challenge #2	Challenge #3
Marketing strategy	Strategy #1	Strategy #2	Strategy #3
Activity objectives	Goal and objective aligned to Strategy #1	Goal and objective aligned to Strategy #2	Goal and objective aligned to Strategy #3
			Goal and objective aligned to Strategy #3
Tactical workstreams	Tactical plan	Tactical plan	Tactical plan
	Tactical plan		Tactical plan
	Tactical plan		

As we discussed in Chapter 4, operating a more blended approach to ABM can help accelerate the rewards and get buy-in from across the business more quickly as you're having a greater impact on a larger number of accounts while delivering true value and impact.

Applying your 1:1 ABM strategy to a clustered approach can be challenging—how do you give customers the personalized attention and detail, without the resources and budget that such a strategy requires?

Having a framework approach to your execution can help solve this problem. Using your 1:1 strategy as a template, you can adapt your approach to make a 'lite' version that holds the same ABM principals just at greater scale. Accounts that share characteristics, like the same sector or challenges, can be targeted with similar content, messages, and tactics that are broadly identical and only personalized for the "last mile."

This has the advantage of requiring fewer resources, lower budgets, and generating greater repeatability —with the framework reapplied to different sectors or cluster accounts. By creating these replicable methodologies, you'll have more freedom for creativity that, because it'll always be based on an element of insight, will resonate with the customer more effectively.

Focus where it matters

It's worth remembering that one of the differences with ABM is that it turns traditional marketing on its head.

Rather than deciding what demand-generation campaigns to launch, when and where to launch them, and then determining how to engage with the resulting leads, ABM challenges marketers to do the opposite. Starting with a list of target accounts and executives and using insight to direct how and when to engage them, ABM focuses on engaging targeted contacts, essentially turning traditional marketing on its head.

When building your plan, consider four key areas:

- What's the key marketing goal from ABM activity, and how will sales teams consider campaign activity to have delivered value?
- What mediums and formats should be used in order to convey the account messaging?
- What channels and touchpoints can be (re)used?
- Where can target individuals best be reached? How can digital, social, offline, and physical interactions be integrated?

Map your content to the customer journey

Campaign implementation itself typically spans a range of technology, data, and content capabilities, based on what is specifically best-suited to the needs of the account or cluster of accounts.

In order to define this you will need to determine the content and marketing/sales touch points best suited for landing your value proposition messaging with stakeholders at the target account(s).

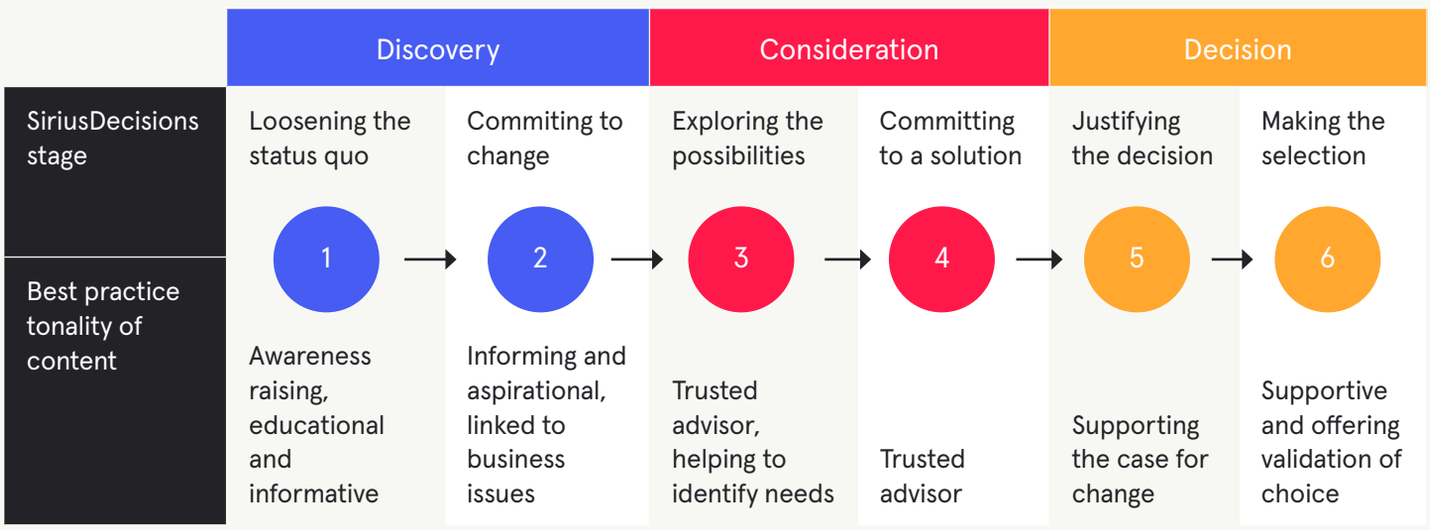
When doing this, it's advisable to base this on aligning your key messages with a typical customer journey. You can use different models, like the the six-step SiriusDecisions buyer journey stages summarized below.

When planning your campaigns, you'll want to use the insight gleaned from stage one of your ABM workflow to inform what tactics will be most effective to reach the key stakeholders in the decision-making unit, including:

- Content/assets: Interactive digital, video, infographics, reports, papers, in-person enablement materials, display advertising, events, etc.
- Activation channels: web, email nurturing, direct mail, print/display advertising, social, etc

Build a structure framework

Once you've created your ABM plan, including the above-mentioned planning of content and activation channels, you should be able to build a structure framework that clearly links your account goals to your strategies, objectives, and activity workstreams.



Conclusion

There is little doubt that ABM, as a favored approach for driving effective sales and marketing outcomes, has moved from being a left field innovation to a mainstream approach, and should therefore be an integral part of any progressive business' sales and marketing strategy. On this basis, any marketer today has to approach ABM not by asking the question of 'should I do it' but 'how do I execute it successfully?'

We spend significant time with our customers helping them develop and deliver the kind of ABM programs that are generate real impact for their organizations. We've incorporated our knowledge and experience into this guide accordingly, and for one purpose; to help anyone reading it better execute effective ABM. Trust us, ABM really can help you raise the game for sales and marketing influence and impact in your organization. We wish you the best of luck on your journey!

Need help developing and executing a winning ABM strategy?

Contact us today.

& EMISSARY

About Emissary

Emissary is the world's first sales intelligence network. Our platform connects enterprise sellers and marketers to a network of over 6,000 senior executives who have recently worked at their most important accounts, helping them gather inside insights so that they can open up opportunities, shorten sales cycles and close more deals.

Emissary works with marketers on developing account strategies and messaging, as well as leveraging inside insights to build and execute 1:1 account-based marketing campaigns.

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About Agent3

Agent3 helps brands realise the full potential of ABM in driving significant commercial impact in their most strategically important accounts, at scale. Using proven proprietary workflows and a combination of data, technology and content solutions, client programs are delivered by a professional services team based in London, New York and San Francisco.

Our customer-facing team includes a blend of specialist functions spanning insights, strategy, planning, creative production and campaign execution; this enables us to deliver end-to-end ABM programs for some of the world's biggest and fastest growing tech and telco brands including BT, CA, Cisco, Pure Storage, Salesforce, Sony, Tata Communications and Veritas.

We also have dedicated data, engineering and innovation teams focused on identifying and productizing new ways of identifying and engaging target organizations and individuals.

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