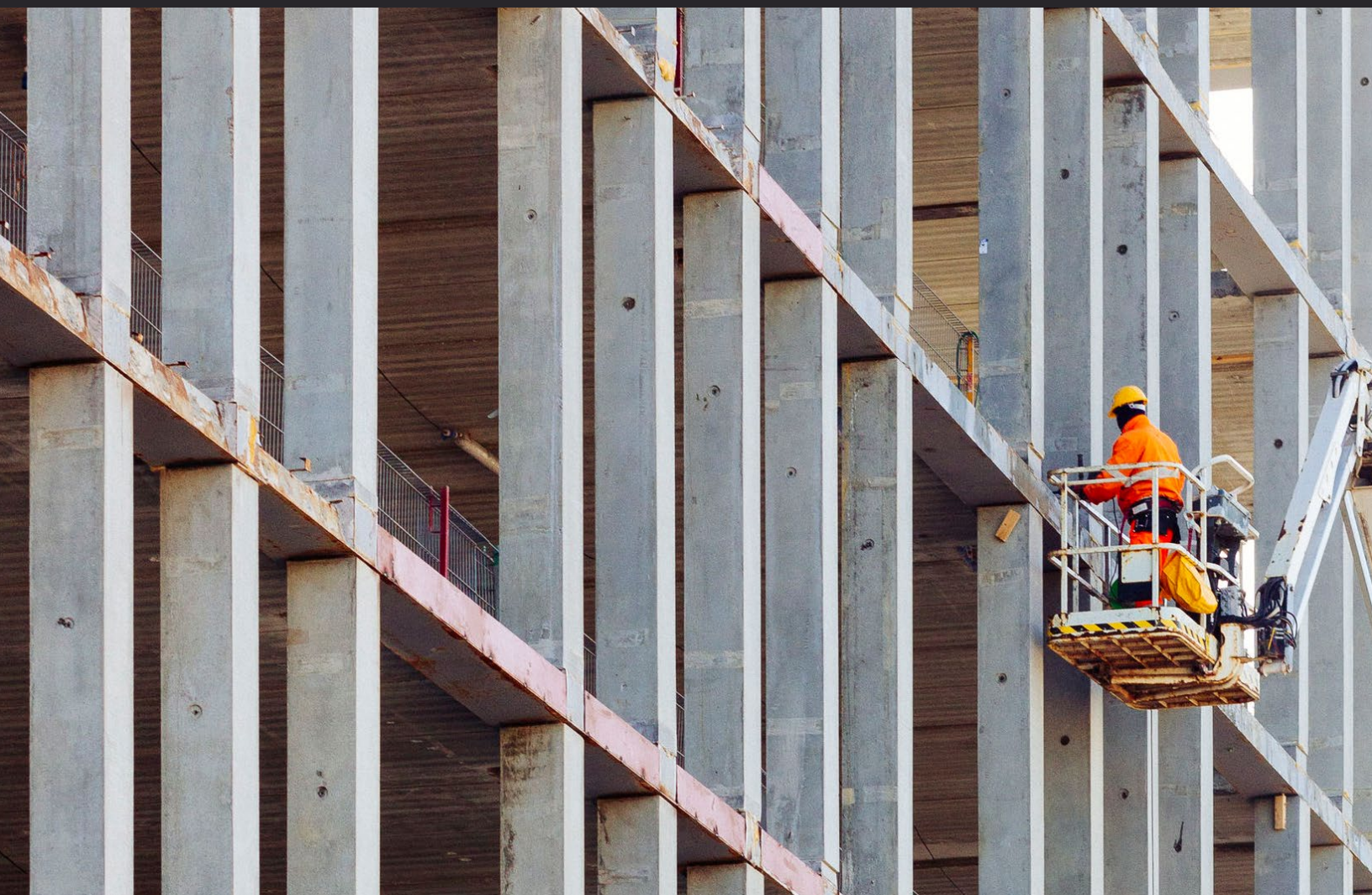
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How U.S. Marketers Can Kick-start Their ABM Journey

Point To Point is a B2B Digital Marketing Agency



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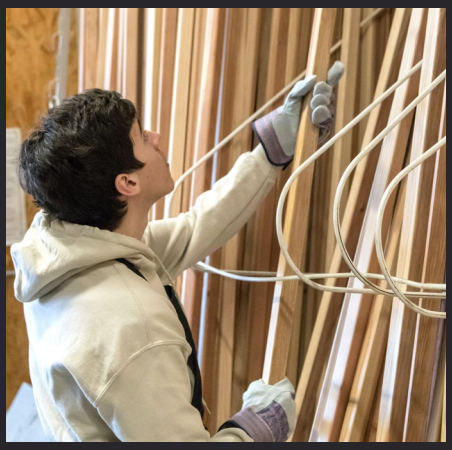
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Account-based marketing (ABM) is intuitive. Every marketer knows a customer will respond better to a personal interaction than to a mass approach.

So why isn't everyone doing it? ABM takes the traditionally accepted mass marketing process and gives it structure, a strategy based on listening and responding to customers, so that you can offer a solution to their specific challenges.

It works, but getting it right isn't easy. This report will break down ABM and show you how to implement it successfully for great results.

What is ABM?

Account-based marketing does what it says on the label. ABM is an alternative strategy that focuses on a clearly defined set of accounts, a move away from casting a wide-net, or demand generation, approach to marketing. It uses targeted campaigns designed to appeal to the specific attributes and needs of the account.

ABM is a burgeoning trend, building popularity among marketers not just through ROI but better sales and marketing alignment and greater customer insight. You've probably sensed that everyone's doing it, but it still feels a bit daunting – and you may wonder if it's even right for your business.

How This Report Can Help

This report, written in conjunction with digital B2B agency Point To Point, will tell you why your mass approach isn't working and how ABM can work for you.

We'll look at the tools and insights to give your ABM journey a rocketing start, focusing on how top marketers in the US are using ABM to land big deals. The report will focus on case studies from the manufacturing, technology and medical industries to give you the best advice in the business.

Learn how to start small, get it right, and scale for success from the people at the forefront of change.



The Three Types of ABM

There are three different ways to categorize ABM. They are:

Programmatic ABM

Programmatic ABM focuses on one-to-many account targeting. The newest approach to ABM, programmatic focuses on accounts rather than individuals. This method is less resource-intensive, with one marketer working across hundreds of accounts.

Lite ABM

This is a one-to-few model focused on small groups of accounts, usually five to 10 at a time. Marketing programs and campaigns target those accounts' shared business attributes, challenges and initiatives.

Strategic ABM

This is the original ABM approach executed on a one-to-one basis. With this strategic method, the focus is on building stronger relationships with customers. It uses targeted marketing interactions and a customized plan that demonstrates in-depth knowledge of the business and its issues.

Get Personal with Any ABM Strategy

You can perform ABM at any level and to any number of accounts, but the best way to reap the rewards is to interact on an individual level.

Grad Conn, CMO at social media platform Sprinklr, advocates a one-to-one approach no matter how many accounts you're targeting. At Sprinklr, there are 6000 target accounts in the customer experience center. Factoring in the buying committees within those accounts, that's 250,000 people. Keeping ABM personal might seem tricky at that level, but every single one of those people's names is entered as a keyword on Sprinklr so they can be tracked socially. This allows Grad's team to 'listen in' on prospects and keep up to date and notified of their online conversations.

When targeting fast-food chain Burger King as a prospect, the team at Sprinklr started tracking the company's employees, including the CMO. Earlier this year, the CMO tweeted about the launch day of a new product, 'Crispy Pretzel Chicken Fries'. Seeing an opportunity, two of Sprinklr's experience managers rushed out to their local Burger King in New York City to get the new fries.

Being quick off the mark, the fries they ordered were the first of its kind ever made in that store. They came back to the office and filmed a Boomerang video eating the fries and sent it to the CMO saying, "We just got the first ones in New York City and they're delicious!" The CMO responded well, and this was the first of many interactions, which Grad calls 'handshakes', that led to the CMO reaching out to them and becoming a customer. "Never at any point did we say you should buy Sprinklr," says Grad.

Why ABM Is Right For B2B Marketing

01. Decision-making units are changing. The number of decision-makers in B2B companies has radically changed. Gone are the days when marketers are selling to one individual – some companies have up to 20 people making a purchase decision. You must view your customers as accounts and as individuals, to get them to buy from you.

02. B2B customers are consumers too – and they're used to a personalized approach. It's still an emotional decision as well as a rational one, so you need customers to champion your brand. If you haven't tailored the experience to them, they're not going to remember you.

03. ABM may be the easiest way to align sales and marketing – the aggravation of any marketer. ABM is a two-way street: marketing can help land accounts for sales, and sales can help provide in-depth insights to marketing. This requires a synched approach that is the envy of any business.

04. GDPR is coming to the US. The increased regulation on data privacy, which has swept Europe, is inevitably going stateside. This means the days of mass emails and spreadsheets of unengaged contacts are gone. Focusing on the important accounts, tailoring messages they want to receive and getting rid of those who don't want to hear from you is the best way to get ahead of the game.

05. If you want to land enterprise deals, ABM is the answer. Working in marketing may have trained you to focus on reaching the most eyes, but targeting fewer companies with a unique approach means you'll hit big deal sizes at a quicker win rate and boast higher customer retention.



Section 1

Aligning Your Company To The ABM Approach

Pitching the right framework

The first thing to do when implementing ABM is to make sure you can argue that it's the right strategy for your business.

Grad Conn, of Sprinklr, suggests these two frameworks for convincing your team on ABM.

01. When selling big, you're selling career success

If you're selling at a large scale, such as a tech platform or solution, then you're also selling career success. When a marketer, or anyone in their business, is trying out a new piece of software, they're hoping it will help them advance in their career – that's a powerful thing. If you can tailor your offering in a way that customers feel will benefit their brand and career, they'll buy from you again and again. If a customer feels your product is combating career failure, they'll remain loyal.

02. The days of anonymity are over

ABM is all about building relationships, which means you shouldn't expect to know everything about your customer and still stay anonymous yourself. Marketers are gaining unprecedented levels of insight on their customers, yet the customers still have no idea who is talking to them on a one-to-one level. They are used to a broadcast approach from a brand, not the people behind it. If you want to be the antidote to those faceless, data-hoarding corporations, your customers have to know about you. Bring down the walls of anonymity and talk to your customers as people, and you'll be surprised at the results. Grad suggests using LinkedIn to get in touch one-on-one, but this could just mean a personal message from a named individual, rather than your brand.

Setting objectives

Start small with aggressive objectives. These could be:

- Grow the deal size
- Improve the win rate
- Shorten the sales funnel
- Win new business
- Improve customer insight
- Improve relationships and the brand
- Align teams
- Reduce customer turnover

Align sales with marketing

Microsoft's first ABM pilot included 50 of its sales people in the first year. Through collaboration and early success, by the fourth year there were 5,000 in the program. "You could watch it spread like a virus," says Grad.

He learned that involving sales in early discussions and setting targets was crucial to success.

Grad says many B2B marketers are missing a trick by not putting inside sales into the marketing team. At Sprinklr, he shifted ABM targets from marketing-qualified leads (MQL) to new business meetings.

"At Sprinklr, inside sales is part of marketing so our output is not MQL, it's new business meetings set up in line with sales. That's a meeting with a decision-maker in the room with a proposal with dollars attached to it."

This initial insight from different team members is invaluable when deciding how to approach ABM.



Case Study: ABM In Manufacturing – How To Make It Work

Matthew Webster, CMO at electrical manufacturer Molex, on how to make ABM work for you:

- Provide a solution to a problem and the features of your product will do the talking for you. If you align your product portfolio to the customers' needs, they'll think of you when they are ready to purchase.
- Make sure sales don't think you're just taking credit for a successful account. Start with salespeople who have been struggling to win an account and approach them with a campaign that can overcome the problem. An offer of help is harder to rebuff.
- Understand your customers' pain points and adjust your messaging. Use your website to identify your customer journey and reach them with a message that will target their needs.
- Don't start with tactics, start with the message. If you've got the right message, you can deploy it at a tradeshow, via email, and print. Start with understanding why one message may resonate more than another and why one product might fit one account better.
- The manufacturing industry has some way to go to before being attuned to highly personalized messages. Don't scare customers with the insights you have on them – talk about industry trends and issues affecting manufacturers, don't approach them saying 'we've been watching you.'

Checklist for aligning your company to ABM

- Pitch your ideas to the board and sales
- Determine the budget and scope for your ABM plan
- Together with sales, select the number and type of accounts you'll pursue
- Work with sales to set clear objectives based on revenue and engagement
- Build insight and understanding of accounts so that you can deliver personalized, highly relevant marketing

Section 2

Defining Accounts And Dealing With Data

Defining the top 10%

The first step to ABM success is deciding which accounts to target. While the number and criteria may vary from company to company, you'll have to focus on one thing – making it personal and meaningful.

Lynsay Russell, marketing operations manager, who implemented ABM at medical equipment company Medtronic, used existing internal data to decide who to target. "We had a list of everyone who purchased a previous device, which was thousands of accounts, and then we compared that to other data, cross-referencing with other devices as well as where our significant competitive threats were." After applying those data points, she arrived at 600 for the pilot scheme, out of a possible 5,000 hospitals in the US.

While this is a high number, this pilot worked because of the salespeople on the ground and the targeted advertising that kept things at an individual level.

Grad Conn says he has a top 50 list of companies he wants to double his annual recurring revenue with at Sprinklr. He suggests starting an ABM pilot with 10% of that, in his case five companies, to target using a one-to-one approach. "The best way to do these things is to scope it way down, get some success, then scale," he says.

While the number will be different for everyone, a good rule of thumb is normally to target the top 10% of your customers – those who are engaged and could bring in big business. Using an account-propensity model will help you predict who is most likely to buy from you and therefore who you should focus on. Once you have success with these you can think about scaling up.

Jim's step-wise map to determine ABM accounts

The key to knowing which accounts to target is setting some boundaries and pre-qualifying leads. Jim Hopkins, senior product marketing manager at Salesforce, takes a step-by-step approach in data preparation for this important milestone in your ABM journey.

01. Clean and enrich your CRM system data. Run an assessment and complete a health-check on your data. Clear up important fields like industry and employee size. Once you know what you have, you can understand what you're missing. Make sure you eliminate duplicate records to avoid a skewed perspective on the market.

02. Fill in key missing fields. Once you've assessed what data you're missing you can look at filling it in. Whether that's a manual process or you work with a data enrichment provider, getting that information up to date allows you to use tech for deeper intelligence on those fields.

03. Analyze and build your customer profile. Find common attributes among customers who buy your products and continue to renew, whether that's industry, company size, behavior, or using a certain product. Take those attributes and apply it to the addressable market you want to target.

04. Create segments. Once you've acquired data for the companies you want to target, create some groups of accounts to market to in a specific way. That could be anything from a certain geography, to companies who use a competitive product.

Defining people as well as accounts

At Sprinklr, Grad focuses on 'people-based marketing', which means marketing to the individuals within each account.

The company has 6,000 target ABM accounts, and only sells to enterprises over $1 billion. Factoring in buying committees, how do you take a personal approach with that many people? "We've had every single one of those people in those accounts entered as keywords on Sprinklr so we can track them socially," says Grad. "If someone we're targeting sends out a post we can react and respond to it straight away."

The company signs every tweet with their individual names, showing a more human side. This philosophy moved him away from the 'you should buy Sprinklr' approach and towards 'let's have fun together'. It helps build relationships with people naturally, making them more likely to work with you.

Case Study: Grad's 3 ABM Epiphanies

When starting out on his ABM journey at Microsoft, Grad had three Eureka moments that challenged the way he approached ABM.

01. The problem with marketing automation systems is that they put the workload on the customer's shoulders. Instead of getting the customer to fill out online forms, for example, Grad decided to switch it around to collect customer information by sending material on LinkedIn's content platform PointDrive, a feature of the site's Sales Navigator which allows you to deliver personalized content and track engagement – this meant he knew who was reading what, as well alleviating the need to fill out laborious forms. This has resulted in a 100% completion rate and the cost of acquisition has been brought down by 10%.

02. You can't be anonymous if you expect your customer to be identified. Grad primarily uses LinkedIn to talk to prospects, which makes it an equal approach; they know as much about him as he does about them. There was a risk this could destroy his profile on the site, but six months and he's found it highly successful at building relationships. Grad plans to roll this personal interaction across C-Suite profiles and then across Sprinklr's sellers.

03. Social networks are more indicative of buying committees than organization charts. People make purchases from those they talk to – it's not all about roles and hierarchy but relationships. Using himself as an example, Grad's team mapped who he communicated with most online, versus who sat next to him in his organization. They were struck by how his online presence – his social matrix – showed much more accurately who he would consult on a purchasing decision, as opposed to his structural matrix. This allowed the team to re-think who they needed to talk to in any given organization.



Section 3

Which Tech Should You Use?

Cleaning up your data

The first step to great tech is aligning your marketing automation platform and CRM system. Some companies may have a whole team who manage data stewardship, others may rely on manual processes. Either way, making sure data is as clean as possible before starting a campaign is crucial.

Jim at Salesforce coined a term while evangelizing ABM at the personalization platform, Demandbase. Frustrated with an archaic approach to marketing, he called it 'mass backwards'.

The way to move your marketing forward is to put the time in to get the data right, he says. "I've done campaigns where I haven't invested as much in data, and they've been ok, but we haven't hit the goal we were aiming for."



Adding to your tech stack

When Lynsay at Medtronic started ABM, she used her existing tech and then built on it. Eloqua was her foundation, synched with her Salesforce CRM system. Before starting her pilot, she saw a gap, and made the case for a new content marketing platform.

Lynsay's team had success with ABM advertising software Demandbase and Terminus, and decided to trial a dedicated content marketing solution, Uberflip. The new platform allowed Lynsay to create tailored content hubs, which increased engagement.

Customers read Medtronic's content for upwards of five minutes in one session, as opposed to a minute and a half on the company's own site. By combining related content in an accessible tile structure, readers were able to click through brochures, evidence reports and procedural videos through the suggested content feature.

Lynsay had to sell the value of new tech to the business as she didn't have a dedicated budget. "I compared the ROI from digital advertising with the small return from traditional print media. I showed them what we'd get with the new system and they said yes, absolutely. It made a lot of sense."

Tips for getting the right tech for ABM

- If you can't sync your entire martech stack into one tool, make sure the different systems have the same information.
- Don't be seduced by new tech – use what you have and then look to fill the gaps by trialing different systems.
- Ask yourself – do I need this? Before making any large purchases.
- Make sure you have a clear use case for new tech to present back to the business.

Section 4

Delivering Your First ABM Pilot

Take aim

"In archery, there's 40 pounds of tensile strength when you're holding a bow taught. The longer you aim the less accurate you are because you start to shake," says Grad at Sprinklr. "If you aim for too long, you'll miss the target. The same is true with ABM – gain some experience, go back, aim and learn from that shot for next time."

Setting up a pilot means you can deliver ABM on a lower scale and at a lower risk. Take that opportunity to learn by drawing on the mistakes as well as the successes. With those learnings, you can build on subsequent iterations and get the strategy right.

Case study: Delivering an ABM pilot successfully

In 2016, Lynsay's ABM pilot at Medtronic consisted of 600 accounts taken from a list of 5,000 hospitals in the US. She ran a six-month program, which featured account-based ads and email campaigns, targeting customers who had previously purchased medical devices from the company. The new product had seen great technical advancements, so sellers would also meet customers face-to-face to drum up excitement.

The team used existing customer data from Salesforce as well as public procedural data from hospitals to determine how many surgeries were performed at different hospitals, and who would benefit from the product. Marketing also relied heavily on sales insight. Starting with sales leadership, they collated competitive information on particular accounts to understand how to target them, helped also by a dedicated analytics team.

The campaign's results. Sales found it much easier to upgrade these customers to the new device. With no other account-based ads running at the time, they knew when a surgeon mentioned seeing their ads and wanted to put the device in the next day, they were onto something.

At the end of the campaign, 32% of the targeted accounts created a new opportunity. The team followed the 600 accounts through the sales cycle and closed $30 million of incremental revenue in 12 to 18 months.

A year after the pilot launched, Lynsay created eight new ABM campaigns.

Overcoming challenges. The biggest hurdle was transitioning from traditional leads to account-based metrics. Changing from using an exact number to a full account picture, tracking revenue, was very important. People were confused by the change in narrative and others were skeptical of something new.

This was a sticking point for almost two years, but eventually a new campaign created a tipping point in how metrics were viewed. With great results, the whole team was able to see the value of how reporting was done.

Changing company culture. Medtronic has two main product-based divisions. Since the pilot, the marketing team has realigned around the ABM strategy, with the product marketing team working with Lynsay's team more closely. ABM's success in the company shone a light on Lynsay's marketing team and gave them a more prominent role in the business as a whole, meaning they now have a seat at the table when it comes to decision-making.

Scaling up from a pilot

At Demandbase, Jim Hopkins started with an ABM pilot of 1,500 enterprise accounts. Over the course of a year, he saw the close rate double compared with the rest of the accounts; the deal size was two-thirds larger and deal cycles were two-thirds shorter.

"That validated a hypothesis," says Jim, "So in year two we doubled down on that. We focused only on those 1,500 and used them to decide on our marketing tactics." When deciding whether to go to an event, for example, if there wasn't a significant number from that 1,500 set of accounts going, they wouldn't attend. Or if they did go to an event, the team would use it to target only those accounts.

Section 5

Key Learnings From Top US ABMers

5 top tips for getting ABM right

01. You have to crawl before you can walk. "If people are considering ABM, start with a pilot and a clear idea of your objectives." says Lynsay at Medtronic. That means working closely with sales. "It's been a bridge from marketing to sales – it's not just about marketing tossing something over the fence."

02. Join your sales team on their customer meetings. "Get down from your ivory tower and pack a bag and go on the trip with them," says Grad at Sprinklr. "You'll understand sales and how they're selling, plus the customer. It also gives you credibility. I've never seen any marketer who got their hands dirty, fail."

03. Set boundaries for your accounts. "There are only a few accounts that fit the ideal customer profile and are ready to buy," says Jim at Salesforce. "Talk to the right people and ignore the rest – unless they're beating down your door." For Jim, this number is fewer than a hundred accounts, but for many companies, this could be fewer than ten.

04. Focus on the why and not the what – especially when it comes to tech. "Be aware of what's possible today from a marketing context, but don't presume because it exists it's right for you," says Matthew at Molex. "Challenge yourself to understand technology and techniques and decide how to leverage it to be successful and not the other way round."

05. ABM is about relationship building, not just selling. "People want to talk to us because we're not just selling to them," says Grad. "Don't tell people what to think about your company. If customers make the conclusion on their own it's more powerful – positive interactions are key to brand image."



Top takeaways from the report

No matter what industry you're in, it's time for your marketing to get personal. Whether you're targeting five key accounts or 50, ABM can offer you the tools to land big deals. But if you're wondering where to start, here are our key findings to get you on the road to success.

- **Align sales with marketing.** ABM is not just a marketing function. It's a business-wide strategy that needs to be treated as such to succeed. Set aside time to pitch your view to sales and show them how it can help their work. Select accounts and objectives together.
- **Start small and scale up.** Start with the top 10% of your accounts to target. Get some positive results with a pilot and then think about scaling once you've established success.
- **Clean your data.** Gain insight into which accounts are best to target by auditing your CRM. Don't skip this crucial step needed to analyze your customers and identify attributes for your addressable market.
- **Identify people, not just accounts.** Social media can be a great tool to not only work out who the decision-makers are at each company, but also for building individual relationships. Even if there are twenty decision-makers on one buying committee, it's worth nurturing communication with the right people.
- **Don't impulse buy.** It might be tempting to buy a shiny new piece of tech to help you with ABM, but focus on what you've got first. If your systems aren't integrated into one tool, make sure they have the same information. Use what you have first, and fill the gaps later.
- **Get set, go!** The only way to learn from your mistakes is to make them. Don't wait too long before setting off on your ABM pilot and trialing your new strategy. Use insight gained from your first attempt to come back fighting



About Point To Point

Our Philosophy is Simple:
We unleash the power of digital marketing in B2B to turn indifference into engagement.

Whatever we do for our clients, we make it easy, we keep it clear and we give it value. Balancing strategy and execution, our passion is deep-rooted when it comes to what we do, and it's evident through the longstanding success of our clients. We take the right people and the right process to make every interaction purposeful by combining analytics and creativity, validating everything we do with results. That's how we know it works. We keep our audiences engaged. With us. With the work. With what matters.

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