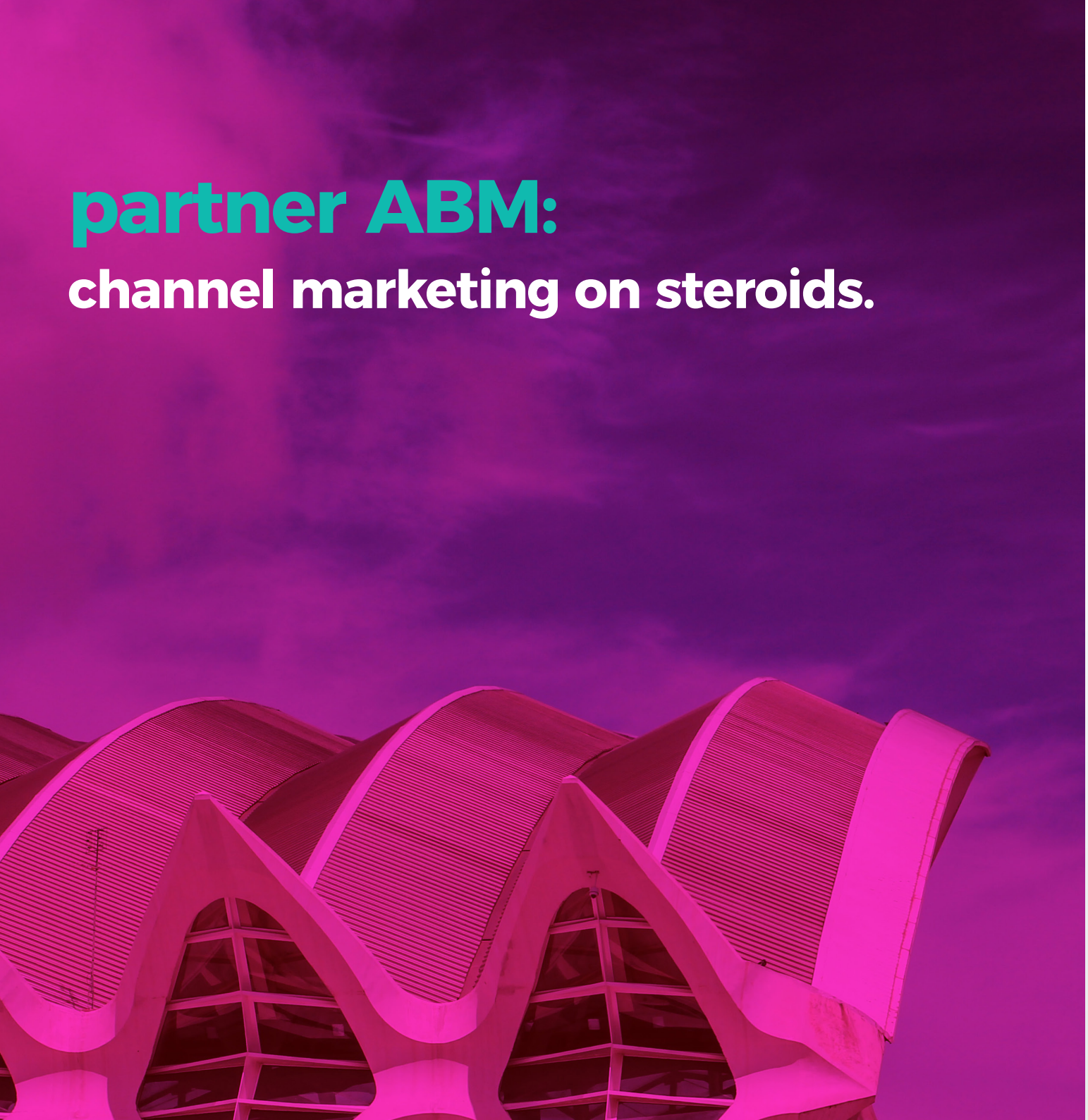


#gohigher

SHERPA

“92% of companies recognise the value in ABM, going as far as calling it a ‘B2B marketing must-have

DemandBase”

driving ABM through the channel.

Channel marketing is a complex landscape to navigate. A small minority of Vendors and Partners are ahead of the curve when it comes to marketing activities and content distribution, but the majority are struggling to stay ahead, whilst battling MDF issues and sales and marketing misalignment. Channel partners have become accustomed to receiving market development funds, but due to the fractured MDF system, do not have the motivation, expectations or marketing expertise for effective delivery, leaving them disengaged. This is amplified by the lack of sales and marketing alignment within their teams, which results in an equally fractured sales funnel.

Outside of the channel, other marketing strategies have exploded and become more commonplace. One of these is Account Based Marketing (ABM). ABM is a laser-targeted marketing strategy which appeals directly to the pains and priorities of key decision makers of precisely targeted accounts. Using tactics such as intent scoring, desirability and fit matrices, marketeers are able to locate organisations who are searching for specific products and services to build highly personalised, targeted marketing campaigns which provide solutions to their problems. Marketing team are then speaking directly to a cross-section of people within a specific company who are currently ‘in market’ for the product.

The benefits of ABM are exponential:

- ✓ **Sales and Marketing teams work together in a customer-centric, lead-nurturing process which accelerates the sales cycle.**
- ✓ **Increased ROI**
- ✓ **Long lasting commercial partnerships built upon understanding and trust**
- ✓ **Trackable KPIs which are aligned with existing lead scoring criteria**
- ✓ **Increased potential of a higher lifetime account value.**

84% of marketers said that ABM had significant benefits to retaining and expanding existing client relationships, whilst 97% thought that ABM had higher ROI than other activities.
(Alterra Group)

> companies using ABM generate 200% more revenue for their marketing efforts compared to those that don't
>
> FlipMyFunnel

can ABM really work in the channel?

has the audience considered it?

The beauty of ABM lies in its agility; it has many guises and multiple tactics that can be blended to obtain the best results, both outside the channel and within it. ABM especially complements the recent shift in B2B marketing towards approaches more often seen in B2C campaigns. Customer-centric tactics such as hyper personalisation and refined targeting based on people rather than verticals are still relatively uncharted in the practice of B2B marketing, but ABM works with - and even improves upon - the efficiency of many existing marketing practices. So it is perfectly suited to the nuances of partner marketing. However, as with all ABM, suitable foundations must be present in the first place and the many accompanying challenges and aforementioned nuances must be understood and addressed to generate value.

Sherpa have extensive experience in partner marketing and understand the subtleties and distinctions which come with marketing through the channel. By explaining the obstacles and the relevant solutions, we can create a landscape where Vendors can establish successful and scalable ABM programmes for partners.

why is this useful?

- **Better processes and partner education lead to greater understanding of products and how to market them**
- **Opening up the marketing and sales processes gives all parties more visibility into the areas in which sales enablement requires more focus**
- **Better partner engagement**
- **More accountability on the partner when it comes to delivering results in return for the vendor investment (one of the existing challenges in the channel).**

“Results: the pilot campaign has been a huge success and has outperformed the industry average across all metrics.”

partner ABM in practice

Sherpa have recently completed an extremely successful pilot partner ABM campaign with a global market leading software company; this programme can be referenced as an example.

what does an ABM process look like?



In the planning phase, it is imperative to understand the partner’s target audience, their value proposition and how their proposition works with the vendor’s product- we worked with the partner to plan the campaign and identify the target audiences. A large part of the programme was focused around account research, analysis and discovery, however the content and messaging were equally important. We created a blend of partner-specific content and vendor content, personalised to the target audience. The programme was constantly monitored and optimised, using sales and marketing stakeholders from the partner (and the vendor) to progress accounts. Throughout the programme we reported and analysed engagement and ROI metrics aligned to both the objectives of the partner and the vendor.

“Before you consider your own Partner ABM campaign, we’d like to share some key learnings from our own experience.”

SHERPA

partner ABM:

six key learnings.



“An estimated 6.8 stakeholders now have to formally sign off on each purchase, up from 5.4 in 2014”

(CEB in HBR)



1. account selection

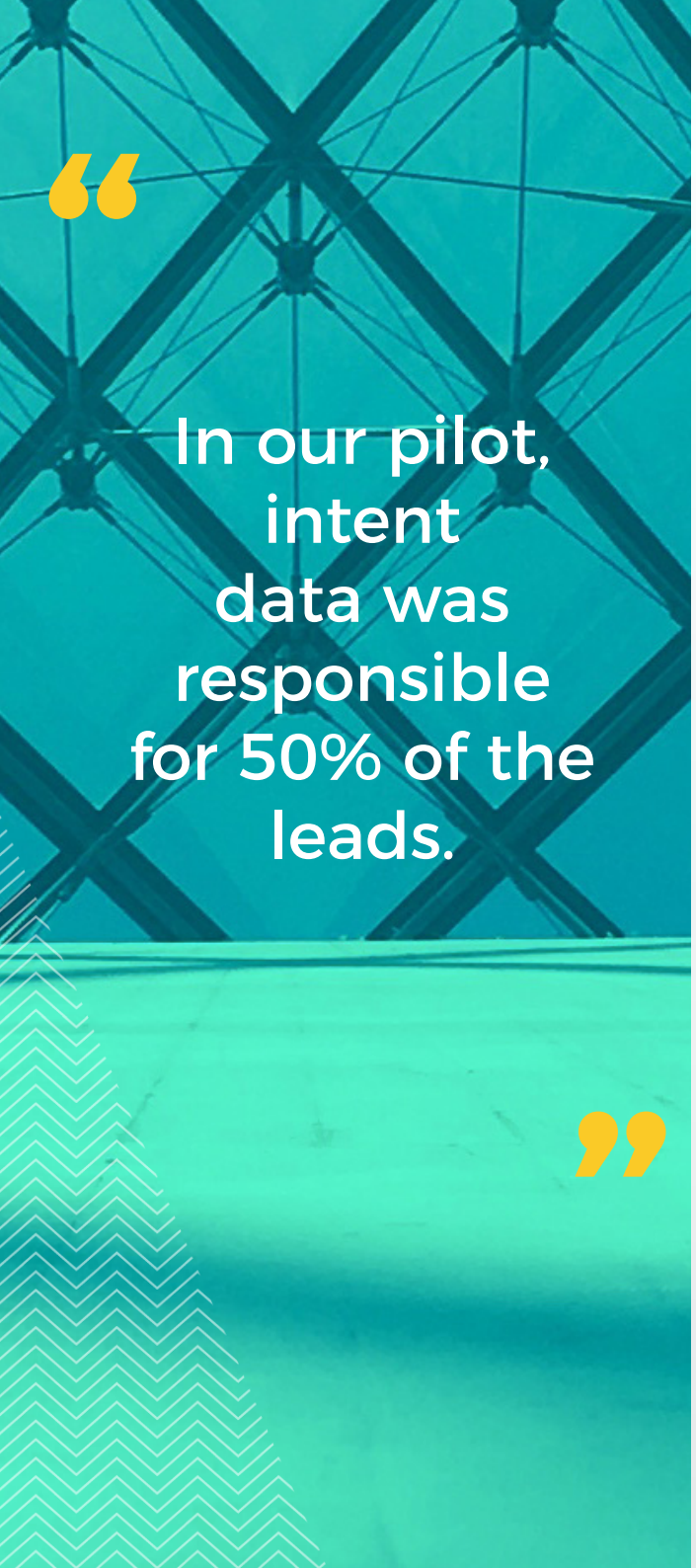
product set:

ABM is best suited to high ticket/lifetime value, enterprise level products. Therefore it is critical that the product set and type must be clearly identified and strictly adhered to in order to avoid wasted vendor investment and partner resource.

database:

This will be built between all parties - the Vendor, the Partner and the Agency. A three-way validation is crucial, so as not to overlap with the Vendor's direct activities or current operations; in this example, the Partner ABM programme was targeting Net New accounts to the Vendor and to the Partner. In our experience, the Reseller database has often been below par and needs building out. Targeting in Partner ABM is a critical success factor and a highly involved process, which requires a sophisticated level of segmentation. The decision making process usually begins below the C-Level and involves multiple people, so the target audience must extend beyond the C-Suite. Once the database is built, it must be viewed as a living part of the entire programme; it requires continuous nurture, cleansing, refreshing and review throughout.

Vendors will often recommend a product-defined audience that will be delineated by company size, job functions of decision makers and other variables. There will also be a specific audience in which the partner has referencability. Using partners to access companies the vendor would not have a direct sales line to maximises the value of the channel. With the added expertise of the partner, the content created can be extremely customer-centric as they understand more about the customer's pain points and the required solution within their specific audience or vertical, than the Vendor perhaps will. This makes ABM hugely successful and this customer insight comes out in the content and the substantiation in case studies.

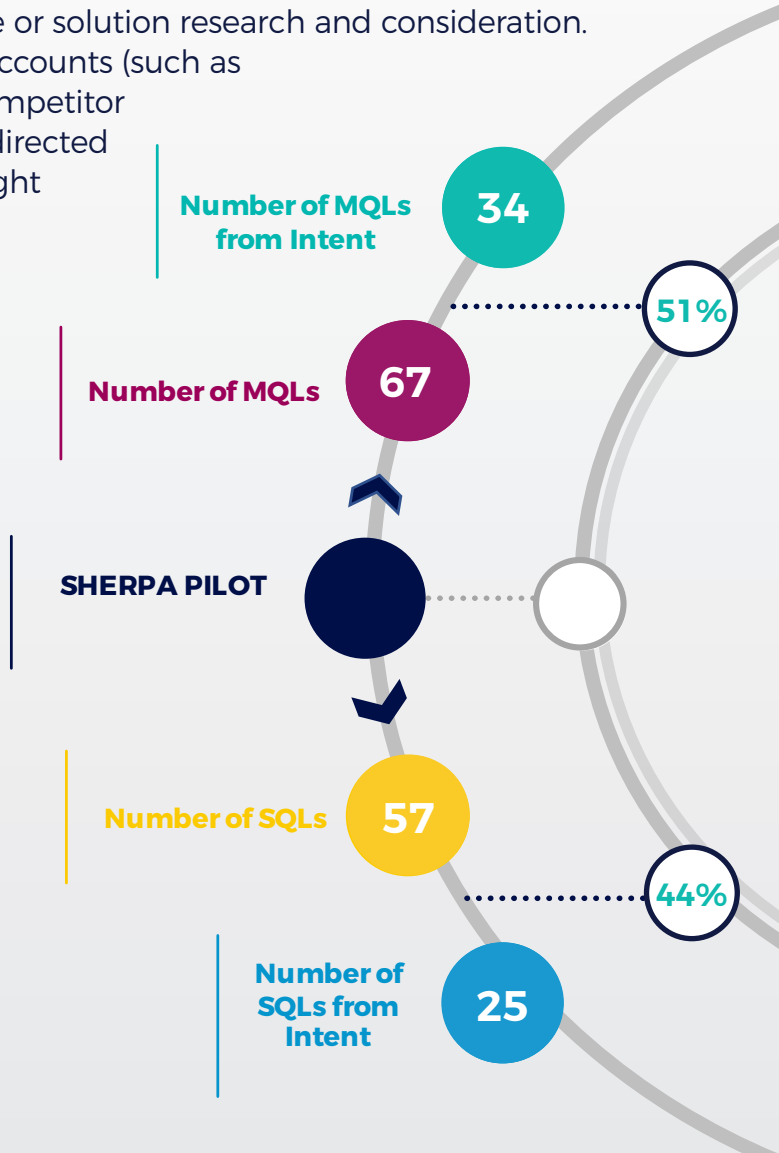


2. intent

Using Intent data we can identify specifically which companies are actively researching determined solutions, more general business objectives or complementary solutions. This is integral in identifying the key ‘in market’ accounts, to whom bespoke, targeted messaging and content can be tailored and sent. This is distinctly beneficial within Partner ABM, because as mentioned, you are dealing with a high value, enterprise level product, which often have a longer stage or solution research and consideration. By using a variety of intent topics to identify accounts (such as business challenges, specific solutions and competitor products), you can ensure that resources are directed at the right people, at the right time, at the right point in their customer journey; throughout their journey. We can learn more and more about the customer through intent as they progress on their journey and as they engage more with specific content.

sherpa pilot

The ultimate aim of this ABM pilot was to create Sales Qualified Leads (SQLs). Intent data is key for identifying accounts which are actively researching or are ‘in-market’ for a particular solution to specific business challenges. With this knowledge, suitable content can be served to these accounts in order to nurture them through the sales funnel, creating SQLs.



> Individual customer stakeholders who perceived supplier content to be tailored to their specific needs were 40% more willing to buy from that supplier than stakeholders who didn't
>
> (CEB in Harvard Business Review)

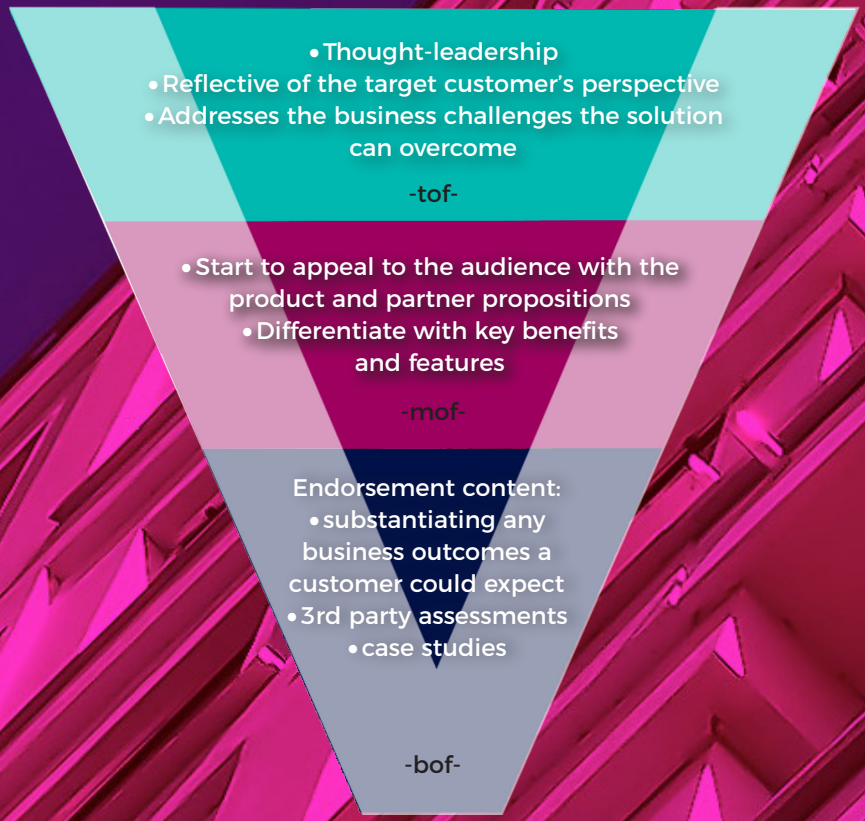
3. content

Content is hugely important in ABM, but even more crucial in partner ABM. It needs to bring together the value of the product with the value of the partner in implementing it; as well as offering ongoing education and support. Content needs to be customer-centric and provide a solution to the prospective lead's current challenges, which requires an immense amount of research and knowledge of their pain points and requirements.

For a successful Partner ABM programme, content must be multi-tactic. We would recommend top, middle and bottom of funnel content that is specific to the audience's pain points and aligns to their customer journey and where they are currently positioned in the sales funnel. This can often lead to multiple versions of very targeted, insight driven, customer-centric content pieces being served to prospective customers. This can be a mix of new content, partner content and vendor content, but tends to have a split of 70% vendor and 30% partner content.

It is hugely important that the agency involved is able to take a subjective role and identify content gaps for both parties and establish what needs to be created or adapted. Failing to define the stages of your sales funnel and applying suitable content will be detrimental to results.

content funnel diagram.



sherpa pilot.

Content

Average of 12 pieces of content per partner

Utilised mix of new content, partner content and vendor content

We identified content gaps for both parties

We were able to identify prospective leads' pain points and serve appropriate content in order to offer a solution.

Content which could be used in shorter formats or a mix of media type can often create more engagement and be used in the different marketing tactics.

> Campaigns are best running for a minimum of 6 months to generate significant results.

4. working process.

ABM is not an overnight process; it is fully defined, lengthy and highly involved. This is amplified with Partner ABM. The length of the campaign is critical. Partner campaigns are usually delivered within eight weeks to coincide with vendor quarters; this is not the case with PABM, which requires at least a one month build and five month campaign to generate significant ABM results.

The agency takes on the role of project manager and must ensure that all of the processes are agreed from the outset. The investment a vendor makes in PABM far exceeds that of mdf and therefore requires an extremely collaborative and high-touch approach. The level of management in these campaigns often comes as a shock to Partners and in order to ensure transparency around the programme's collaborative nature, an SLA should be established in the first instance. This ensures all parties understand the part they are required to play in the programme and all processes are pre-agreed. However, despite the stringent processes, there is a requirement for all parties involved to be as flexible as possible when running a PABM campaign to ensure the best possible results.

The agency is required to work tightly with both the vendor and partner, fully managing the campaign. Live dashboards are an absolute must, to ensure all parties are continuously aware of the campaign's progress and suitable optimisation is carried out. Despite this, weekly 'check-ins' are required as part of the SLA, to ensure that leads are being efficiently followed up and all parties are on the same page. Partners should actually be selected on their ability to follow up leads and drive opportunities effectively.

sherpa pilot.

Requirement for all parties involved to be as flexible as possible to ensure best possible results

Weekly check ins with strict SLA for lead follow up

Partners actually selected for ability to follow up and drive opportunities properly

Live dashboards provided

The entire cycle is extremely defined and involved.



5. successes

Obviously the primary measure of success is actually hitting the required numbers, but there are criteria through which the success of a PABM campaign should be measured:

Best practice - Share experience and best practice with partner and use this information to improve going forward

Content - Creating innovative content formats with longevity is vital



Data - Identifying the right data set is a key success factor

ROI

Creating a partner feedback system which is managed by either the agency or vendor - open channels of communication create results

Partner / Vendor relationship - due to the high-touch, high-investment from the Vendor, the Partner's perception of them can improve substantially

“I wanted to write to share my experience with Sherpa Marketing. My email won’t do this justice but I can’t express how completely satisfied we are with this program, Sherpa and the early results! Sherpa has been amazing to work with. We’ve quickly partnered to launch an industry-specific campaign using our list and existing assets to produce real leads during the initial top-of-funnel tactics. I know I’ve been critical of ‘Vendor’ programs and preferred marketing partners in the past. You have a winner with Sherpa and I hope you are strongly considering extending this partnership. This has easily been the most valuable marketing program that I’ve ever participated in with the Vendor. We are pleased with the early returns and I hope you are, too. Thank you for considering us for this pilot!”

-Walter Goodfield,
EVP, RKL eSolutions | Pilot Programme Partner

6. partner performance.

> Criteria for successful partner:
> Right team
> Right content
> Right engagement
> Right lead follow-up

The beauty of having an agency project managing a Partner ABM campaign is that each aspect is fully monitored. The vendor investment is often substantial, so proof of execution, ROI and campaign performance need to be monitored extensively. This also extends to partner performance. The partner is obviously an integral part of the entire programme and ensuring the right partner is selected is one hurdle, but measuring their performance and successes throughout the campaign is another.

As project manager, the agency is able to undertake that role and measure the partners' performance and successes across the programme and report this back to the vendor. This process should be transparent and performance will be judged on how well the team performed and how responsive they were, what sort of content they provided, how well they engaged with the programme and how efficiently they followed up on leads.

example of partner performance summary

Partner	Key Stakeholder	Partner Content	Engagement	Lead Follow-up
P1				
P2				
P3				
P4				
P5				
P6				

“When companies were asked what percentage of their total marketing budget will be dedicated to ABM in 2018, the average was 29%.”

Engagio
ABM Outlook Survey

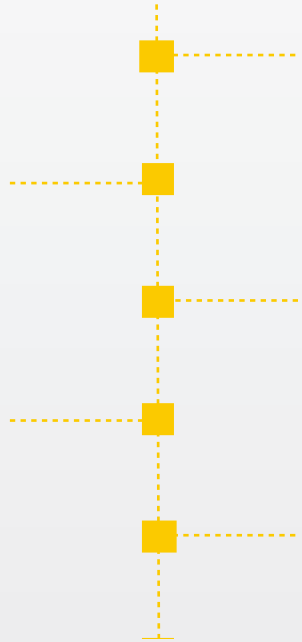
partner ABM in FY19.

So, where does Partner ABM go from here? Partner ABM is on the brink of becoming arterial in channel marketing and as its advantages become more prevalent and its application more commonplace, we will have a better idea of how it will shape the landscape.

Using our own pilot as a benchmark for learning, what have we learnt and how can we build upon it?:

Partner ABM is not exclusive to, but is best suited to enterprise and must consist of high value products only.

All Partner ABM campaigns should be fully managed, but not all programmes require the same level of input from the agency. However, this very much relies on the Vendor having suitable content and the partner having suitable skill and resources throughout the campaign cycle.



Length of programme is key. As a minimuim, it must consist of a one month build, followed by a five month campaign.

Any partners who are recruited by the Vendor must have the capability for ABM. The highly involved process requires time, resource and the right team.

ABM management requires defined sales and marketing teams, so all partners must have predefined SLAs in place to make ABM a success.

an example of a fully managed Partner ABM campaign.



B2B Marketing

Top 70 UK B2B marcomms agency 2018

B2B Marketing

Top 20 UK B2B PR agencies 2018

B2B Marketing

2018 UK B2B marcomms agency to watch



> “Channel Marketing is evolving. Sherpa is at the forefront of that evolution.”

Tom Perry
CEO | Sherpa Marketing

For more information on ABM, or to discuss how Sherpa can transform your channel marketing through Partner ABM campaigns, please get in touch:

- via email on **letschat@sherpamarketing.co.uk**
- by giving us a call on **01234 964000**.

sherpamarketing.co.uk/abm