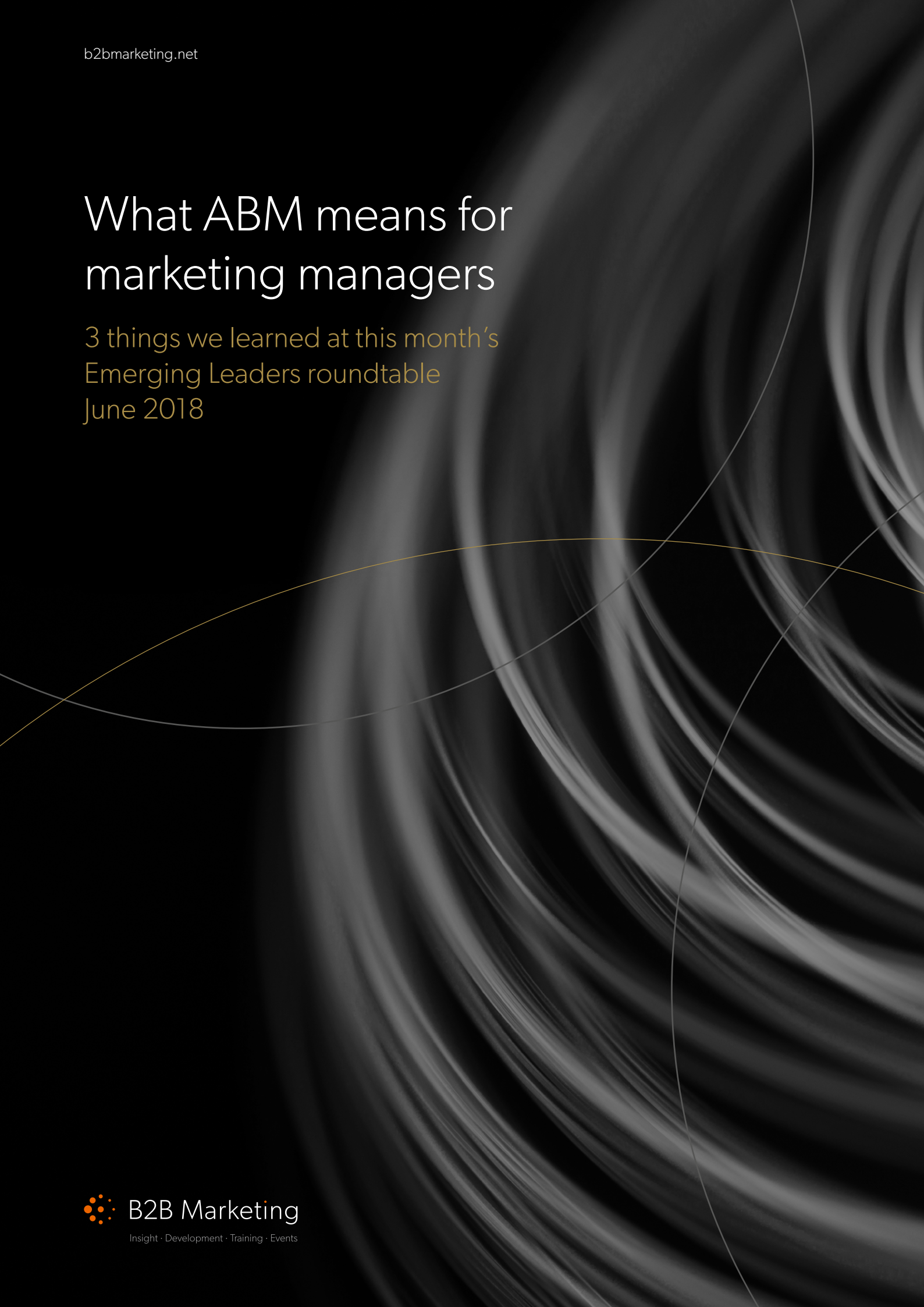
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What ABM means for marketing managers

3 things we learned at this month's Emerging Leaders roundtable June 2018



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3 things we learned at this month's Leaders roundtable

Switching to a new marketing method, such as account-based marketing, is scary. There are new processes, tools, objectives, measurements… It can very quickly become overwhelming. But it doesn't have to be as tough as you think.

Your first efforts should be in understanding what you want to achieve. Do you want to capture more wallet share, get a deal over the line, or simply get some new key prospects to visit your website? Knowing this will help you understand how much resource you need to invest and how many accounts you can take on at once.

You'll also want to consider how to segment your accounts – for some it will make sense to group them by sector, others will do it by the challenges those businesses face. Whichever way you choose, it should be integral to your campaign approach and messaging.

1 Do more with less

ABM does require a serious investment of resources and those who adopt it alongside their previous responsibilities may struggle to get it all done. Don't overstretch yourself – it's better to have proven success on a small scale than proven failure on a large one.

Look for ways to incorporate your ABM strategy into 'business as usual'. Perhaps you already run regular thought leadership roundtables – how about using them to engage with and understand your key accounts?

Don't feel you're limited to traditional (or even revolutionary) marketing efforts – existing business operations can give you many potential touch points. For example, one attendee forges relationships with key accounts by partnering on CSR programmes and graduate schemes. These high level issues often gain attention at board level, which can help open doors later.

2 Work on bridging the sales and marketing divide

The new processes put into place under ABM can shine a bright and uncomfortable light on sales, highlighting existing poor practices (like failing to update CRM) or a lack of commitment to the new regime.

As a marketer who sees the value of ABM it can be very tempting to pull sales up on their lack of commitment, but this is likely to leave them feeling challenged, confronted and defensive. It will create a greater divide between sales and marketing when what you really need is to inspire them to make changes.

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You can only sell the value of ABM to sales if you understand their targets and challenges. The best way to do this is to look at how they're incentivised.

ABM is a slow burning, high risk (but also high potential) process. Those focused on hitting hard quarterly results are unlikely to buy into ABM. Instead, look for account managers who understand the value of building relationships over a long period.

3 Apply ABM principles when building your relationship with sales

Core to ABM is building a relationship with your key accounts by understanding their needs and giving them personal and authentic support.

Marketing should take the same approach to fostering a relationship with sales. Take time to understand their needs and challenges, then respond to them in a personal way. This will give you buy-in – but as with ABM, it may be a slow process.

Consider hiring an ABM lead who has both sales and marketing experience, or adapt existing roles to create this cross-over. You'll need at least one key player who can understand and engage both sides.

One way to approach this is for marketers to join sales on their client meetings. Marketers should feel comfortable in a sales environment – not in order to sell to clients, but to understand their drivers and challenges. This interaction and insight can allow marketing to deliver much more targeted messaging, drawing on what they've learnt about both the client and sales.

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About

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The B2B Leaders programme is a network of the most senior marketing figures at prestigious B2B brands.

Members benefit from a unique and invaluable opportunity to regularly network and collaborate with senior-level peers, sharing insights and discussing strategic challenges at events every month.

Membership is by invitation only, and includes:

- Your B2B Leaders Forum ticket, the only B2B marketing leaders event of its kind.
- Regular roundtables focusing on key marketing leadership topics.
- Monthly roundtable findings reports.
- Annual *B2B Leaders Report*, with key research data and insights.
- Monthly Premium content reports.
- A subscription to *B2B Marketing* magazine.

The B2B Leaders programme counts senior marketing names from Deloitte, Oracle, Atos, Dell, HSBC, KPMG and Adobe among its members, all sharing ideas on topics ranging from team development to board interaction.

To register your interest in the programme call +44 (0)20 7014 4920 or email adam.harper@b2bmarketing.net.



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