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B2B Marketing

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Early stage ABM: Plotting your route to success



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A word from B2B Marketing



Mary-Anne Baldwin
Head of content,
B2B Marketing

It's incredible how quickly ABM has developed from something tucked away in the dark corners of the industry to what it is now – a celebrated part of the mainstream.

It's now one year since we launched B2B Marketing's ABM conference and with it, our ABM development programme, Head-Start. In that year we've had the privilege of speaking to hundreds of B2B marketers who are practicing these methodologies, and we have learned from them as they have learned from us.

We've watched as interest in ABM has mounted and activity has flourished, and I have to say we're excited for what's to come. There is still so much ABM can achieve. And it's not just about winning or growing accounts, but about changing the nature of marketing teams. We know that it can improve relationships with sales, instil a focus on data-led insight and be a real game-changer in customer experience. We see that as something to be really passionate about.

We also believe that ABM can be as revolutionary for the individual as it can for the company. Given the dearth of skilled ABMers on the market (only 1% of ABM teams have all the skills they need), we've no doubt that it will be a career springboard for those who demonstrate success over the next year or two.

But for me, the real beauty of ABM is that there is so much room for creativity and human connection. ABM speaks up for the customer, it champions their goals and challenges, and pushes lazy, ego-led marketing aside. It supports a new era of customer-led marketing and while doing so, calls for the utmost innovative and imaginative ways to show customers that you've listened.

Executive summary

ABM has certainly hooked this industry's attention, but as that interest mounts so does the volume of things you're supposed to learn, read and understand about it. Admittedly, it can seem a little overwhelming. We want to make it easier for you by charting the journey ahead in clear, easy steps. We also focus on the areas where others have stumbled and show how you can circumnavigate those issues.

This year's ABM Census, a survey of more than 300 B2B marketers, shows the biggest problem those in ABM currently face is access to information on their accounts. This issue is tangled in many other aspects of ABM's delivery, which we will pick apart in this report and outline below.

› 86% of marketers are struggling to secure data

The biggest challenge facing those in ABM right now is access to customer data and insight. Practitioners must secure a huge quantity and high quality of account information to deliver personalised marketing. Any delays to this will impact their progress.

Those struggling to secure the information may need to revisit their account selection process. Have they chosen too many accounts? Are they too hard to reach? Ultimately, have they made the process too hard for themselves at this early stage?

› Most B2B marketers use ABM to win new business

The main aim behind ABM programmes is to win new accounts (51%) versus to grow existing ones (34%). This may be having a significant effect on the top challenge of securing information. Clearly, new accounts aren't known accounts, so you will have to start from the very beginning when sourcing information on them.

Of course, ABM must support your business objectives – indeed the beauty of it is that it has something to offer all models. But, if you have limited budget, resource and time growing your existing accounts is a much easier way to prove early success.

› The number of marketers doing one-to-many ABM has significantly dropped

It's in their favour that, for now at least, marketers are limiting the number of accounts they're targeting. Only 7% now conduct one-to-many ABM, versus 21% last year. This considerable drop shows a strong preference for the purest forms of ABM and a move away from demand generation, to which one-to-many is most closely aligned.

While the top challenge is perceived to be a lack of data and insight – this and a number of other problems, can invariably be traced back to the initial account selection phase. But don't worry. This report we walk you though all of that, with clear advice.

Section 1

An outline of the report

Through our extensive industry surveys and countless interviews and conversations with B2B marketers, we've come to learn a lot about what it takes to deliver ABM. We know the hurdles you're likely to face in advance of you reaching them and we're here to walk you through them all. We also draw on the guidance of Andy Bacon, lead advisor for B2B Marketing's ABM Head-Start Programme, who works with B2B marketing leaders on the successful delivery of their ABM campaigns.

Aside from the three distinct types of ABM (one-to-one, one-to-few and one-to-many), there are numerous methods of application. Some use it on old accounts, others to win new ones. You can cut ABM so many ways, with each one taking you in a different trajectory. But that can seem overwhelming, which is why, in this report, we have broken ABM down into five simple stages of maturity and five core elements of delivery, which can be applied to any style of ABM.

Later in this report we will lead you through each of those five elements of delivery, but to keep things simple we will focus on only the first two stages of implementation. Why? Because having surveyed the industry we've found the majority (59%) of you are yet to deploy ABM but are busy laying the foundations to do so.

Next, we provide a short summary of ABM's principles and the three main methods of delivery, but for those seeking more detail on the basics of ABM, we suggest you start with our first *Account-based Marketing Benchmarking Report*, released in 2017, and gives you an overview of ABM's methodology, benefits and challenges.



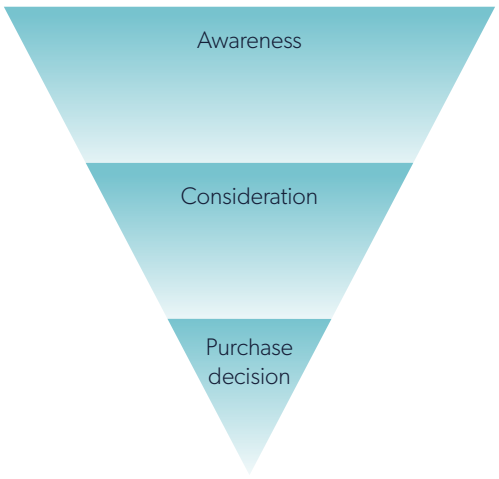
Flip the funnel

ABM doesn't just 'flip the funnel', it flips the agenda. It's no longer about generating leads, but about nurturing accounts.

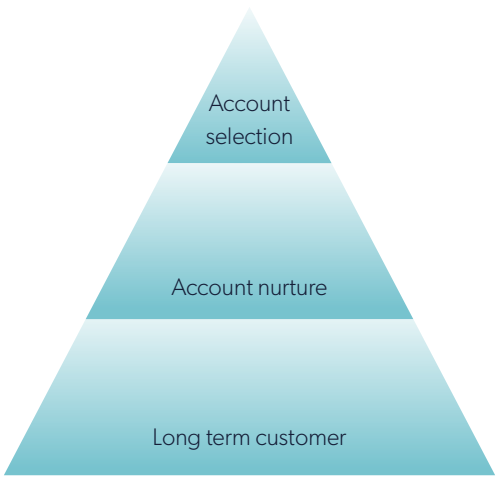
With ABM, marketers are moving away from the 'spray and pray' approach to marketing seen under demand generation and are instead taking a targeted, systematic view of marketing, one account at a time. It's no longer about how great your products or services are, but about responding to your customer's challenges.

> *"People go to ABM mostly because their existing demand generation process isn't working very well. They're spending a shed load on it and not getting results."*
>
> **Andy Bacon, lead advisor for B2B Marketing's ABM Programme Head-Start**

The traditional marketing funnel based on demand generation



The account-based marketing method



Source: ITSMA

Account-based marketing comes in three main forms

One-to-one

Selects a small pool of top tier accounts, typically five to 10. This very targeted approach is a great place to start as it is the most manageable of the three (particularly on limited resource), and is highly scalable. However, the fewer accounts you have, the higher the risk that none will convert.

One-to-few

One-to-few applies ABM to a larger selection of accounts, often selected in 'clusters' according to their commonalities – this may be their vertical, their challenges, or their relationship to you.

One-to-many

This is currently the least popular form of ABM and the type that has most in common with demand generation. It applies personalisation *en masse* to a wide pool of accounts and prospects.



Source: ITSMA

All ABM boils down to the same process

While there are many approaches to ABM, all types use the same process – it really is simpler than it first seems.



Section 2

Results of the 2018 ABM census

Interest is high but it's still early days for ABM

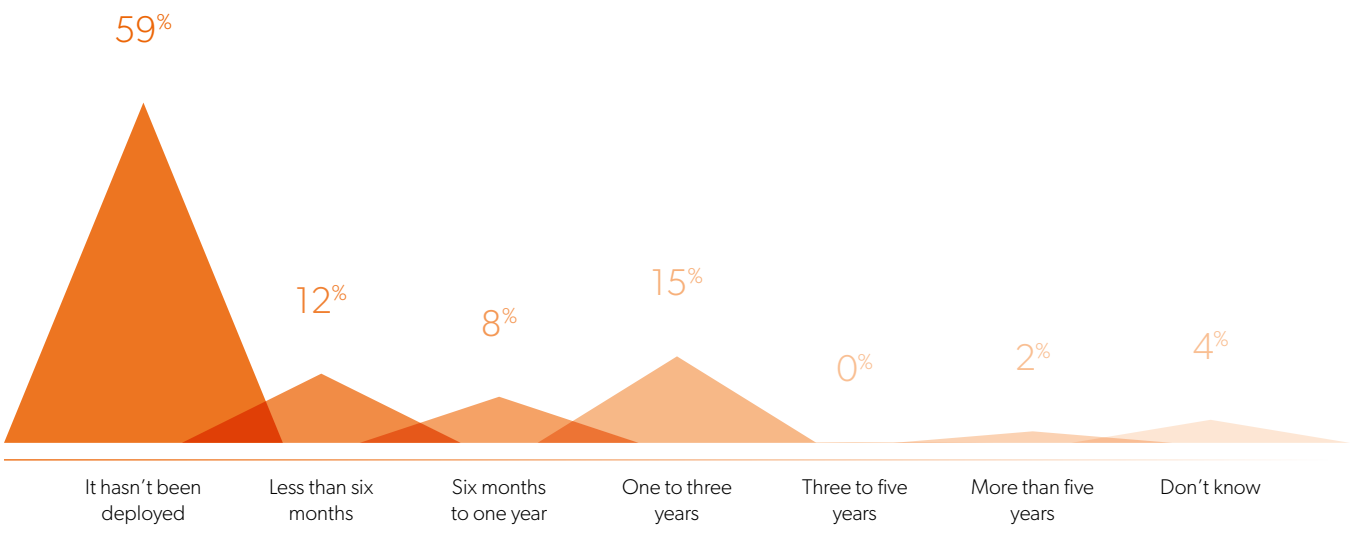
Anything that proves to have mass appeal will have some naysayers calling it a flash in the pan. That's certainly been said of ABM – yet interest and investment is growing, and it looks like it's here to stay.

While a handful of marketers have enjoyed its benefits for some years (the method first formed in 2000), those are few and far between. It is still early days for most, and ABM has yet to show us all it has to offer.

In our extensive survey of more than 300 B2B marketers, the largest group of people (33%) are still scoping ABM's fit with their business, while another 27% are busy planning their ABM programmes.

Given the mounting interest over the past year or two, it's clear we're on the edge of considerable change. It won't be long before we'll see a surge of account-based marketing hit the industry. This explosion of activity will provide the opportunity for collective learning, from which individual marketers can hone and develop their efforts in this methodology.

How long has ABM been operationally deployed in your business?



Interest is high, yet ABMers are slow to progress

2018: 59% are yet to deploy ABM programmes

2017: 47% were yet to deploy ABM programmes

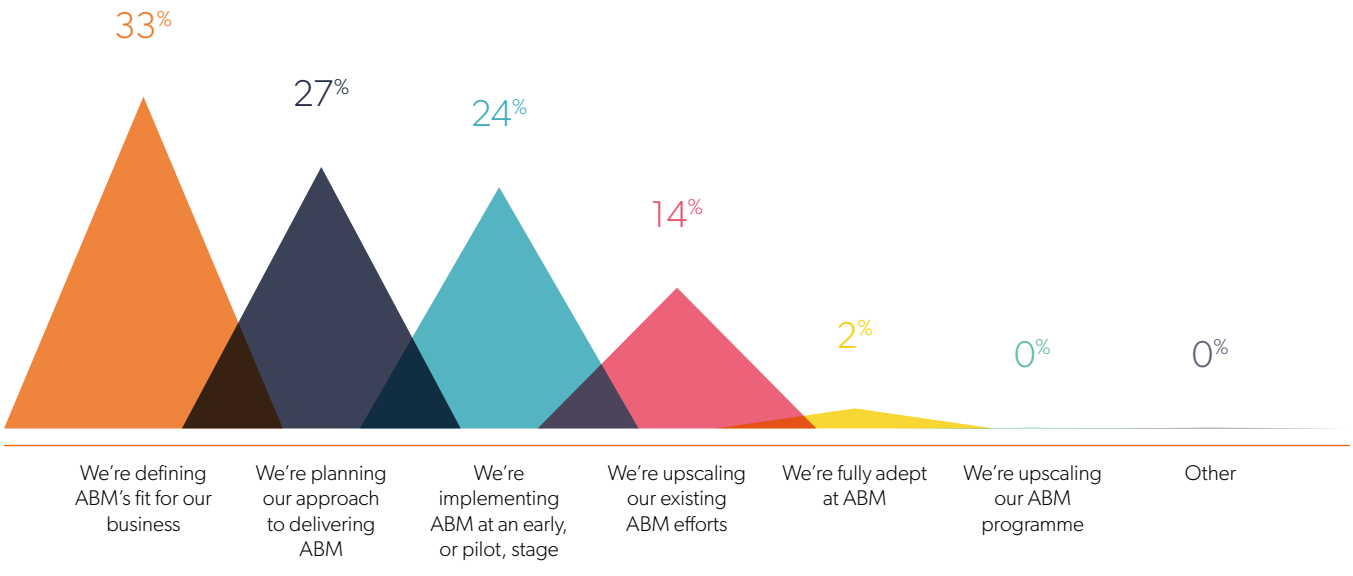
There is a 12% year-on-year increase in the total number of people who have adopted ABM but are yet to deploy it. It's unclear whether this predominantly marks an increase in the number of people interested in ABM or the amount of time it takes to move from the planning stage into action, although it is most likely a bit of both.

B2B marketers are already thinking big; 76% of them are looking to increase their efforts in ABM, 56% of which aim to do that on a significant scale. Yet no one can afford to be complacent. Growth can only follow from success, and as we'll uncover in this report, many issues lurk on your path to ROI.

"Where the market is increasingly competitive we really needed to respond by growing our existing accounts. ABM is the way forward for us and we're just at the beginning of what it has to offer."

Conrad Wilson, head of marketing and communications, Cranfield executive development, Cranfield University

Which of the following best describes your organistation's current approach to ABM?



The vote is in on ‘one-to-many’ marketing

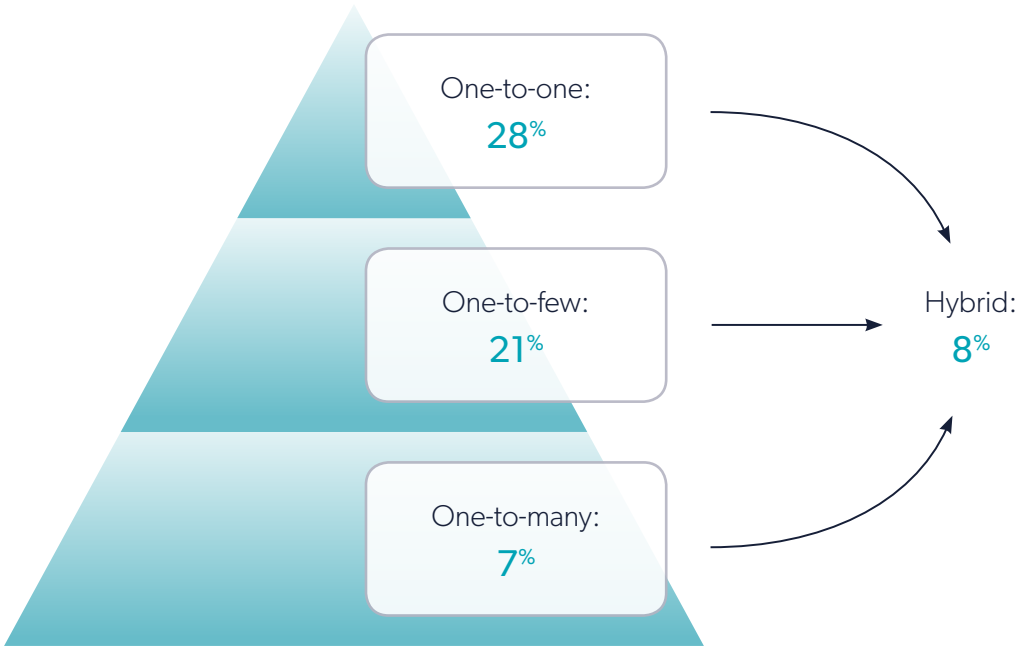
The consensus is clear. One-to-many ABM is just marketing done well. Over the past year, the number of marketers practising it has dropped significantly from 27% to 7%, demonstrating a lack of conviction.

One-to-many has always sat at odds with the very bespoke delivery of its down-scaled counterparts, and its place under the ABM moniker has been called into question many times. It is, afterall, far closer to demand generation than ABM’s other forms, the very thing ABM moves away from.

But that’s not to say it doesn’t have value, nor that interest in it won’t rise again.

One-to-many (or programmatic ABM as some prefer to call it) can be a very effective method when it really absorbs ABM’s principle of targeted personalisation. It could be that marketers are building up to one-to-many by first perfecting their use of ABM on a smaller pool of targets. But for now at least, and rightly so, most people are focused on the thoroughbred versions of ABM, which are one-to-one and -few.

Which method of ABM do you use?



*36% are not yet conducting ABM/have not yet selected a method

ABM's primary driver is new business

The majority of people using, or seeking to use, ABM are doing so in the hope of winning business from new accounts. Of those surveyed 51% said their main aim was to win new accounts versus 34% who want to grow existing ones.

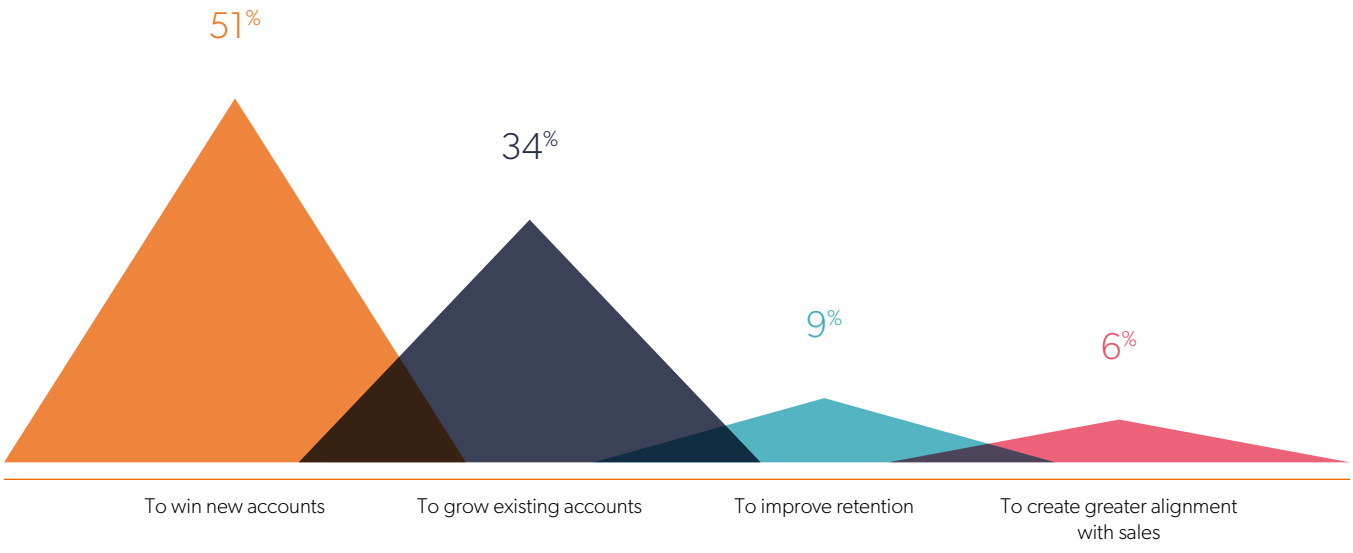
This finding is consistent with other industry surveys and with the many conversations we've had with practitioners over the past year. Our qualitative research shows us most marketers use ABM as a means to steal big brand accounts from their competitors.

While this isn't a surprise it does carry some concern. As we'll explore later in this report, there are challenges in applying ABM to new accounts, namely a lack of data and insight, which may limit or delay your success.

"ABM is not about stuffing the sales funnel with MQLs and hoping for the best – it's about working in collaboration with sales to engage the customer and enable quality interactions. It's about conversations that address the customer needs and deliver value at every step"

Marcus Hiles, client services director, Enigma Marketing Services

What is the main aim of your ABM programme?



The common challenges of ABM

The biggest concern among ABMers is securing the data and insight they need for their accounts. As we will explore later, the struggle to access more data can be tied up in many things, such as fragmented use of the company's CRM system, or a lack of effort from sales or a focus on new accounts with little existing information.

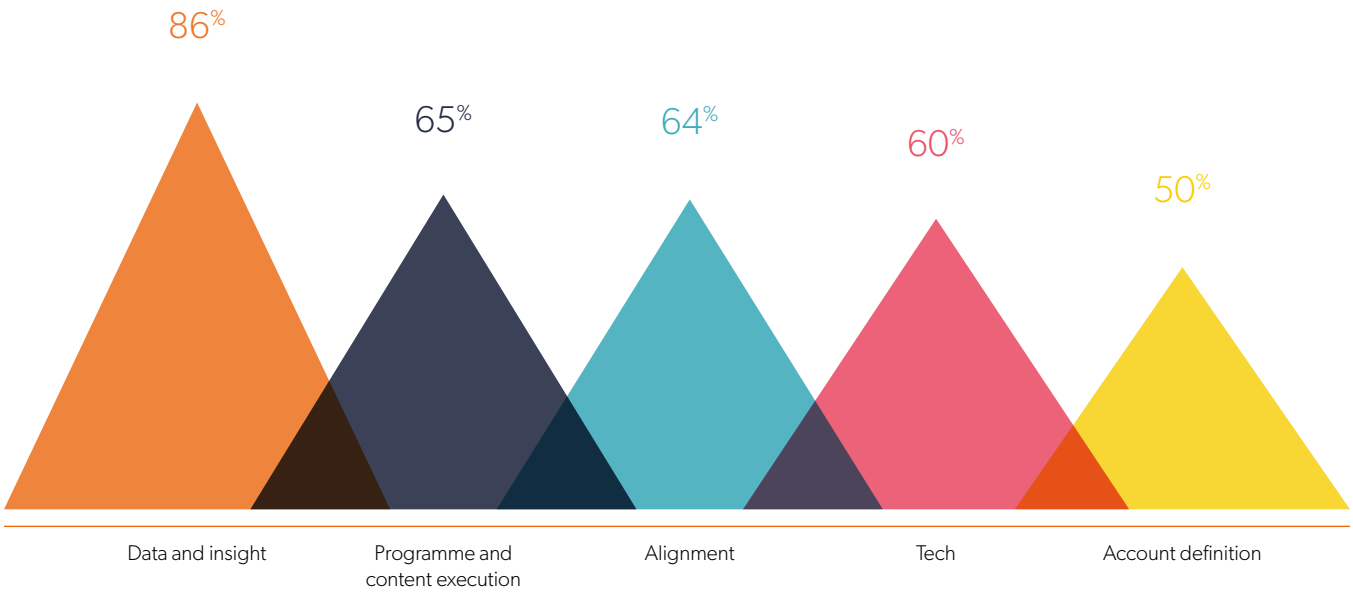
We also see that the least challenging area is seen as defining and selecting accounts. However, as we explore later, almost half of those surveyed have yet to choose their accounts and may find there is more to it than first thought.

In sections 6 and 7 we delve into each of these five challenges. We dig deeper into the findings, demonstrate where your peers are in relation to these issues, and provide specific advice on how to overcome them.

"The biggest areas of conflict between sales and marketing are building trust versus managing expectations. Marketing is so keen to create buy-in that it's prone to oversell ABM. It also don't know what it's up against so may mismanage expectations."

Andy Bacon, senior ABM advisor, B2B Marketing

How significant are the following challenges when deploying ABM within your organisation?



** % of people who see this as a challenge or big challenge*

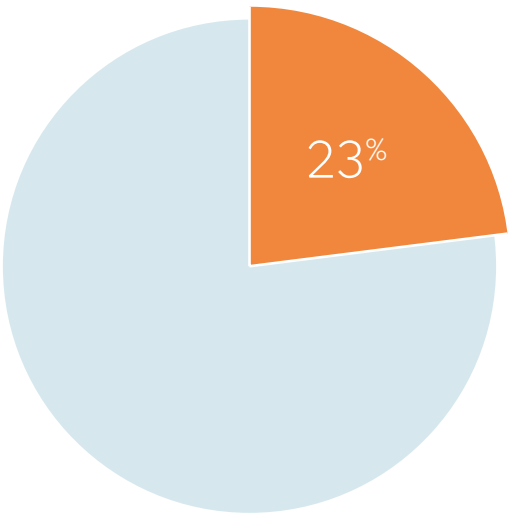
ABM on a budget. Is there any other way?

Very few marketers have been granted additional dedicated budget for ABM and are instead reallocating funds from the overall marketing pot, which can put a strain on both the existing and new operations. The same applies for staffing – very few have a dedicated team of ABM staff, but instead divvy-up a handful of accounts to select employees (typically five per staff member). In some cases these accounts are spread across the whole team, but very rarely will there be more resource or less pressure to deliver on existing targets.

This poses a considerable, though not unfamiliar problem. Without additional budget and resource, progress (and ultimately, success) in ABM will be limited. And without success, you shouldn't expect further investment.

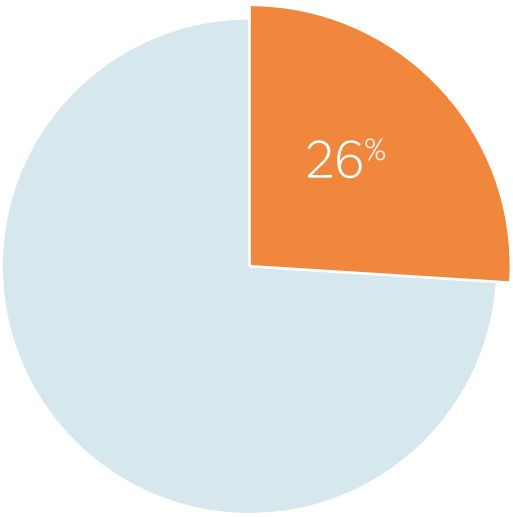
At this early stage of ABM's evolution, most marketers must make do with small but scalable programmes and be mindful not to bite off too much. Later we will discuss how to ensure some easy and quick wins to support your case for later investment.

What percentage of your marketing budget do you allocate to ABM?



+3% YoY

What percentage of your resource do you allocate to ABM?



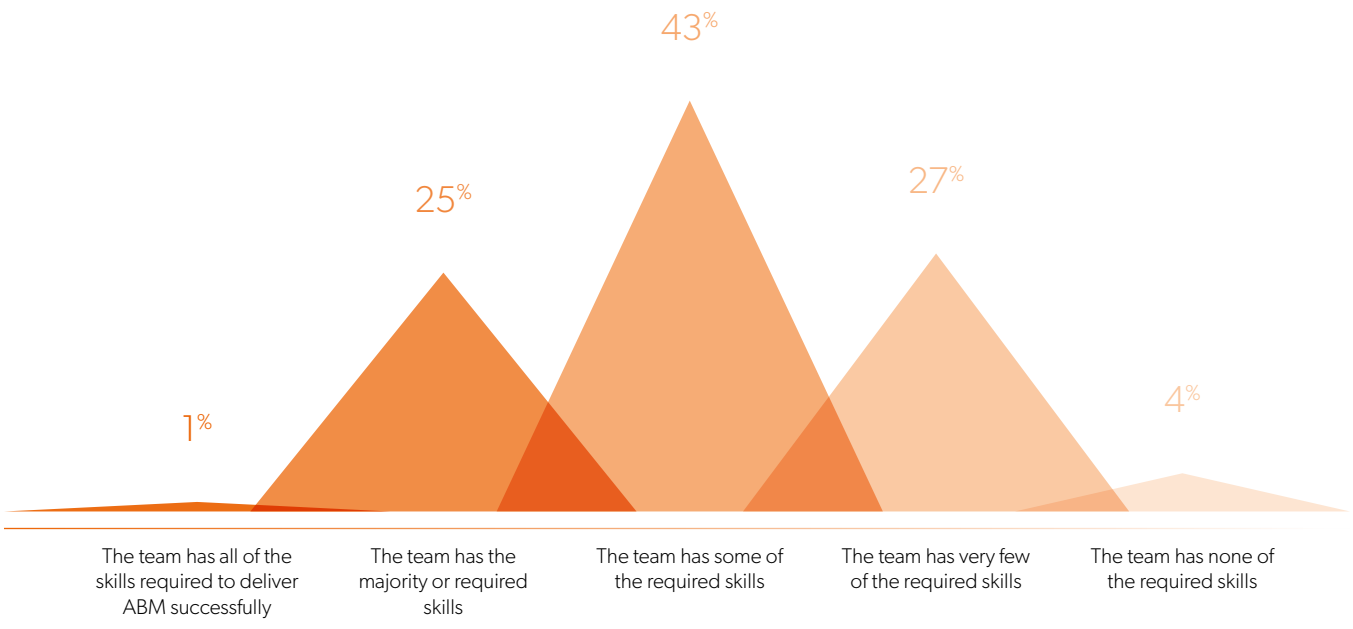
+6% YoY

Only 1% of teams have all the skills for ABM

Yes, you read that right. Only 1% of teams practising ABM have all the skills required for it. You may take comfort in knowing you're not the only one struggling to find these elusive ABM gurus, but that comfort will be short-lived.

Just as you secure the budget for skilled staff so too will your competitors – and the talent pool you'll be fighting over is incredibly small. That makes training for your existing staff essential – most likely a mix of experiential and formal. But the real trick will then be to hold onto those staff who, once trained, will be a highly sought after commodity.

How would you describe the ABM skills of your internal marketing team?



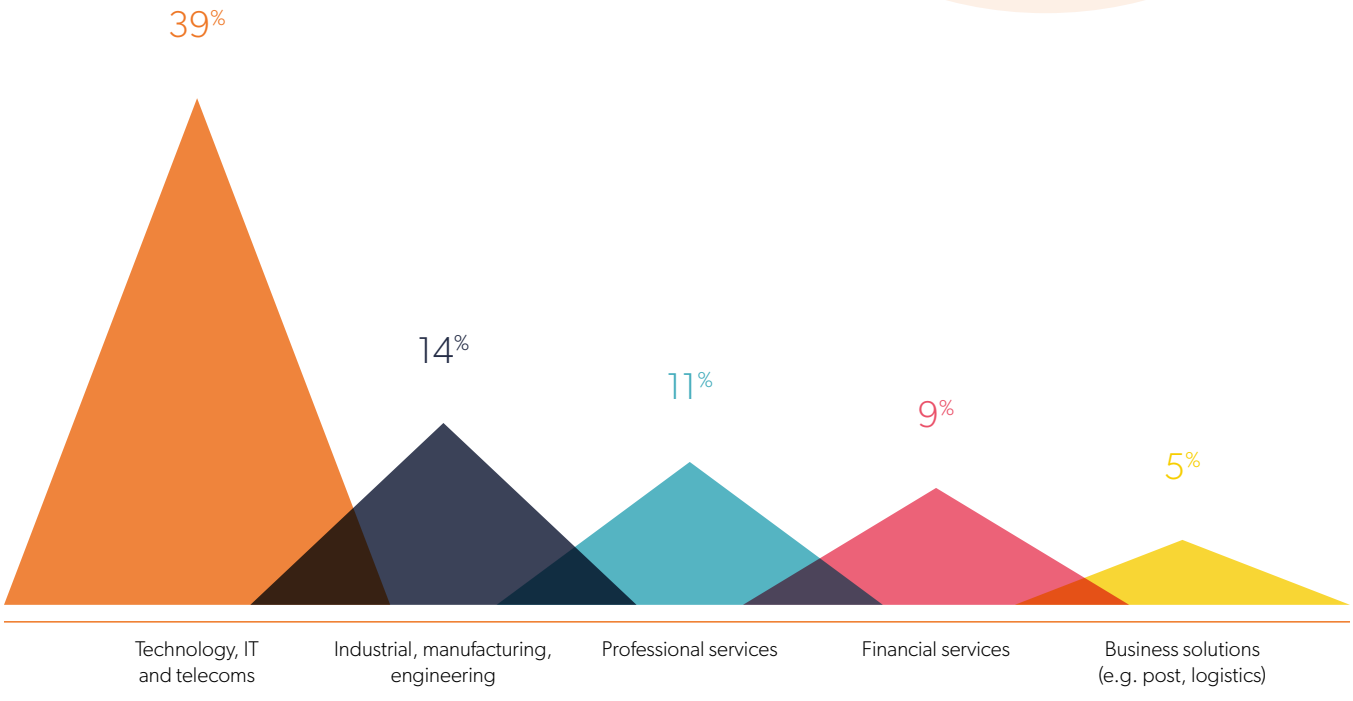
Look to the tech sector for inspiration

ABM first kicked off at the turn of the century with its technology-based forerunners – including CSC, Unisys and IBM – leading the way. Yet even there, ABM is an evolving discipline with numerous hurdles still to clear, such as how to scale up, and how to create greater alignment with sales.

Want to know more?

For more insight into ABM in the tech sector, including its popularity, specific challenges and opportunities, plus case studies from Atos, Fujitsu and Criteo, read our free report, *ABM lessons from the tech sector*. bit.ly/abmlessons

Top five sectors in which ABM practitioners operate



A word on agencies

At present 19% of clients practicing ABM are doing so with the support of agencies. This figure is flat year-on-year, which mirrors the fact that most clients are still taking the time they need to educate themselves on ABM, and to prepare themselves before putting it into practice.

Most will not have the budget for agencies during this early stage of implementation and must prove success on a smaller scale before they can earn the budget to work with external partners.

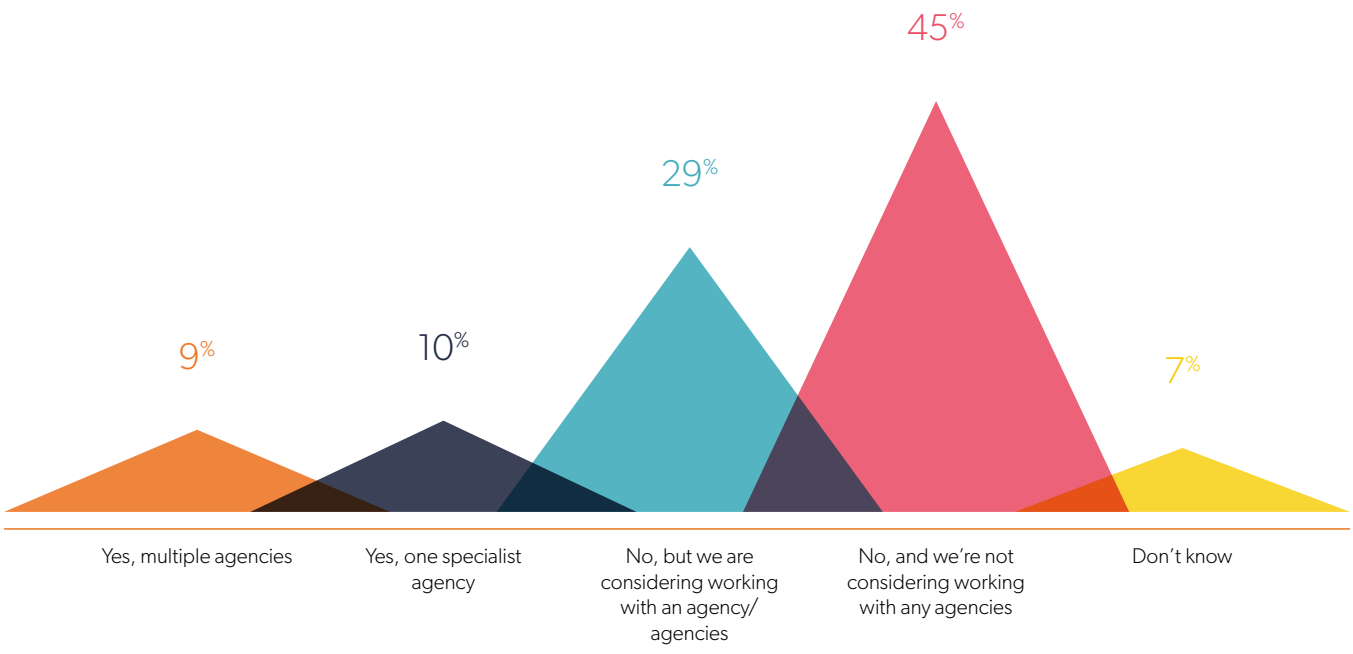
ABM clearly offers a growing opportunity for agencies, yet it may take time for them to win this business, and they will have to fight against tough competition. The number of clients looking to use agencies in the future has dropped 9% year-on-year to a current figure of 29%. (Yet that does still mark sizeable growth from today.)

Agencies are eager to snap up any of that market growth and are upskilling and preparing themselves for it. In another of our annual surveys (this time on agencies) we've found that the number of participants listing ABM as a skill and offering has increased considerably over the past two years.

Of course, agencies do have a lot to offer on this. For ABM to work, its campaigns must be original, powerful and persuasive – and there will be a lot riding on it.

Where they can really add value, and successfully compete against their counterparts, is in supporting their clients right through the process. That means not just providing great creative, but understanding all the elements of ABM – from data consumption and account selection, right through to delivery – and supporting their clients with that.

Do you work with agencies to help you with your deployment of ABM?



Section 3

The ABM Competency Model Version 2.0

In the following pages we present The ABM Competency Model. It's an update on the Maturity Matrix we released last year, and a means by which you can understand all of the components involved in moving from your very first understanding of ABM to being proficient in it.

Crucially, this model also allows you to:

- Assess your current skills against what you'll need for the road ahead.
- Compare your aptitude with the majority of other B2B marketers.
- Determine the steps that'll take you to the next stage.

This model demonstrates everything you will master as you become proficient in ABM. It maps that across five stages of evolution, taking into consideration the five core elements of delivery:

1. Internal alignment
2. Account definition
3. Data and insight
4. Technology
5. Programme and content execution.

It's important to note that while stages one to five mark a linear path through time, the five elements do not. There is no doubt that you'll be tackling many, if not all of these elements concurrently. However, alignment should always be the first of those.

To follow we'll explore what each of those five developmental stages look like in practice, and what each of the five elements of delivery comprises.

The darker shades on this model show which stage the majority of B2B marketers are.



The ABM Competency Model Version 2.0

B2B Marketing

Elements of delivery	Stage 1 Understanding	Stage 2 Preparing	Stage 3 Delivering	Stage 4 Upscaling	Stage 5 Perfecting
Alignment	Cultural & customer fit assessed Execs/board support ABM Initial budget allocated	Initial ABM team has been created Key stakehlders are on board Sales & marketing agree objectives	Sales & marketing are working collaboratively ABM team delivering on agreed objectives	Greater budget & resource allocated There are internal champions at many levels	ABM supported company-wide Full collaboration with sales & other stakeholders Marketing's status has improved
Account definition	Key stakeholders see the value of personalisation, yet no accounts are selected	Accounts are scored, selected, segmented & agreed Sales & marketing have mapped the DMU & buying process Standardised sales account plans have been created	Small-scale targeted marketing is delivered Customer engagement has improved	Large-scale targeted marketing is delivered throughout the buyer journey The deal size/win rate has increased	Targeted marketing is used to prospect & retain/upsell
Data & insight	Existing customer insight is audited Data requirements are mapped	Research & third-party data is sourced All data is clean & inputted	Data is regularly shared & updated Data is used to deliver targeted marketing on a small scale	Centralised data is used to deliver targeted marketing on all touch points	Data insights are consistently delivering increased sales Data is used for strategic company decisions
Technology	CRM & MA systems are in place & used frequently	CRM & MA systems are regularly updated & properly used Additional tech for data/ contact resources & sales insights installed	Content, personalisation & event management tech is installed Website starting to deliver dynamic content	ABM ROMI dashboard in place Retargeting & intent platforms installed	Orchestration, advanced measurement & attribution tools installed All tech fully deployed & staff regularly trained
Programme & content execution	Marketing efforts are delivered in sympathy with (not in adherence to) ABM philosophies	Customer needs/challenges are defined Content is audited Programmes are planned	Content serves bespoke propositions, based on detailed customer insight Content hits the right person at the right time	Targeted campaigns are being delivered at every point of the buyer journey Marketing adds strategic value to RFPs	Sales are successfully & consistently leveraging targeted campaigns

The five stages of development

Stage 1: Understanding

Recognising the value of targeted, personalised marketing, your current practices are likely to involve loose experimentation with ABM philosophies but not its precise disciplines.

You will now be scoping the opportunities from developing these efforts. This will include auditing your current capabilities, securing top level buy-in and budget, setting your overarching objectives and assessing fit, both internally and with prospects.

Stage 2: Preparing

At the planning stage you will be mapping a targeted approach to your selected accounts, having found the decision-makers, segmented them but also understood them on an individual level. This stage is about preparing all elements and tools – including data, staffing, early stage technology and content execution – ready for implementation.

Stage 3: Delivering

During stage three you will be busy implementing your first steps as ABM practitioners, applying its principles to a select number of accounts. For some this will mean running precise ABM techniques on a small pilot scheme, while others may take a more general but wide spread approach. During stage three there will be a strong focus on learning, development and alignment.

Stage 4: Upscaling

Having experienced early small-scale success in ABM, you will be ready to roll out this approach to a larger number of accounts and cover all stages of the buying cycle. Your early efforts will have earned you wider and firmer stakeholder support, with which you will have secured additional budget and resource to grow your efforts. This is likely to involve greater investment in technology.

Stage 5: Perfecting

At stage five you will be fully proficient in ABM with marketing and sales, having mastered it and the rest of the business culturally embracing it. ABM techniques are being used to win, retain and grow accounts at many levels. Furthermore the insight you have on these customers is being used to make strategic decisions at a company level.

"People struggle to describe ABM in a coherent and unified way. That's because ABM exists differently in every organisation, it's a programme that needs to be tailored to how you business goes to market, its organisational structure and offerings"

Andy Bacon, lead advisor, B2B Marketing's ABM Programme Head-Start

The five elements of delivery

Element 1: Internal alignment

Internal alignment starts with key stakeholder buy-in from your marketing team, sales, executives and the board. Once you have secured this (and that is no easy feat in itself), the majority of your efforts will be to maintain your understanding and alliance with sales. Friction between you will have an affect on your performance.

Element 2: Account definition

This is the process by which marketing and sales have worked together to define what the ideal account will look like, and then selecting them. This includes finding agreement on the number, size and type accounts you will target. That decision must be data-driven and made collaboratively by sales and marketing.

Element 3: Data & insight

Again sales and marketing must work collaboratively together to pool the information they need to select the right accounts. Once they've chosen them, they have to dig deeper into those insights, mapping what they don't know and plugging that gap. That information must be clean, up-to-date and readily shared.

Element 4: Technology

Largely speaking, additional technology is not essential to ABM's delivery – unless you are using one-to-many marketing. As you progress in your journey you will find more use for tech, but at the start your focal point must be getting sales and marketing efficiently and effectively using the CRM system. It's surprising how many aren't there yet.

Element 5: Programme & content execution

This covers the bespoke marketing assets – be they whitepapers, microsites, direct mail content or company awareness days – that you will use in order to engage and entice your chosen accounts. It describes both those assets the full scope of the campaign under which you deliver them.

What a difference a year makes

The 2019 ABM Competency Model, is a revision of our 2018 Maturity Matrix (shown in last year's report). Having listened to many practitioners in the field we tweaked and honed this model to better reflect what the majority of B2B marketers feel are the main aspects of delivery.

While the 2019 model does not match the 2018 matrix, there are many similarities, so it is worth noting how last year's survey participants ranked themselves on the 2018 Maturity Matrix. In terms of their progression through the journey to proficiency, marketers put themselves at an average of 2.2 out of 5, so almost half way through the five stages toward being fully adept. This year the average is 1.5.

The greatest change was seen in account definition, for which people ranked themselves at stage three last year, versus stage one this year. So why have people downgraded themselves despite having more time to mature?

It's our belief that in the course of the last year marketers have educated themselves on what ABM really involves, and in doing so they have recognised that they are not as far along the journey as they first thought. This is not a bad thing. In fact, it marks greater ABM maturity, which stands them in much better stead for success.

The following five chapters will focus on each one of the five elements of delivery, honing in on the efforts involved in moving from the stage most are currently, to the next. In doing so, we will provide insight and advice on the apparent and unseen considerations ahead so you'll progress more smoothly.

"In the course of the last year marketers have educated themselves on what ABM really involves"

Section 4

Case study: The anatomy of an ABM campaign

Genesys and MOI

ABM was completely unrepresented in Genesys' marketing budget, now it has a 30% share.

When it's everyone's opportunity, it's everyone's gain

Genesys needed to rethink the way it targeted high value accounts and decision-makers. It hired MOI to help develop and deliver a new ABM-based campaign strategy.

The campaign was a precision-targeted, insight-led, account-based marketing programme. The result was a sophisticated and scalable programme that not only achieved its goal of one-to-one dialogue between Genesys and its hottest prospects, but strengthened teamwork between all involved.

The campaign has so far delivered a 400% increase on target pipeline, which was in the millions, and ABM's share of Genesy's EMEA marketing budget has gone from zero to 30%.

About Genesys

Over 25 years Genesys has grown to operate in more than 100 countries, serving more than 10,000 customers and powering some 25 billion contact centre interactions every year.

Although analysts rate Genesys' customer experience platform as number one in the world, the company faced three major challenges:

1. Strong competition from its targets' existing incumbents.
2. No real insight into decision-makers or understanding of who they were.
3. Unsure how to get a 'foot in the door' with new prospect organisations.

"MOI has brought a fresh, collaborative, scalable, approach, which is really driving results. It's great to work with an agency that's as hot on innovation and strategy as it is on getting the job done. I can't wait for our next social"

Jennifer Campbell, marketing director, UK&I, Genesys

Campaign objectives

The aim of this one-to-one account-based marketing programme was to identify and convert prospects that were not only the most valuable, but who were actively looking to buy. MOI therefore developed a campaign that would create its own opportunities and to maximise every one. The approach was to:

1. Raise awareness among net new and existing accounts.
2. Increase pipeline with new and maximised engagement opportunities.
3. Demonstrate a strategic and efficient use of marketing budget and resource.

The target audience was decision-makers in:

- Customer services IT
- Operations
- Sales and marketing.

Across four verticals:

- Utilities
- Retail
- Telecoms
- FS&I.

(However, targeting would be refined throughout the campaign, segmented into ever smaller datasets then driven through a hyper-relevant user journey.)

Onboarding the team

In order to engage and nurture each lead on an increasingly bespoke journey to conversion, the campaign needed deep insight into the target audience and a means to communicate on one-to-one, not corporate-to-one basis. So, as the people on the front line, the involvement and collaboration from sales was vital.

It took dedication, positivity, direction and persuasion to win the co-operation of a sceptical sales team. The first step was a series of sales and marketing workshops to optimise the individual profiles of five key account executives, establish tones of voice and identify initial conversation starters.

Better together

Top quality, original and hyper-relevant content was essential in helping to engage with prospects. Research was carried out to find the biggest issues faced by the target audience – this enabled the creation of an important opinion-forming hero piece, which was distributed using email, direct mail, social media and social selling. From here, audience respondents would be mapped, segmented and entered into the ABM programme.

The ultimate aim was to engage with the prospects most likely to buy. Collaboration from sales at this point was vital to develop a target hierarchy for the ABM. Initial scepticism faded as the programme's value became ever more apparent. Account execs began to add their own observations, ideas and leads, and next steps were routinely and collectively discussed between sales, marketing and the agency, with daily contact and weekly face-to-face discussion.

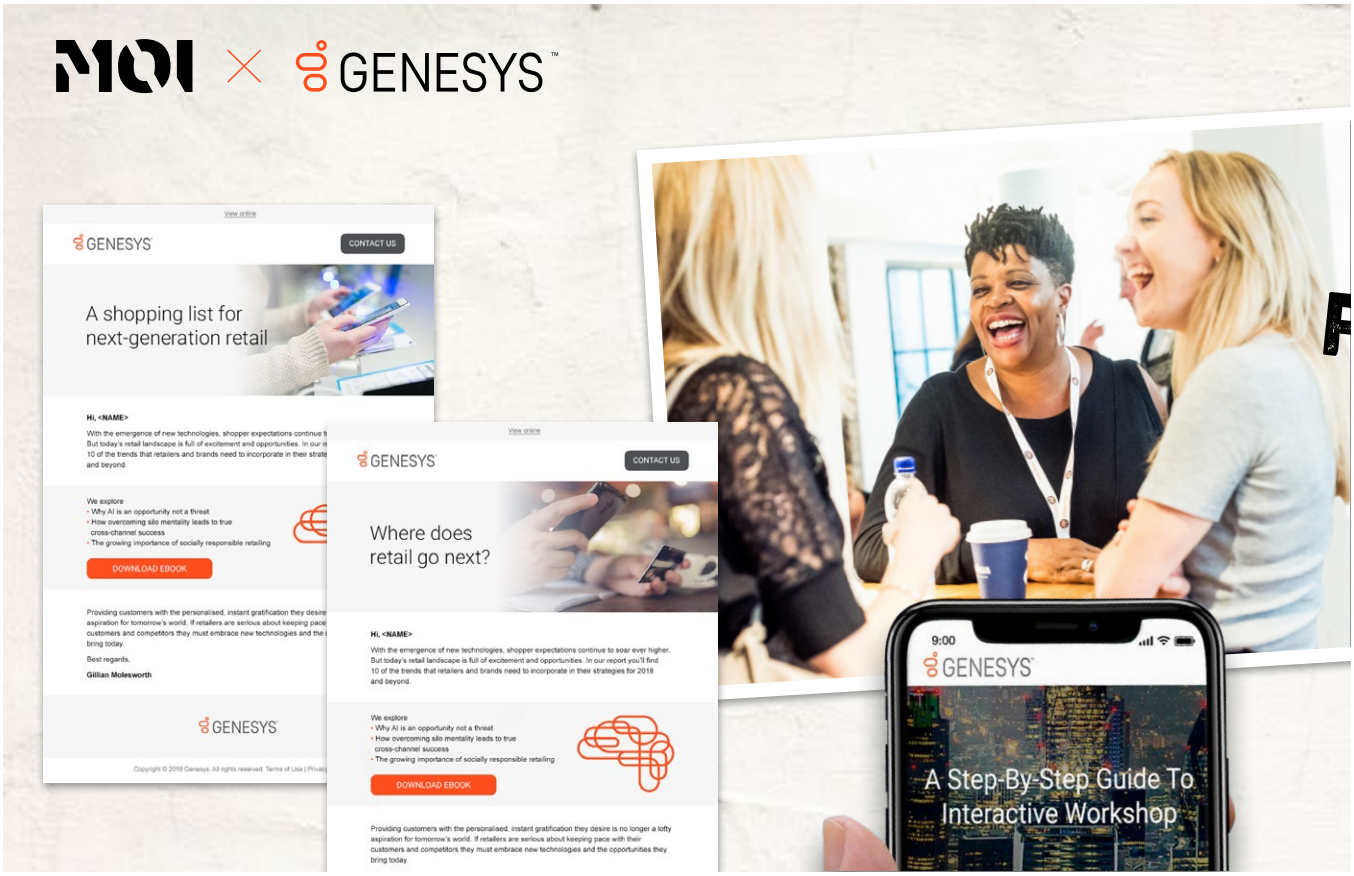
Going one-to-one

Phase two saw the introduction of a predictive marketing tool, meaning that previously manual ABM could be scaled, automated and taken to new levels of precision targeting. The tool combined profile information, keywords, digital signals and propensity-to-buy modeling to produce intent data, allowing the identification and immediate targeting of the prospects currently demonstrating real and active buying signals. Day-to-day insights from the front line sales execs were fed into the data, with the result that targeting could now be one-to-one, or one-to-cluster, depending on what the intent data revealed.

From here, the initiative could be scaled with lookalike modelling and more. At the same time, the programme remained highly efficient. By targeting only engagement-ready prospects, wastage was minimised.

Tight-knit for tightest targeting

Alongside the main programme, and using its direct learnings, individual initiatives began with 35 of the



client's key accounts. Decision-makers were identified, meticulously profiled (using demographic, firmographic, psychographic and behavioural profiling) and added to on-the-ground insights from Genesys' sales teams. The analysis revealed a shortlist of targets for whom detailed profiling documents were produced.

The Genesys account leads were then able to target their shortlist with hyper-relevant messaging and content. In many cases, specific content was created per account.

From zero to hero

From a position of scepticism, the relationship between marketing, sales and agency is now one of mutual respect and intense collaboration. It's an extremely close partnership that has extended into offsite brainstorming and socials. "When's our next 'epiphany pint'?" has even slipped into the group vocabulary! Three separate teams have become one close-knit unit, with every single member having an equal influence and decision-making role in the campaign.

This closeness and constant communication was absolutely vital for the ability to jump on every new opportunity. The proof is in the results. Campaign targets have been smashed, pipeline numbers are three times what they were previously, and new highly efficient ways of working and budgeting have been established. ABM was completely unrepresented in the Genesys marketing budget, now it has a 30% share.

Timescales of the campaign

April – May 2017
Planning, content auditing, account mapping, social champion onboarding.

June – December 2017
Topic research and content development; sector profiling; launch of messaging and content.

December 2017
Predictive marketing tool launche.

January 2018
Prioritising of accounts via intent scoping, analysis and deep profiling.

February 2018
Nurture programme devised from above analysis. New and precision targeted content developed and distributed.

Results

Pipeline:
400% increase on the target pipeline, which was in the millions.

Awareness & engagement:
- 66% of article views delivered connections with influencers & decision makers.
- 4% engagement with priority contacts.

Use of budget:
Efficiency and scalability improvements mean ABM now gets 30% share of the EMEA marketing spend (previously zero).

Marketing automation platform used in this campaign:
Marketo

CRM system used in this campaign:
Salesforce

Social media marketing/analytics platforms used in this campaign:
NUVI and Crimson Hexagon



Section 5

Alignment

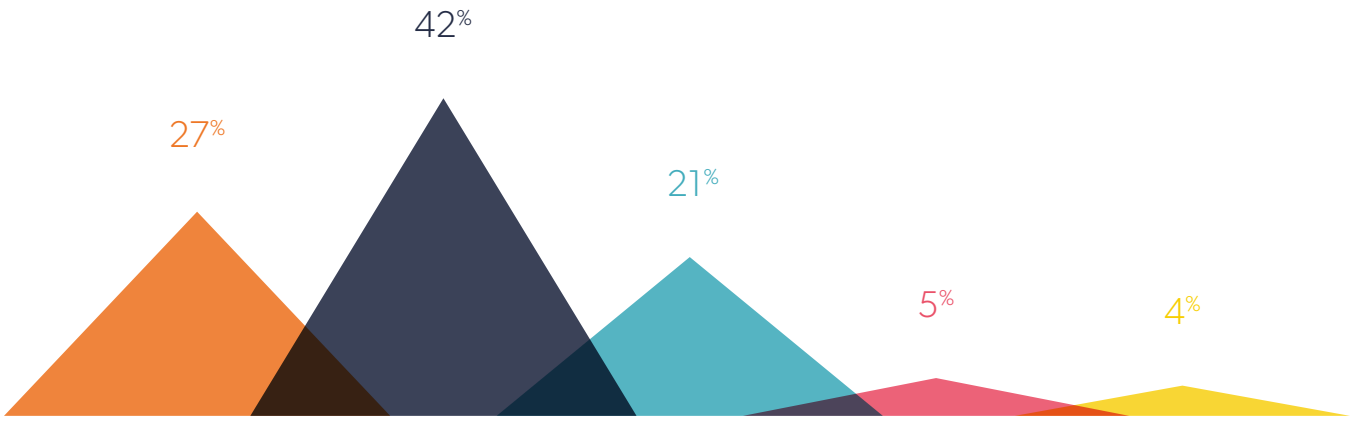
64% of ABMers find alignment a challenge

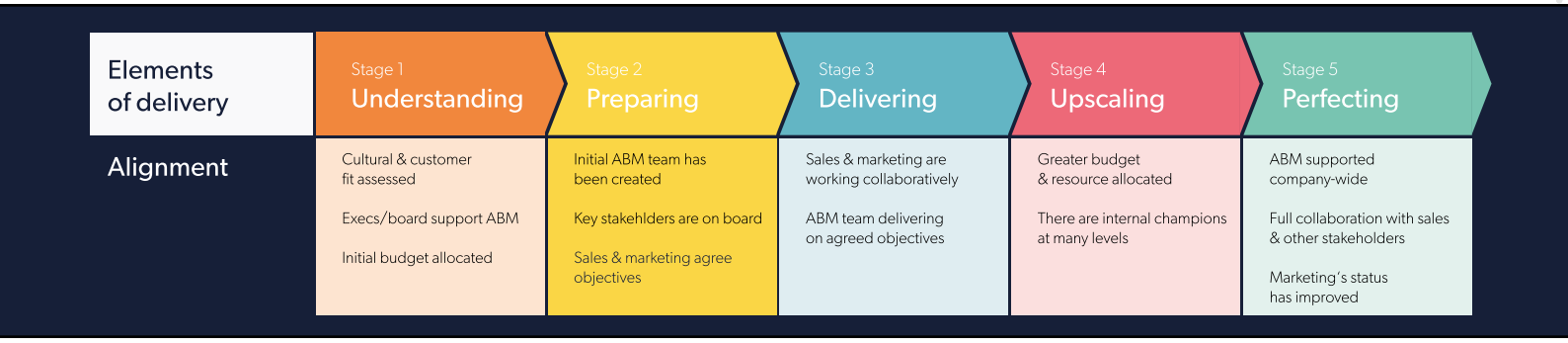
Overview:

For any new programme to succeed there must be alignment, agreement and buy-in between all stakeholders, from the senior leaders and board through to the team members who will action the plans. This is no different in ABM, except that (and this is crucial) there must be watertight alignment between sales and marketing in particular.

The fact that ABM requires resolution to this widespread and perennial problem may sound entirely daunting, but ABM doesn't just demand sales and marketing alignment, it helps deliver it. Indeed, this was ranked as the greatest benefit of ABM seen so far.

Which of the following best describes your company's alignment around ABM?





Where are my peers on alignment?

Stage two: Preparing

Alignment is the one area in which B2B marketers have progressed beyond the understanding shape. In this area alone they rank themselves at stage two of the five-stage process. This is not because alignment is easy but because it is the first step of the journey. Without alignment between the key ABM stakeholders, no further progress can be made. Most B2B marketers have won the initial buy-in, carved out budget and resource and most crucially agreed their objectives with sales.

Next steps

Stage three: Delivering

The jump to stage three is a sizable one – it's the difference between planning and theory versus practice and delivery, and as we know from our survey, most aren't operationally running with ABM yet. Progress to stage three alignment will depend upon progress in the other areas.

> *"Make sure you're taking the right first steps by going out and speaking to experts. You could be losing a real opportunity if you fall at the beginning. Be really clear about what you're looking to achieve or you may lose your credibility and then ABM will be seen as just another fad."*
>
> **James Smith, director strategic account marketing, digital and brand, Envigo**

Simple steps to success: Alignment

- Define your overall vision.
- Map what the future looks like.
- Understand the problems you're trying to solve (for your business and customers).
- Don't over sell ABM to your internal stakeholders.
- Communicate ABM as a sales AND marketing initiative.
- Set realistic goals and celebrate short-term success.

Section 5

Alignment

The relationship between sales and marketing creates the framework from which all of your ABM efforts will hang. A shaky relationship means it can all come crashing down. So, step one of your ABM journey is to make sure you're best buddies with sales. Easy, right?

Okay, we understand it really isn't easy – in fact the relationship between the two teams can sometimes feel like it needs a mediator from the UN. But it's also worth pointing out that ABM doesn't just require collaboration between sales and marketing, it creates it. It is a self-perpetuating machine. B2B marketers we've spoken to have told us that they've formed valued friendships with members of the sales team along the way. They say they understand sales more, including their pressures and the strength of their relationship with the customer. They also say ABM has led sales – and other stakeholders – to take marketing more seriously.

Of course you can't just sprinkle on a magic acronym and expect everything to play out perfectly. It requires effort, openness and consideration. In the following pages we will share advice from fellow marketers on how to get alignment right. But first of all, let's recap on the steps you've taken to get where you are.

> *"You can have all the creative ideas in the world but if you can't get internal buy-in from your organisation or alignment between stakeholders, those campaigns will not see the light of day. Instead of seeing the strategic benefit of ABM it will be approached as a one-off tactic."*
>
> **Sarah Thomas, CMO Accenture Operations**

5.1 Early progression through ABM alignment

Stage 1 of Alignment: Understanding

During the first stages of your ABM journey you'll be busy writing business plans and working out how you'll pitch your big idea to the boss. You'll have done your homework and understood what ABM has to offer your company and most likely have a good idea of how you want to deliver that in practice.

Knowing when to bring sales in takes some educated timing. You will want to have enough understanding to sell it to them, but ideally you and your sales lead will take this to the board together, as a united front with shared ideas and goals.

Few people manage to secure additional budget or resource at this early stage, so the emphasis will be on reallocating the existing budget and resource (typically a quarter of each) to a pilot scheme.

For some companies ABM just isn't meant to be. It's a modern methodology that requires an openness to change, a willingness to break from siloes and a reasonable amount of existing customer insight. You must have both the cultural fit and the senior level support.

Stage 2 of Alignment: Preparing

During stage two you will be creating your team of ABM practitioners – be they a dedicated resource or (most likely) existing staff who are adding ABM methods to their 'business as usual' efforts.

You will also be working closely with sales to firm your objectives for ABM, including:

- The type of ABM: One-to-one, few or many.
- The objectives: To grow, win or retain accounts.
- Account selection: The number and type of accounts.
- Outcome and timeframes: E.g. improved win rate, deal size, customer insight, NPS.

It's crucial that sales and marketing are in complete agreement on the deliverables, timeframes and actions needed to achieve them, as any discord is very likely to result in problems later down the line.

Stage 3 of Alignment: Delivering

Most ABM practitioners in B2B Marketing are now looking to move into stage three of alignment, passing from the planning to the implementation stage. At this point sales and marketing are working collaboratively to start to deliver on the objectives they have already agreed. But for this to happen they must have moved into stage two in at least three other areas of delivery – account definition, data and insight, and tech. In the following sections we will show you how.

> *"It's not just about aligning sales and marketing: if you're going to successfully orient your engagement activities around the customer and move beyond legacy KPIs, then the whole business needs to be of one mind."*
>
> **Adam Greener, head of strategy and ABM lead, Enigma Marketing Services**

What's in a name? Quite a big problem as it turns out

> *"Part of the problem with ABM is the actual name of it. Calling it ABM loses the concept, which is really about people-based marketing."*
>
> **Grad Conn, CMO, Sprinklr**

> *"We dropped the account-based marketing moniker because it puts the emphasis on marketing. Now we call it account-based strategy, or ABS for short, so that sales and marketing know from the outset that we have shared responsibilities for each account. We cracked a few jokes about flexing our abs when we first came up with the name – now its part of our everyday conversation."*
>
> **Conrad Wilson, head of marketing and communications, Cranfield Executive Development, Cranfield University**

> *"We had called it 'strategic account marketing' because ABM had become a word synonymous with a mindset that if you spend money you don't get any direct return. It's only now that we've started calling it ABM."*
>
> **Sakina Najmi, CMO, Criteo**

5.2 Common challenges in sales and marketing alignment – and how to overcome them

5.2.1 Overselling ABM

A really common mistake is to oversell your pitch and under deliver on your promises. It's a tough one to get right. Of course you will want to create support and enthusiasm for your endeavour, highlighting what ABM can do for sales in particular. But don't underestimate how long it may take to see a financial return, how much collective effort it takes to pool all of the insight you need. Conversely, don't overestimate how many accounts you can take on at any one time. Be enthusiastic yet pragmatic.

"Our sales team got very excited with our pitch on ABM and we had to manage the expectation we had generated. This could have been hundreds of potential new accounts, which is not something we could, or should, undertake with our one-to-one approach. We had to work out how to find the budget and resource to support the volume of accounts for the first wave and ensure it was achievable. The biggest challenge has been conducting ABM principles in a proactive disciplined manner while sales were still coming at us with more accounts or acute opportunities."

"We devised an internal scoring matrix whereby we could look at the account's long-term prospects as our customer, their partnership potential with us, and their cultural fit. That allowed us to filter down the number of accounts to target and be more strategic with our selection."

James Smith, director strategic account marketing, digital and brand, Envigo

"The biggest areas of conflict between sales and marketing are building trust and managing expectations. Sales will either ring fence their accounts or fire hundreds at marketing expecting them to manage them all. Because marketers don't have the information at their fingers tips to set reasonable goals, they tend to resort to overselling."

Andy Bacon, lead advisor for Head-Start, B2B Marketing

"Be realistic and pragmatic – don't oversell. Push yourself as a marketer to deliver creatively but make sure your feel comfortable about what you've promised to deliver."

Sarah Thomas, CMO, Accenture Operations



5.2.3 Not seeing ABM as a change project

ABM isn't just about the customer, it's about a totally new way of working. For example, you may need to switch from quarterly targets to half year ones. That alone will have an impact on remuneration, working habits and mindset. It calls for new processes, skills and disciplines. In short, ABM is a change programme in itself, so expect everything that may come with that.

"It wasn't straightforward getting to ABM readiness, we've had to work through some thorny issues such as legacy systems that were keeping us siloed. We recognised from the start that it's a culture change; a marathon not a sprint. We've transitioned away from mainly a product-focused mindset to one of the customer, but it's taken a small stroke of 'good fortune' by jumping on top of an existing internal structural change project to achieve that."

Conrad Wilson, head of marketing and communications, Cranfield Executive Development, Cranfield University

"You must have the right mindset – especially at the c-level. That takes time. We started thinking about ABM in 2016, but didn't launch until later that year because we took a long time to come up with the right strategy, educate the team and ensure we're all talking about the same thing.

"I have a challenging internal audience, the CEO, CFO, CRO, and the MDs of each region. All of them want the same thing – dollars – but they have different needs and priorities in delivering them. And they use different terminology. You need to understand each and every person, and personalise their education. I had to do an ABM campaign internally to get approval for the ABM campaign for our customers!"

Sakina Najmi, CMO, Criteo

Top tip: Join sales on their customer meetings

Another way to align marketing with sales is for them both to spend time with the customer. A number of marketers we've spoken to have taken to joining their sales colleagues on customer meetings so they can better understand both parties they're meeting with. Not only does this provide marketing with far greater account insight, but it can be a very positive way of strengthening the relationship and understanding with sales.

"Whenever a marketer is struggling it's because they haven't spent time with the sellers. Pack a bag, go on the trip. I've had meetings with almost every sales person on the team. It means you understand every person and how they're selling, it gives you a connection to the seller so they can reach out to you and it gives you credibility. You start to land things with more precision. I've never seen any marketer who's done that and fail."

Grad Conn, CMO, Sprinklr

5.2.4 Applying a long-term vision to short-term targets

A common problem raised by those we spoke to was over-ambitious targets, in particular, those related to financial (as opposed to engagement) targets.

Of course, you can't forget the importance of ROI, but don't expect it see it too soon. ABM has a great deal more to measure than revenue but marketers often don't take enough credit for those achievements.

> *"The KPIs we established for 2018 were aligned to the sales cycle. It was important we were speaking the same language as sales. Our target was to move the sales cycle by two stages. We have achieved that in a number of accounts. However, this KPI did not give a true picture of marketing's contribution to the accounts that had a lot of activity but hadn't moved two stages. For 2019, we are looking at refreshing these KPIs to also reflect metrics like engagement rate from the DMU."*
>
> **Caroline Potter, head of field marketing, EMEA, Sabre**

Metrics for ABM success

- Audience growth
- Revenue growth
- Increased deal size
- Improved win rate
- Quicker time to pipeline
- Internal perception of marketing
- Improve customer perceptions and relationship
- Sales and marketing alignment.

Top tip: Assess your staff remuneration structure

Almost all marketers are compensated through a salary and bonus structure, which contrasts to the compensation-based payment received by sales. Consider how you might align these two teams through commission-based incentives. Matched targets and remuneration will support a matched effort, mindset and delivery.

Section 6

Account definition

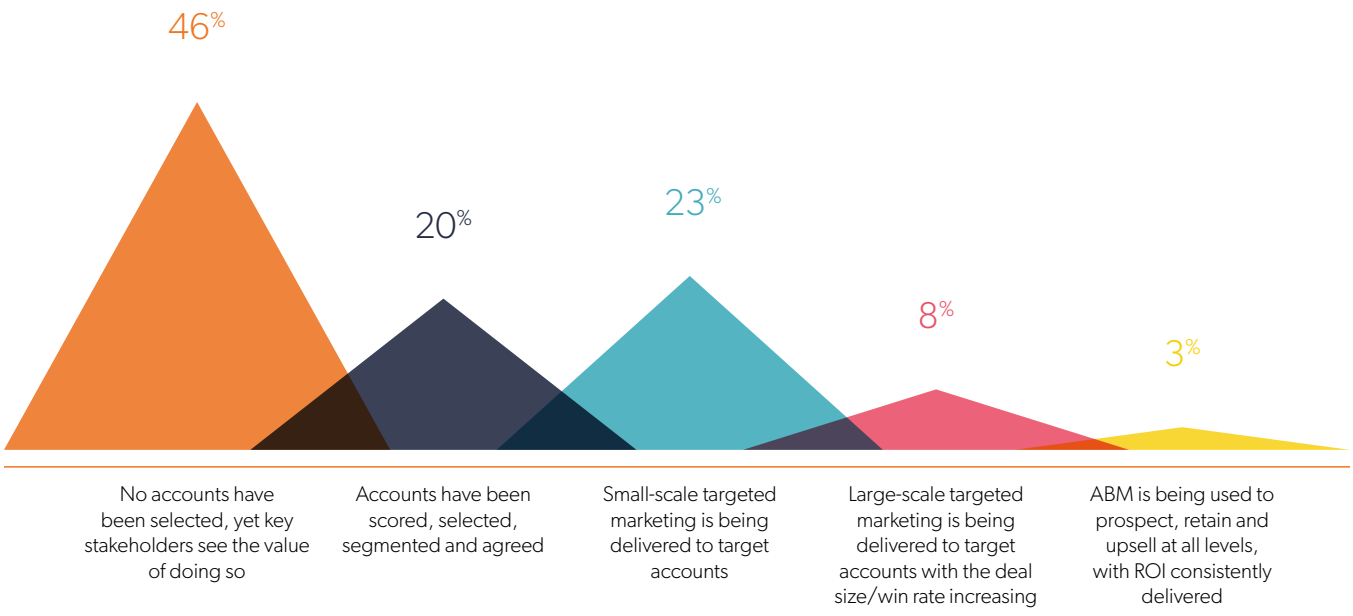
Only 12% of ABMers see defining their target accounts as a big challenge

Overview:

Selecting your accounts is a make or break process. Choosing the wrong ones could severely affect your momentum, engagement and ultimately your results, yet many marketers underestimate how rigorous this process should be.

Of course, how many you select and what type will depend on your objectives . In this chapter we will review some of the options available to you, providing you with advice on selecting the right accounts and securing the best likelihood of a win.

Which of the following best describes your efforts to define your target accounts?



Elements of delivery	Stage 1 Understanding	Stage 2 Preparing	Stage 3 Delivering	Stage 4 Upscaling	Stage 5 Perfecting
Account definition	Key stakeholders see the value of & personalisation, yet no accounts are selected	Accounts are scored, selected, segmented & agreed Sales & marketing have mapped the DMU & buying process Standardised sales account plans have been created	Small-scale targeted marketing is delivered Customer engagement has improved	Large-scale targeted marketing is delivered throughout the buyer journey The deal size/win rate has increased	Targeted marketing is used to prospect & retain/upsell

Where are my peers on account definition?

Stage one: Understanding

Most ABMers are at the first stage of their journey when it comes to account definition. They have convinced their internal stakeholders of the value of ABM – including customer insight and personalisation – but they haven't selected their accounts.

Next steps

Stage two: Preparing

The next steps for the majority of those surveyed will be to move into stage two. That encompasses selecting and scoring their accounts. While most don't see this as a challenge, there are many possible hurdles, such as overstretched expectations and misaligned objectives. Getting this right is crucial. Without the right accounts in the mix, your ABM programme simply will not deliver.

> *"There is a lot more to this than most people think and when accounts aren't properly selected you get loss of alignment and poor motivation."*
>
> **Andy Bacon, lead advisor on B2B Marketing's ABM programme, Head-Start**

Simple steps to success: Account selection

Assess your target account's potential value to you:

- Carry out financial analysis – what is its profitability and forecast spend?
- What's its place in the buying cycle?
- What's its relationship with you and your competitors?
- What's its purchase history?
- How in need is it of your offerings? Where can you deliver value?
- How much do you already know about this account?

Section 6

Is account definition a lurking monster?

Account definition was ranked as the least challenging criteria by our survey respondents, yet 46% haven't selected them yet. That got us wondering – is account selection trickier than people think? Might it be an unseen hurdle in your own journey?

Our participants were largely confident about their account selection process, deeming it low on the risk register. They may have started ABM with certain accounts in mind, or be satisfied with going after those fiercely advocated by sales. But for their strategy to work, account selection should be far removed from any gut-feel or personal preference.

The correct account selection will be based on your likelihood of securing business with them, the value of that business to you, and the time frame over which you will receive it.

> *"Anything that allows us to be part of the discussion early on in the account relationship is a good thing for marketing. Being involved in the discussion allows us to understand industry context, the broader account strategy and any history with individual targets – that's all context we can tailor our marketing to."*
>
> **Sarah Thomas, CMO, Accenture Operations**

Year-on-year survey results show marketers are less adept at account definition than first thought

Our 2017 survey of B2B marketers found the majority of people using ABM viewed themselves to be at stage three of our five-stage delivery model.

Exactly one year on and they have downgraded themselves by two places to stage one.

Why has this happened? It's likely that in the process of defining their accounts, ABMers have realised it's more complex than first thought. Our individual interviews with practitioners certainly support this view. In short, account definition is tougher than it seems.

6.1 The effects of poor account selection

Poor account selection is often a symptom of poor alignment between sales and marketing, stemming from unclear objectives between the two. A lack of internal alignment at the beginning of your ABM journey is likely to create confused, disharmonious or ill-judged account selection. It starts with one of two scenarios:

Marketing hasn't sold ABM to sales

- Sales lock their accounts away from marketing.
- Sales don't share account information.
- Poor objectives and success metrics take ABM delivery off course.

Marketing has over-sold ABM to sales

- Sales swamps marketing with too many accounts.
- Marketing fails to address these unachievable expectations.
- Sales become disillusioned with marketing when those high expectations aren't met.

> *"There is a lot more to this than most people think and when accounts aren't properly selected you get loss of alignment and poor motivation."*
>
> **Andy Bacon, lead advisor, B2B Marketing's ABM programme, Head-Start**

> *"Focus on the account selection process. It's the most important part of your strategy. The key is to be sure you're moving through your account selection with your sales team. It should be a collaborative process with foundations in your overall go-to-market strategy."*
>
> **Lisa Skinner, VP marketing at Localytics (now head of marketing at Tamr)**

6.2 Selecting your accounts

The amount and type of companies you select as your ABM accounts will depend on your objectives as a business – such as whether you want to retain or grow your market share, and how many marketers there are available to manage them. Your ideal customer will be a certain size, possibly in a certain sector, have a cultural fit with your own business and need for your offerings. Most importantly, represent significant value.

> *"The ABM efforts have to reflect the overall business strategy. In Europe and APAC, there are more opportunities for growth from new business as opposed to North America who are more in the phase of customer retention. Therefore our ABM efforts in EMEA have been on new business primarily."*
>
> **Caroline Potter, head of field marketing, EMEA, Sabre**

6.2.1 A word on 'protect and grow' versus finding new business

The initial account selection process will pull one or both of the following types onto your radar. The first are large, high value customers that are either at risk of churn or are granting you only a small portion of their wallet. These will be tackled under a 'protect and grow' programme. The second pool of candidates are new accounts, those that may represent a large potential profit but also come with a large investment of time and effort, plus a high risk of no return. And, the third, accounts that you have lost and seek to reclaim.

ABM is a strategy that will flex to your business needs, meaning that you can choose either approach – or even a mix of both - if your business objectives warrant it. However, as this report focuses on early stage planning implementation, it will stress the importance of perfecting your ABM strategy on a small but scalable level. The temptation is often to select too many accounts, and/or accounts that seem promising but have little likelihood of converting.

Andy's advice to those starting out on ABM is to opt for a 'protect and grow' method. As ABM relies on high levels

of personalisation, the more information you already have on an account, the better. That insight into their needs, DMU, key stakeholders and pain points will be the framework for your ABM campaigns. And, having a framework early on will speed up your journey and create a much clearer path.

It can be tempting to go after big untapped brands, particularly when sales are eager to open doors to them, but don't underestimate the amount of effort both sides will have to put. This is the difference between beginning the marathon with a head start versus a weight on your back.

> *"It's a lot easier to grow an existing account with an existing foothold and relationship than a new one. To start by trying to win new accounts is really just making life difficult for yourself. The best place to start is to delve deeper into your existing accounts, retaining, cross-selling and upselling. Under a grow and protect strategy you will clearly have more data on how that company is working with you. Strategic ABM is really all about knowing what the business wants to achieve in the next few years – it relies on intent data to find out how to help them on that journey."*
>
> **Andy Bacon, lead advisor, B2B Marketing's ABM programme, Head-Start**

6.2.2 Make customer retention your new playground

Opting to grow or retain existing accounts also gives marketing the opportunity to go where most don't tread – that is back over common ground. Marketers have historically been focused on new business and it's not often that they support the process of up-sell and cross-sell. As soon as an account has been won, it's handed to sales. Marketing rarely get the chance to pursue it with the same intensity and insight. They become disintermediated, but that's where they stand to learn so much.

> *"This is often the first time marketing has gone down in the weeds to understand why people buy their product and service, or how they do that. They can learn a tremendous amount by looking into the purchase decisions of an existing account and applying those learnings to inform their new business strategy."*
>
> **Andy Bacon, lead advisor, B2B Marketing's ABM programme, Head-Start**

6.2.3 The 3 core tenets of successful account selection

Andy uses a 20-point scoring system to assist client on the selection and scoring of their accounts, all of which fit into these three key consideration.

Account value – Don't be lured into selecting an account just because it's a big brand, focus on what that account means to your business. That means putting a number against its existing pipeline and volume of potential business. This marks the difference between the sales person's dream deal and marketing's due diligence on the real business opportunity.

Achievability – You need to assess how realistic it is that you can achieve your objectives with this account. How likely are you to win or retain your business with this account? Do they have a complicated buying unit and do you know how to engage with the people in it? What's your competition and how deeply entrenched are they in this account?

Co-operation – Are your chosen accounts already engaging with you? If they don't know you, or don't like you, you're bound to have an uphill struggle. You also need to measure the likelihood of having support from those within your own company. If you chose an account that was 'owned' by an unco-operative member of sales you may find they become your biggest blocker.

> *"We went through a process of account selection for 2018 with key deliverables. However, we realised some of these accounts, in hindsight, should not have been in the programme for various reasons. We have since worked with Andy Bacon from ABM Head-Start and developed a tool to ensure we have key criteria and a scoring system on which accounts get into the programme."*
>
> **Caroline Potter, head of field marketing, EMEA, Sabre**

6.3 The tiered approach

Only 8% of the marketers we surveyed are taking a hybrid or 'tiered' approach to ABM (using mix of the one-to-one, few and many approaches). While for many people this should be a distant goal, it's wise to consider how you may grow into this approach as you scale up your efforts.

Creating a tiered approach means you focus your attention and budget to the few key accounts at the top of the pyramid filtering down your efforts to those at the bottom. It also means that once you've won an account at the top level, it can move into the bottom, where you work to retain and grow the account.

This can be too large a mouthful for many to swallow at the start, but the benefits are that you have a pipeline of accounts that are likely to deliver at a consistent, steady stream and will include both early and big wins.

"Only start playing with the known framework once you've mastered it. We have a robust foundation but we'll still maintain what we're doing for a period of time before reviewing scale or diversity within ABM. The next step is working out whether we dive deeper by looking for more one-to-one accounts, or go wider to one-to-few."

James Smith, director strategic account marketing, digital and brand, Envigo

"We are looking into scaling our ABM programme next year through maintaining our one-to-one approach, but looking at opportunities for a cluster approach on about 10-15 accounts in a particular vertical or segment. We learned in 2018 that to do strategic one-to-one ABM well you need to have the budget. My recommendation for 2019 is to do less accounts but assign more budget to those large pursuits."

Caroline Potter, head of field marketing, EMEA, Sabre

Top advice: Pick some low-hanging fruit

It's important to factor in some quick wins by choosing accounts that are likely to give you measurable results early on. These may not be your big ticket accounts but success doesn't have to mean ROI – it could be something far faster and easier to achieve, such as an improved NPS, open rates or stronger client/prospect relationships.

Regardless of which metric you pick, selecting a spread of them along your programme's timeline, and particularly early on, will prove invaluable when it comes to demonstrating success, boosting morale and retaining momentum.

6.4 Standardised sales account plans

While ABM shouldn't put additional burden onto sales they do carry responsibility for putting forward relevant accounts and the full set of data you need to determine their worth to you. That means standardised sales account plans and regular, effective use of your CRM system – both of which are commonly underused.

Standardised sales account plans, such as Miller Heimans Blue Sheets, provide a clear view of the account being reviewed including its value to the business, such as the size of the company, its previous purchases with you and pipeline opportunities. These plans also enable you to compare accounts with each other, delivering greater transparency and clarity across your selection process.

While not a popular tool with many sales employees – particularly given the rise of the CRM system, which in many cases has become a substitute – they are invaluable. Sales should not bring any account to the table unless they have a clear and detailed account plan for it.

> *"The account selection process needs to be objective with sales and marketing scoring the accounts collaboratively. Within that process they should realise that there are shed-loads of stuff they don't know and therefore need to find out. If they already have a sales account plan that process is a lot easier, without one it can be very sketchy."*
>
> **Andy Bacon, lead advisor for B2B Marketing's ABM programme, Head-Start**



Section 7

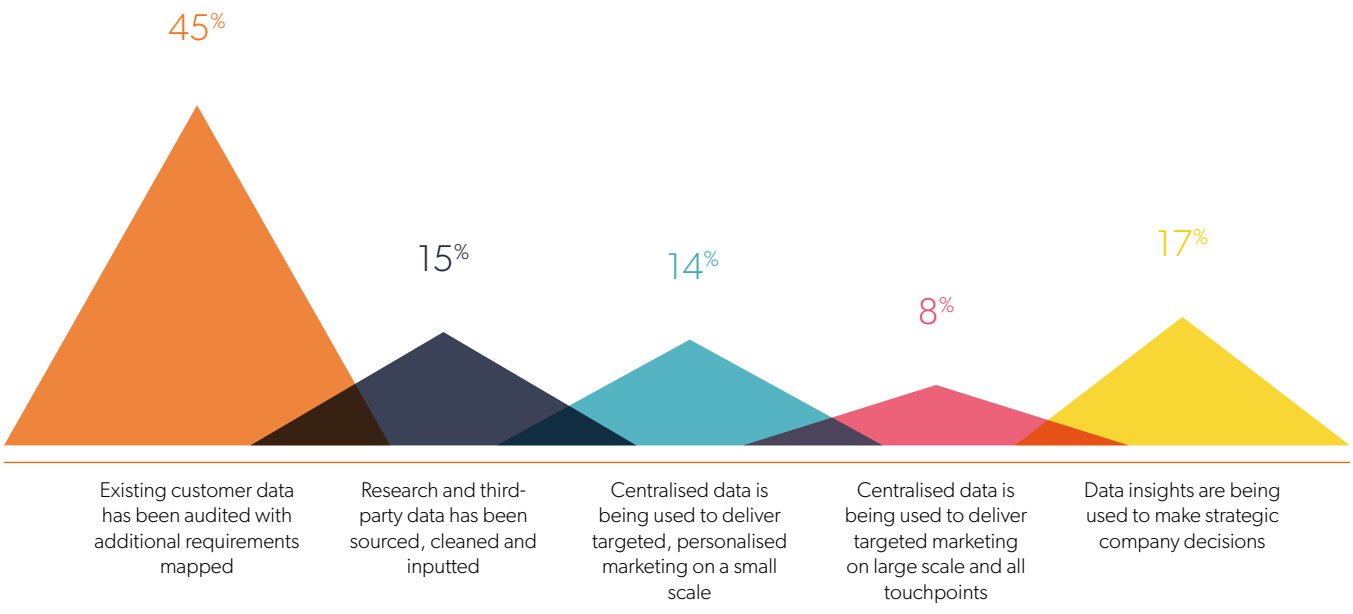
Data and insight

84% of marketers think that accessing account data and insight is a challenge

Overview:

ABM relies on solid data and insight right the way through the programme. Not only is it essential in selecting the correct accounts, but also in knowing how to target them. This is a challenge for the vast majority of marketers as often large pools of information are missing, with others locked away in different systems and documents.

Which of the following best describes your efforts to secure the right data and insight?



Elements of delivery	Stage 1 Understanding	Stage 2 Preparing	Stage 3 Delivering	Stage 4 Upscaling	Stage 5 Perfecting
Data & insight	Existing customer insight is audited Data requirements are mapped	Research & third-party data is sourced All data is clean & inputted	Data is regularly shared & updated Data is used to deliver targeted marketing on a small scale	Centralised data is used to deliver targeted marketing on all touch points	Data insights are consistently delivering increased sales Data is used for strategic company decisions

Where are my peers on adata and insight?

Stage one: Understanding

Most marketers have audited their existing customer insight and have mapped their additional data requirements, but have yet to source them.

Next steps:

Stage two: Preparing

The next stage for marketers is to pool the additional insight and data they need on their accounts. This will be achieved through a mix of research and third-party data. It's essential that all information is shared between sales and marketing, inputting it correctly and cleanly in an accessible CRM and/MA system.

> *"A big issue is accessibility of data – a bit might be sitting in Salesforce, another on a marketing spreadsheet somewhere. So much is locked away. At some companies marketing doesn't even know how profitable an account is to their business"*
>
> **Andy Bacon, lead advisor on B2B Marketing's ABM programme, Head-Start**

Simple steps to success: Getting to know the customer

- What does the customer want to achieve?
- What are their challenges and opportunities?
- Where can we help them?
- What is their timescale?
- What are the desired outcomes?

Section 7

Data and insight

Data and insight is by far the biggest challenge facing marketers in ABM. A whopping 86% of those surveyed see it as a significant problem. In this chapter we will examine the role of data and insight in ABM, the challenges and expectations involved in collating this information, and how you can make that task easier.

It's not surprising, given where most ABM programmes are, that data and insight have become such an issue. ABM is a data-driven approach and marketers will be reliant on account information to make informed moves, particularly at two crucial junctions – account selection and campaign planning. The wrong information, or not enough, will severely impede progress.

The amount of facts you need can feel overwhelming, and can put immense pressure on both sales and marketing to deliver it. The alarmingly clear message from those 86% of practitioners struggling with this is not to underestimate the effort it involves.

To follow, we will review the information needed to deliver ABM before examining some of the ways in which to make it easier to turn duplicates, old or unreliable data into clean, validated and standardised insights.

> *"We've got 25 years' research into key account management and strategic sales plus Cranfield is already a known centre of excellence for marketing research, so we understand the critical success factors and scoring process. Yet there were a lot of basic questions we couldn't answer at first, like who our top accounts are within our newly integrated business structure, and how often they buy. We only had pockets of information, which goes to show how much work we had to and continue to put in."*
>
> **Conrad Wilson, head of marketing and communications, Cranfield Executive Development, Cranfield University**

How to make data and insight collection easier

1. Audit your existing account data, using external data providers to plug the gaps where needed. Doing it all internally can create more friction and delay than it's worth.
2. Reassess your account selection. Do you have too many accounts? Are they too hard to reach?
3. Understand how your sales and marketing team are using your CRM and make improvements to that usage.
4. Go back to basics. Are you all aligned and working towards the same objective?

7.1 An overview of the required information

To follow is an overview of the account information you will need in order to conduct ABM. By no means comprehensive, this provides a précis and some of the sources by which you can obtain this information.

Data and insight: The essentials

The definition: It's important to note a semantic difference between data and insight as we refer to it in this report.

Data: Top level information, often expressed as numbers. This is more likely used during account definition and one-to-many (programmatic) ABM and includes elements such as intent data.

Data will support your initial efforts to a select an account and top level information on the business, but it will not be enough to drive the sophisticated and personalised marketing behind the one-to-one and one-to-few approaches to ABM.

Insight: A detailed understanding of the company and personal information on DMU individuals. This information is always not quantifiable by numbers and has human understanding at it core.

Insight comprises a human understanding of the target account such as the gut feeling that one individual holds decision-making sway over others, or that they are dissatisfied with their current supplier.

"Data and insight are not one and the same. The value is in the insight you extract from the data. The challenge is to know what insight you need and to develop your data collation, analysis and interpretation accordingly."
Martin Simcock, MD, Enigma Marketing Services

Firmographic data

This provides the basic, broad level information you need at the start of your account selection process, as detailed in the previous section. This will include:

- Company size
- Revenue
- Industry
- Geographic locations.

Data sources could include:
Dun & Bradstreet, Reachforce, BlueKai, company financial results, company website.

Intent data

Intent data measures the behavioural patterns of your prospects and clients to determine how likely they are to make a purchase. This data is largely triggered during the customer's research into products and offerings. This will include:

- Search topics
- Cookie and IP-sourced data
- Event attendance
- Content downloads and ad clicks.

Data sources could include:
Bombora, BlueKai, Tech Target, Kickfire, Radius, The Big Willow, Cyance

Engagement data

This information will reflect how engaged the prospect is in your company and will help you determine the likelihood of closing a deal with them. You can pool this information from:

- CRM and MA data
- Web analytics
- LinkedIn
- Engagio
- Personal feedback from sales.

Data sources:
All first party data

Essential account information

- Business model
- Geography and global spread
- Size and market share
- Vertical
- Financial results
- Strategic priorities
- Challenges and opportunities
- Business culture
- Industry trends.

Essential DMU information

- Organisational structure
- Size of its DMU
- Who is in its DMU
- The key purchasing influencer (on paper and in practice)
- Where they are on their sales cycle
- Purchase history with you
- Purchase history with others like you.

Essential buyer persona information

- Job role, function and tenure
- Level of seniority, influence and reporting line
- Business/career challenges
- Personal interest, goals and drivers
- Personality type
- Preferred sales engagement
- Thoughts on your company and its offerings
- Thoughts on your competitors and their offerings
- Peer network and places they frequently visit
- All first party data.

7.2 External data providers

The largest group of B2B marketers we spoke to (45%) have successfully audited their existing customer information and have mapped the gaps that are left. Filling those gaps can be hugely time-consuming and put considerable burden on both sales and marketing – this in turn can create conflict between the two groups, plus long programme delays.

Thankfully, there is a vast richness of data available to marketers from third-party providers. While this comes at a financial cost it can save a great deal of time for both sales and marketing, helping alleviate any friction or frustration during this stage.

It's likely you will need to stitch together a patchwork of third-party data providers in order to collect the full breadth of information you'll need. The further challenge is to bring that data together to create cohesive and meaningful insights. Only 15% of B2B marketers have sorted and inputted account information pooled from third-party providers. Their next step will be to mine that information for strategic insight.

> *"We are working with an external provider to deliver insights on new prospect accounts. It's not expensive and it allows marketing to bring some key insights to the table on our top sales opportunities. It also takes away some of the desk research from the sales team. This research is then used to supplement what we already know internally and helps build out our next steps of the plan."*
>
> **Caroline Potter, Head of field marketing, EMEA, Sabre**

The data-driven department

Mastering the challenge of data and insight will not only unlock your ability to deliver a successful ABM campaign but will also support your position as a data-driven team, able to respond to both the needs of the customer and business through hard facts.

> *"ABM allows us to show our impact through data, which in turn presents marketing as a data-driven function. ABM means we now have a digital trail – often real-time, that we can adjust to. That makes us more credible to the customer and internally. It changes the dialogue and the perception."*
>
> **Sarah Thomas, CMO, Accenture Operations**

7.3 The interplay between pooling account information and the rest of your ABM efforts

One reason why sourcing account information is such a challenge is that it's intricately interwoven with other elements of ABM's delivery. It is the by-product and barometer of many other efforts. If you're coming unstuck at this stage it's wise to review the following elements of your programme:

7.3.1 Account definition

In the previous chapter, we learned it's easier, quicker and more effective to focus on a small number of existing accounts. This is particularly the case when it comes to data and insight. A grow and protect ABM strategy will grant you more insights into the customer, allowing you to select and target in an informed manner. This is where most marketers have made things harder for themselves. The majority use ABM to win new business, which is putting additional strain on their operations.

Take action: Consider your existing target account pool – have you chosen too many, or those that are too hard to reach?

7.3.2 Technology

In the next chapter we will discuss the role of technology in ABM and highlight that effective and proper use of your CRM system is essential to the delivery of your strategy. Yet, many companies are struggling to use these existing technologies in a manner that delivers clean, up-to-date and easily accessible information. This is a considerable blocker to the delivery of reliable information and must be addressed.

Take action: Go back to basics with your CRM and ask how effectively it's being used. Do you need to upgrade, offer training or incentives?

7.3.3 Alignment

Everything comes back to alignment. Without it sales and marketing won't be sharing information, energised enough to source it, or have clear objectives on what they're trying to understand in the first place. All sides must be committed to ABM and on board with the efforts required to deliver it.

Take action: Take an honest assessment of your relationship with sales and in turn their relationship with your chosen accounts.

> *"Marketing and sales must collaborate from day one, focusing on account opportunity not business targets. They should select and prioritise using criteria such as existing account intelligence and relationships matched with sales and marketing resource, plus estimated short and long-term deal values."*
>
> **Gareth Clark, assistant managing director, Enigma Marketing Services**

> *"A big issue is accessibility of data – a bit might be sitting on Salesforce, another on a marketing spreadsheet somewhere. So much is locked away. At some companies marketing doesn't even know how profitable an account is to their business."*
>
> **Andy Bacon, lead advisor for Head-Start, B2B Marketing**

Section 8

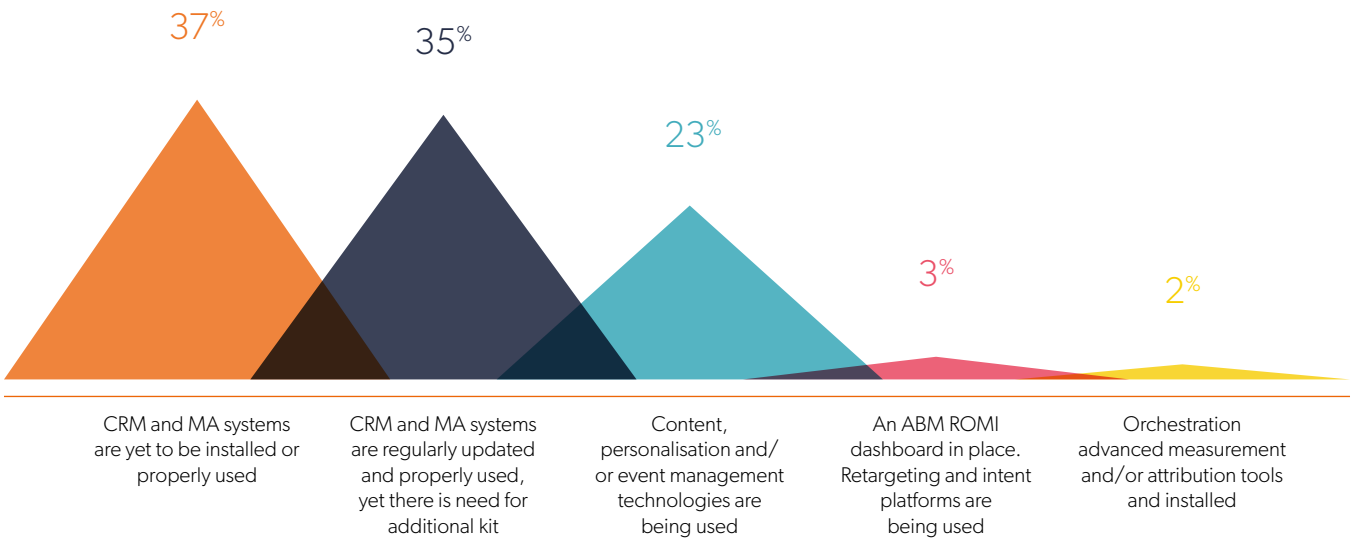
Technology

Only 22% of ABMers had a good understanding of the technology available to them

Overview:

Tech vendors have sprung into action around ABM and have a lot of tools now on offer, as you can see on updated ABM Technology maturity map on page 49. But at this early stage, most are working without the means to invest heavily. Furthermore, when applied to a small number of accounts, ABM does not require a lot of new tech. For most, it is about improving the use of what they already have – especially their CRM system.

Which of the following best describes your use of tech for your ABM programme?



Elements of delivery	Stage 1 Understanding	Stage 2 Preparing	Stage 3 Delivering	Stage 4 Upscaling	Stage 5 Perfecting
Technology	CRM & MA systems are in place & used frequently	CRM & MA systems are regularly updated & properly used Additional tech for data/ contact resources & sales insights installed	Content, personalisation & event management tech is installed Website starting to deliver dynamic content	ABM ROMI dashboard in place Retargeting & intent platforms installed	Orchestration, advanced measurement & attribution tools installed All tech fully deployed & staff regularly trained

Where are my peers on Technology?

Stage one: Understanding

Most B2B marketers have installed and are frequently using both a CRM and MA system. But although these tools are used frequently, they are often not used to the best effect. Marketers are yet to progress further by auditing their tech needs or investing in additional tools.

Next steps:

Stage two: Preparing

The next steps for the majority of marketers in ABM is to ensure the proper use of their CRM and MA systems – this means frequent, effective, efficient use by both sales and marketing. Efforts after that will be to scope any additional tech needs to support your data and contact requirements, although this may simply mean upgrading existing systems.

> *"Marketers utilise only a small percentage of the tech they're already paying for, so the focus should not be on the number of ABM technologies that need to be 'adopted', but in understanding, filtering and then applying the smallest number of interoperable technologies required to meet your needs."*
>
> **Daisy Holloway, head of digital marketing, Enigma Marketing Services**

Simple steps on tech

- Work with what you've already got by training staff to use existing tech better.
- Your CRM system is the backbone of ABM delivery – ensure its proper use.
- Look to upgrade existing tech before buying new tools.
- Focus early efforts and budget on delivery. Unless you are using one-to-many ABM, tech investment can wait until you upscale.

Section 8

Technology

There is a wealth of technology available to support your ABM efforts and those offerings are growing in number very quickly.

Knowing what tech you need, when to invest in it and how to use it to your best advantage can be overwhelming. In fact, our survey showed only 22% of B2B marketers felt they had a good understanding of the technology available to them.

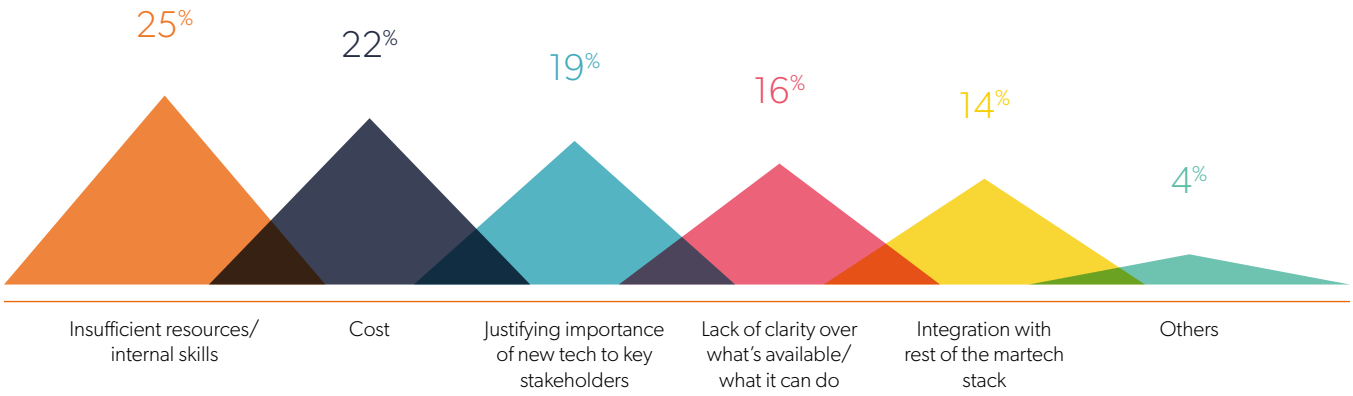
Yet this isn't the biggest challenge impeding the wider use of tech in ABM. The most significant problem is a lack of internal resources and skills (25%) – because if you're not already skilled in using a new piece of tech, it will take time to become so. Second is the cost of new technology (22%), which is an issue for most ABMers as they are working with a limited budget.

In this section we will present some of the tech available to you, yet its greatest aim is cut through the hype and present only what you need right now. This may be far less than you imagined.

> *"The right martech stack can provide insights, enable innovative ways of delivering your message to your target accounts and prove ROI. But planning is key. It is important to understand the limitations of the tool – and the amount of work that will go into making it fit with your organisation – before committing to a solution."*
>
> **Daisy Holloway, head of digital marketing, Enigma Marketing Services**



What's the biggest challenge in deploying new ABM technology?



8.1 Looking for new tech?

On page 49 we outline some of the technologies available to you to support your ABM efforts across a number of objectives. This charts ABM tech across your full journey towards perfect proficiency and for many aspects of ABM's delivery. But while there is a huge amount of very valuable tech available to you, it's important to note that if you're not using what you've already got effectively, you're likely to be wasting you money.

Simple questions to ask when selecting new tech

1. Will the tech allow you to centralise your existing data sources in one location?
2. Does the tech support you in identifying accounts based on a wide variety of data, such as firmographic, behavioural and intent data?
3. Is the tech accessible to other departments, most crucially, does it support both sales and marketing?
4. Does the tech integrate well with your existing stack?
5. Does the tech show sales insights and customer data in real time?
6. Does the tech let you customise your message to deliver personalised experiences for known customers and new visitors?
7. Does the tech allow you to run personalised advertising campaigns that target key accounts and individuals?
8. How long will it take to train staff on its use?
9. How much will it cost to buy it (and train staff)?
10. How easy is to to upgrade and add bespoke elements?

B2B Marketing

Insight · Development · Training · Events

The B2B Marketing ABM Technology Maturity Map: Version 2.0

In this infographic, we've pulled together the vendors and/or solutions that we've listed in the sections above, and mapped them to show where they fit in the different stages of ABM maturity.

Stage 1: Understanding

CRM solutions

act!
BASE
dubsado
Highrise
HubSpot CRM
Infusionsoft.
insightly
MAXIMIZERCRM
Microsoft Dynamics
ORACLE CRM ON DEMAND
pipedrive
PROSPERWORKS
Really Simple Systems
Sage CRM
salesforce
SUGARCRM
ZOHO CRM

Marketing automation

ActiveCampaign
act-on
adestra
eloqua
HubSpot
mailchimp
Marketo
MAROPOST
salesforce marketing cloud
salesforce pardot
salesfusion
SAP
ZOHO

Stage 2: Preparing

Data and contact resources

ABERDEEN GROUP
ALC
B2BSignals
bluegroup
salesforce data.com
DiscoverOrg
headreach
infer
LeadGenius
leadiro
LEADSCALE
leadspace
MARTECH
NetProspex
Oceanos
REACHFORCE
SOCIAL123
SYNTHIO
zoominfo

Sales insights

agent
cb
Crystal
DataFox
DiscoverOrg
dun & bradstreet
Experian
FullContact
iDataLabs
InsideView
LEADBRIDGE
LEADGNOME
LinkedIn
mattermark
momentumabm
node
NOVA
Owler
SAP
TalentIQ
wOopra
xiQ

Stage 3: Delivery

Content tools

ACQUIA THINK AHEAD
Adobe
Contently
LinkedIn
LOOKBOOKHQ
mapp
passle
SnapApp
sprinklr
Storify
Turtl
überflip

Personalisation tools

BrightInfo.
captora
DEMANDBASE
evergage
HubSpot
Marketo
Optimizely
salesforce pardot
triblio

Event management

BIZZABO
Certain
cvent
etouches
hubb
Eventbrite
splash
Symphony

Stage 4: Upscaling

Predictive analytics

6sense
bombora
brighttarget
clari
cyance
Data Hug
infer
Lattice
looker
MINTIGO
RADIUS

ROMI dashboards

Cyfe
GECKOBOARD
Klipfolio
LEFTRONIC

Retargetting

AdRoll
DEMANDBASE
kwanzoo
ListenLoop

Intent platforms

bombora
BuiltWith
Datanyze
GHOSTERY
HG DATA
KickFire
mrp
NetLine
siftery
TechTarget
THE BIG WILLOW

Stage 5: Perfecting

Orchestration tools

6sense
Engagio
Terminus
ZENIQ

Advanced measurement and attribution

bizible
brightfunnel
DOMO
Full Circle INSIGHTS
LeanData
OMNITURE

Artificial intelligence

Adobe
Albert
DEEPINTENT
fractal
IBM Watson
einstein

8.2 Use what you already have more effectively

Rolling out new tech is an investment in time and resource and can be a distraction from the real task at hand. This is especially so with ABM, which in its purest form on relies on only the most basic of tech. Before you invest your limited budget and resource in new technology, think very carefully about your essential needs.

Training staff to use new technology can be a burden, and because staff come and go over time, most aren't using the technology they already have to full effect. Your employees may have different ways of using your tech tools, creating discrepancies, duplicates or holes.

Your most effective move during early stage ABM is to use what you already have to better effect. With a little training and upgrading it may even feel like you have the benefits of a whole new system. Your tech wish list can wait until you have proven that ABM is worth the investment and have secured a larger budget to work with.

> *"We haven't invested in new tools as such for ABM. We already use Salesforce in EMEA, APAC and the Americas so our goal is leveraging what it can do in terms of ABM. For example, being able to pull reports on key accounts that we can tag and review ongoing activity. We also use Pardot as our automation tool for customised emails and landing pages etc. It's not recreating the wheel but leveraging what we already use across the company in a more effective way."*
>
> **Caroline Potter, head of field marketing, EMEA, Sabre**

8.3 Your CRM is the backbone of your ABM programme

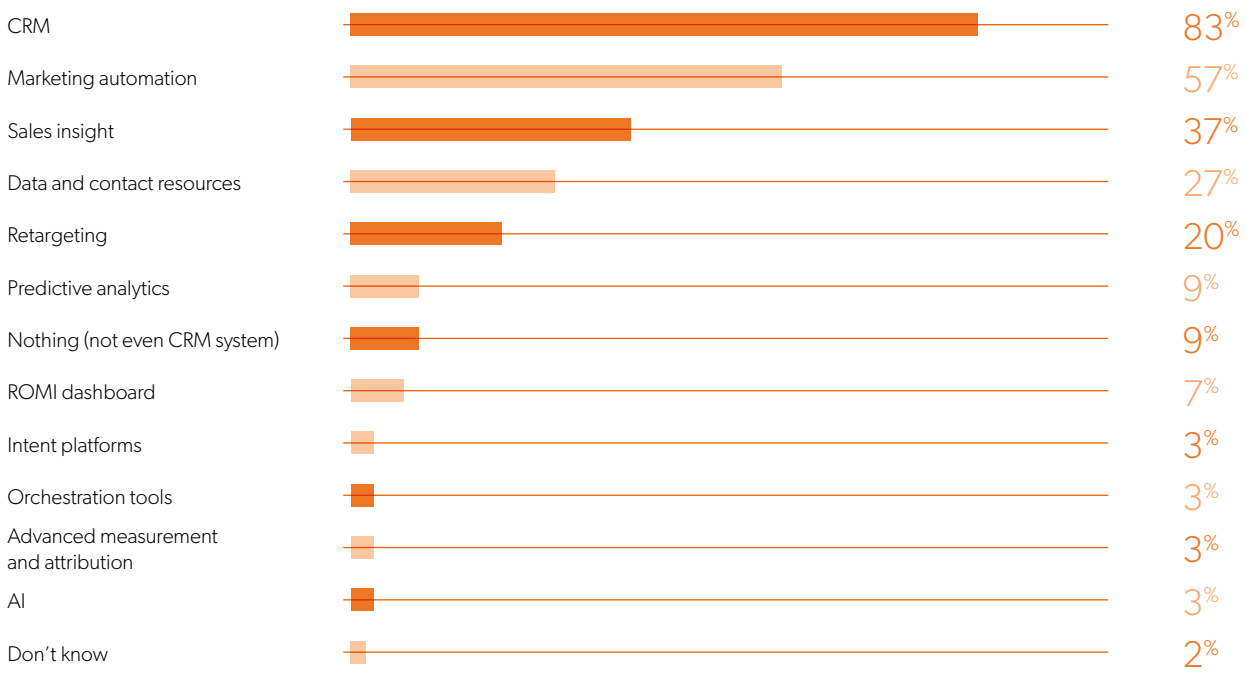
For most people, ABM at this stage is about mastering the basics, which means effective use of their customer relationship management (CRM) system. Yet not everyone has one – 17% are yet to install a CRM system. This is a problem as the CRM is the means by which you and sales will understand your customers; it is not only essential you have it, but that it is properly configured and regularly updated with clean, reliable, shareable information.

Both sales and marketing need to using the CRM system as effectively as possible, this may mean training or upgrades to create a more bespoke solution. Either way, if you aren't nailing your use of the CRM system, you certainly aren't ready to invest in more tech.

Unless you're delivering one-to-many ABM, which relies on technology to deliver timed and targeted marketing *en masse*, it's unlikely you will need anything more than the basics. Although of course, those who are upscaling their efforts will have the means, and the budget, to look further.

> *"We implemented a new cloud-based marketing automation and CRM system, so we could see who was selling to who. We wanted to see the end-to-end view of an enquiry and build a picture of customer and account level behaviours so that we could incorporate timely triggers for intervention. It's really helped improve collaboration between our respective sales, marketing and business development teams."*
>
> **Conrad Wilson, head of marketing and communications, Cranfield Executive Development, Cranfield University**

What tech do you currently use for ABM?



8.4 How to encourage internal CRM adoption

As the full use of your CRM system is so crucial during this early stage of ABM development, we will provide guidance on how to improve your internal adoption of it – both by sales and marketing.

It is essential that marketing become as proficient as sales on the CRM system. Knowledge is power, and your CRM system is the key to it; there will always be an imbalance of power if you are not using it.

Identify your adoption issues

Before you fix a problem, you need to know what it is. Identify weak spots in its adoption – this could be flawed data, lack of use or lack of proper training. From this you'll be able to closely target the people who need extra encouragement and make champions of those who are using it well.

Provide on-going training

Your staff won't become CRM superstars overnight; it will take education for these new tasks to become effortless. Work closely with your CRM administrator and provide feedback to help further optimise processes. It may also require you to tailor your teaching approach. Allocate a period of time for your staff to learn – but make clear that once the honeymoon is over, using CRM will be non-negotiable.

Make sure the CRM is easy to use

It's imperative that your CRM is accessible. In today's workplace, it's guaranteed staff will need to access information out of the office, whether that's at home or on

the road. In particular, ensure your system is more accessible for your sales team, as it will be key to engaging with new business prospects as well as the end-user.

Set an example

If you don't use the CRM yourself, you'll never convince others to get onboard. Incorporate its use into whatever activities you can. This will emphasise just how vital your CRM is to the business and encourage good habits.

Change the culture

Preconceived ideas and negative past experiences can have a detrimental impact on uptake. It needs to be tackled if you want to coax employees toward better use of the system. There is no silver bullet to sales' adoption, but you can create cultural change by demonstrating the value in business and personal terms.

Integrate CRM with marketing automation

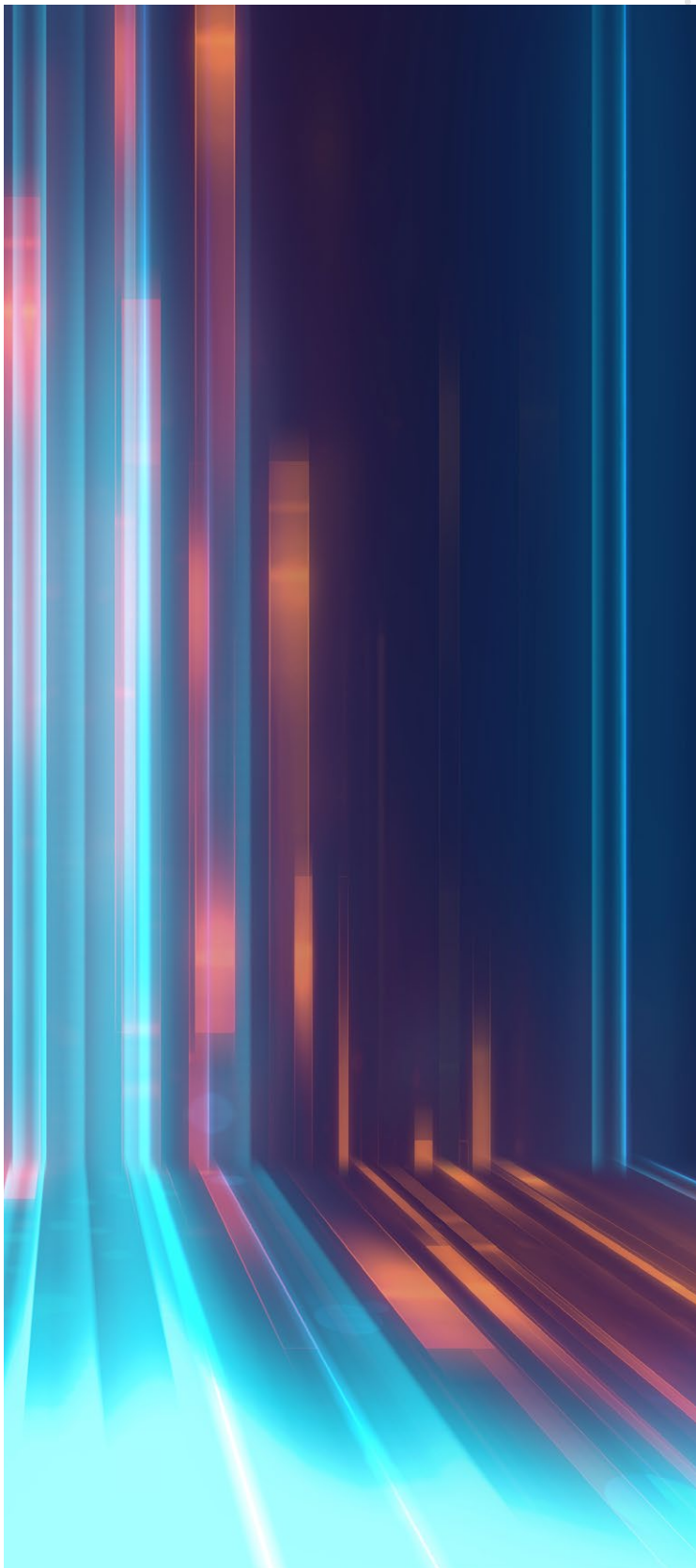
This also has the potential to improve value for the sales team. If they can see which prospects are surfing your site, and the pages they are reading in real-time, it will help them drive the sales more effectively.

Set goals

Be really clear on what information you need from sales, why it's needed and what outcome it will help you achieve. Next, set targets on what information you need and by when. Sales teams are very goal-oriented by nature, so appeal to this. Set clear targets and make the deadlines well known to all, the public nature of those goals will also make them more likely to do it.

Incentivise adoption

Incentives should always result in a positive outcome for an employee, make that incentive work for the personality traits around you. But also be very clear that if sales don't work with you, you can't work on the accounts they put forward. While you can encourage and support, ultimately sales need to be onboard for ABM to work.



Section 9

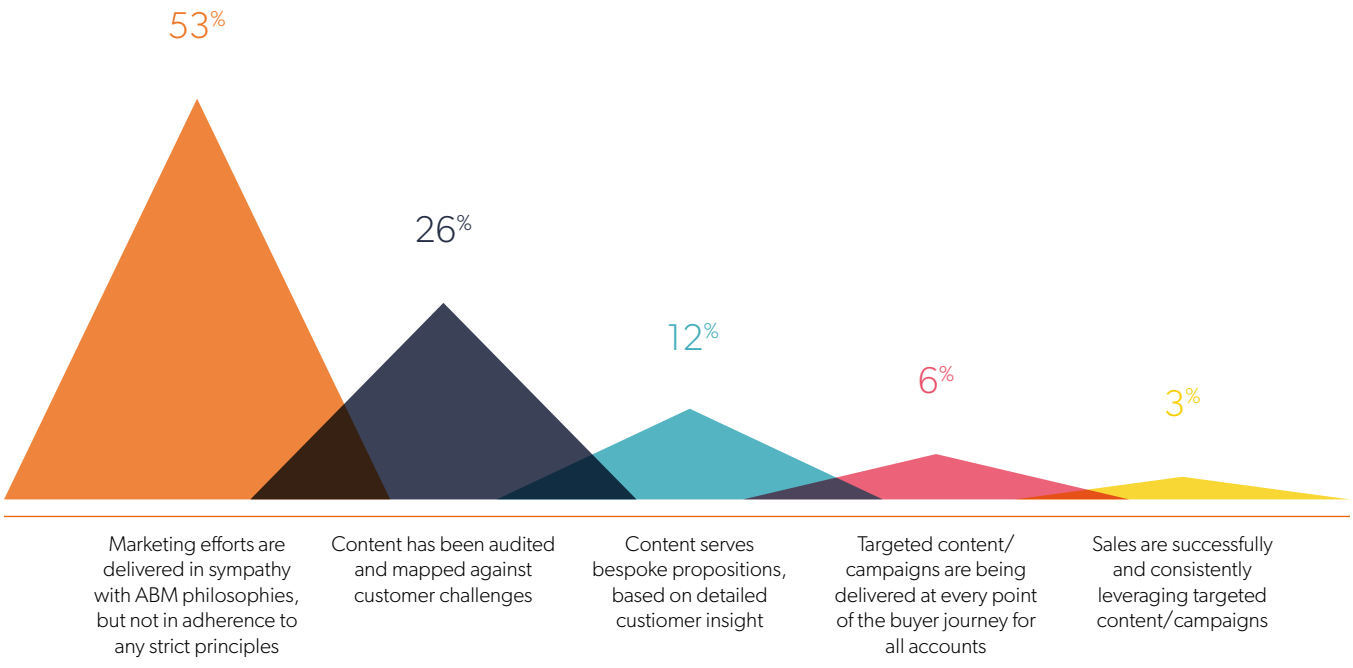
Content and programme delivery

Only 6% of B2B marketers are sending targeted marketing throughout the buyer journey

Overview:

Delivering your ABM content and campaigns is your team's time to shine, get creative and experiment. At this point you'll be very familiar with the mission – connect with the customer on the issues that bother, excite and inspire them. There is a wealth of ways in which you can achieve this. In this section we will dip into some of the things to bear in mind as you do so. You've worked hard to get here, so have fun with it!

Which of the following best describes the delivery of your programme?



Elements of delivery	Stage 1 Understanding	Stage 2 Preparing	Stage 3 Delivering	Stage 4 Upscaling	Stage 5 Perfecting
Programme & content execution	Marketing efforts are delivered in sympathy with (not in adherence to) ABM philosophies	Customer needs/challenges are defined Content is audited Programmes are planned	Content serves bespoke propositions, based on detailed customer insight Content hits the right person at the right time	Targeted campaigns are being delivered at every point of the buyer journey Marketing adds strategic value to RFPs	Sales are successfully & consistently leveraging targeted campaigns

Where are my peers on content and programme delivery?

Stage one: Understanding

Most marketing efforts at this stage are being delivered in the spirit of ABM, but not under its specific teachings. B2B marketers are working towards understanding their customers better, only after which will they be able to devise targeted bespoke marketing.

Next steps:

Stage two: Preparing

Marketers are busy pooling customer data and insight – their biggest challenge at present. This will provide the framework for their marketing efforts. Following this, they will need to audit their existing content and map it against their customer pain-points, before they can fill the gaps and devise wider, creative campaigns.

> *"Most existing collateral isn't client-centric but speaks about the product or service being offered. ABM calls for a real shake up"*
>
> **Andy Bacon, lead advisor on B2B Marketing's ABM programme Head-Start**

Simple steps to success: Content messaging

- What does the customer want to know?
- What do we want to say?
- What tone and type of message will land well?
- What's the best format?
- What's the best channel?

Section 9

Content and programme delivery

Congratulations you've made it to the last of the five crucial elements of ABM. You've been through a lot to get here and all that effort deserves a powerful, creative and head-turning ABM campaign.

Your challenge now is in putting together bespoke content and marketing that makes the customer sit back and think 'these people really understand my business.'

If you're not there yet, don't be alarmed. Only 12% of B2B marketers are sending bespoke content based on detailed customer insight, a further 6% are doing so across all touchpoints along the customer journey.

The temptation when most start out is to dip into and repurpose existing content. While this is a good start, there is a great deal more that can be achieved. ABM delivers an opportunity to apply creative thinking and innovative approaches. It's a marketers' playground.

In this chapter we will discuss what makes an ABM campaign great, we'll outline its core objectives and examine some of the channels and methods in which you can engage your customers.

> *"ABM has created an 'arms race' in which a finite number of customers are being targeted with ever-more tailored communications: having a relevant message may no longer be enough – it must be delivered in context and with impact."*
>
> **Iain Halpin, head of content, Enigma Marketing Services**

Content and programme objectives

- Position your product or service in terms of the buyer's strategic goals.
- Become a trusted advisor who adds tangible value to the decision-making process.
- Connect with individual stakeholders on a human and emotional level.
- Use your content and marketing to enrich your existing knowledge of the customer.

9.1 How to deliver a great ABM campaign

The delivery of a great ABM campaign is no different to any other marketing output but that it is tailored to respond to the customers' needs, not push the products or services you want to sell to them. As long as you stick to the following basic principles you have a wealth of creative freedom in which to experiment.

9.1.1 Respond to buyer intent

Great delivery is all about the timing. You need to target the right person at the right time, with the right message. This means adapting your message to the buyer and their point in the buying cycle.

In-market accounts

These accounts will demonstrate clear buying signals, which could be anything from filing an RFP to regular visits to your website or downloaded whitepapers. Strike while the iron is hot by demonstrating that you know their goals and how to help.

Out-market accounts

These accounts will not be ready to purchase yet but will be receptive to your communications over time. Take the opportunity to become a trusted advisor through content, events and personal relationships. The more you do now, they more likely they are to buy later.

9.1.2 Make it unique

It's okay to repurpose old content if you're sure it satisfies a specific customer goal, especially if you already have a lot of great stuff. However, think about how to repackage and personalise it so that it feels like it's been created just for them.

Experiment with how you can connect to the customer and don't be afraid to move on from success. It is tempting to repeat a successful campaign with a similar account, but that is a process of diminishing returns – the more you borrow the less impact it has.

> *"The temptation is to acknowledge a customer's specific challenge but take some piece of content from the cupboard and repurpose it. You can invest a great deal into the strategy and insight only to fall at the last hurdle by not delivering a really bespoke, punchy bit of content."*
>
> **Andy Bacon, lead advisor for B2B Marketing's ABM programme, Head-Start**

9.1.3 Find a human-to-human connection

Your content and marketing should be used to improve your personal customer relationships. Through it you can show you understand them and demonstrate your strength in their area of need. Tracking their engagement also reveals more about their interests and allows you to gain further insight.

Of course, sales should be using your content and marketing to open personal dialogue with individuals for another level of engagement.

> *"When thinking about ABM try not to get confused into thinking you're marketing to the account. The name ABM makes people think they're marketing to Shell or IBM, or whoever. You need to remember you're selling to a group of individuals who work at an account."*
>
> **Grad Conn, CMO, Sprinklr**

9.1.4 Get creative

For ABM to be effective, it needs to turn heads. Yes, it has to be personalised, meaningful and targeted but most importantly, it must be seen first. That means sticking out from the crowd with creative content and delivery. This is a great opportunity for your marketers to have fun and don't forget the value of agencies in this process. Their fresh perspective can really add value.

> *"ABM gives marketers an opportunity to play outside the box. You're not shouting about*

your brand or product but finding inspired and inspiring ways of connecting with people at a personal level."

Andy Bacon, lead advisor for B2B Marketing's ABM programme, Head-Start

9.1.5 Take an omnichannel approach

Clearly, no single touch point will be enough to close a deal, you need to take an omnichannel approach, spreading messages that respond to the changing customer journey. The channels you select will depend on how your target prefers to engage, but many are finding success through familiar platforms such as LinkedIn, including Sales Navigator and its content solution for sales and marketing, PointDrive.

"We implement ABM through social and use LinkedIn really heavily. That marketing is linked to my personal account, so when someone reads it I interact with them and they're interacting with me. It's got to be an equal exchange of information. It brings down the walls of anonymity."

Grad Conn, CMO, Sprinklr

Don't ignore your client's social matrix

Grad Conn at Sprinklr found that social media networks can be more indicative of buying committees than organisational 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 organisation. 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.

Which assets best suit your needs?

- Online content (whitepapers, e-books, blogs)
- Microsites
- Infographics
- Webinars
- Print media and direct mail
- Sales presentation decks
- Interactive content – apps, calculators and assessment tools.

Which channels best suit your needs?

- Social media
- Company website
- Events and experiential marketing
- Direct mail
- Email marketing
- Video and animation
- AR and VR
- AI
- Face-to-face meetings
- Innovation days
- Roadshows
- IP-based ads and retargeting.

Section 10

Case study: The social ABM pilot

Maersk and Ekino

Helga Eriksson, global head of content and social media at Maersk worked with her existing agency, Ekino, to conceptualise and pilot an ABM campaign that delivered powerful engagement from accounts that may otherwise have a high risk of churn.

The highlights

ABM method:
A pilot ABM campaign, under a one-to-one approach, using existing accounts.

Account selection:
Three accounts were selected, all from the same sector (freight forwarding).

Objective:
To lower customer churn and improve the relationship with existing customers.

Channel:
LinkedIn and the Maersk company website.

Results:
Strong social engagement, greater customer insight, and a 40% uptick in engagement via Maersk's live chat platform, which delivered greater data and insights on the target accounts.

Account selection

Recognising the need to reduce the risk of churn with its existing customers in the freight forwarding sector, Maersk worked together with its agency Ekino (and Ekino's sister agencies, Socialyse and Havas International) to select three accounts for a highly targeted, data-driven ABM campaign.

> *"Our relationship with that customer segment varied in strength over the years. They're an important part of our business, yet in some ways are also competitors. We decided to move forward by engaging directly with them in an innovative way, after all we actually share many of the same challenges. We want to show that we really understand them and listen to them."*
>
> **Helga Eriksson, global head of content and social media at Maersk**

The campaign delivery

Maersk specifically chose accounts with a high number of staff members on LinkedIn, then selected the right target audience within each account by referring to their job title. This social-led, rather than DMU-led approach is one that has been picked up many other marketers driving ABM through this channel.

Once the individual account members were located on LinkedIn, Maersk sent highly personalised messages to them, engaging with them through bespoke content. One example was an interactive piece of content that asked them to guess the amount of cargo they had shipped with Maersk by comparing it to the height of Mount Everest.

The account members were then directed to a bespoke landing page where they were presented with the answer, which in some cases this was 20.5 times the height of the mountain. Not only did this give the clients a fun, meaningful and shareable reference point, but it celebrated the relationship they had with Maersk and allowed them to take stock of how important its service was to them.

Once on the landing page, Maersk engaged with the account members further through a live chat facility. They used this to ask their customers about the industry challenges they faced. This drove stronger relationship building, more customer insight and the means to deliver more targeted marketing.

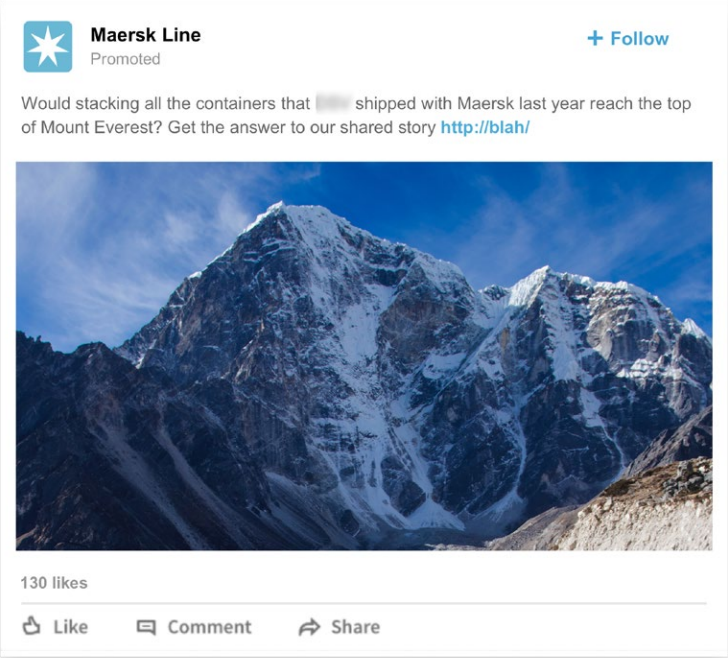
> *"Having listened to them we could then put initiatives in place to address what was raised. It was all about demonstrating that we had listened, rather than a hard sell."*
>
> **Helga Eriksson, global head of content and social media, Maersk**

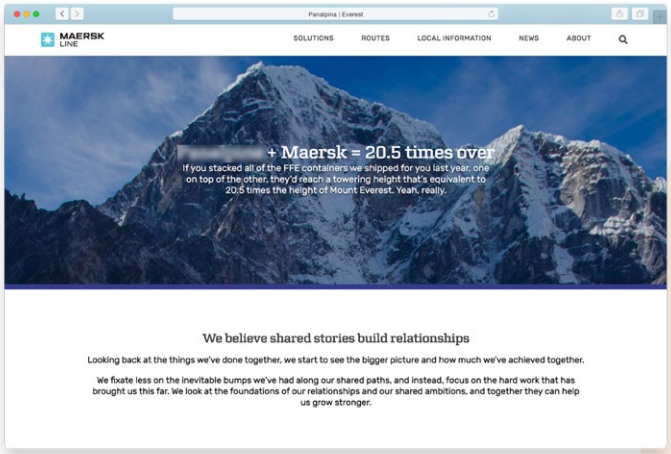
The results

Because the initial engagement was on LinkedIn, the account members could share and comment on their 'Everest score' and Maersk could measure who had done so. This method meant engagement was very transparent.

Maersk also saw a 40% uptick in its live chat facility, a means by which to engage with the account members and uncover their specific business challenge.

> *"We had some fantastic feedback, which also told us that we had targeted correctly. A big part of our success was the creativity of the concept. People were fascinated by how we turned a boring business topic into something fun and engaging."*
>
> **Helga Eriksson, global head of content and social media, Maersk**





Upscaling the pilot

Having seen a positive impact from its ABM campaign, Maersk has decided to roll it out through a larger omnichannel approach through 2019 and into different customer segments. However, the intention is to keep it unique to the customer or small cluster.

"With the three freight forwarders we only targeted a fraction of customers segmented in this group. We now intend to apply this to 10 others, but also to look at other customer segments, of which we have six. It would honestly be very stupid not to continue something this successful, and our senior team is fully on board with this.

"It's very tempting to take something successful and replicate it 10 times but it really does have to be customised. Everyone is interlinked through social networking these days – people talk, and I'm sure our customers would share stories on this. It stops being special if you know someone else has had the same experience."

Helga Eriksson, global head of content and social media, Maersk

Nici Malamoglou, client partner at Ekino and the lead on the Maersk account

"Many people throw a lot of money at marketing without knowing what part of it works, ABM is one of the few tools that allows very clear measurement on a number of touch points.

"I've worked on a number of ABM campaigns over the years and most of the time clients feel that ABM is overwhelming. My advice is to think about how to approach one or two customers first, then scale up. Think about how to nurture that path down as many channels as possible.

"Also factor in some quick wins and put measurements for that in place early on – it's not always about the final sale but building a pipeline."

Key takeaways and advice

To help you take your next steps in ABM, we've put together specific advice on overcoming the most common early stage challenges in each of the five main areas of ABM delivery.

Alignment

The relationship between sales and marketing creates the framework from which all of your ABM efforts will hang. A shaky relationship means it can all come crashing down.

A common mistake is to oversell your pitch and under-deliver on your promises. It's a tough one to get right. Of course you will want to create support and enthusiasm for your endeavour, highlighting what ABM can do for sales in particular. Yet many create over-ambitious targets in terms of the timeframes they given to deliver them.

The key message in your pitch, should be that ABM must be an 'in it together' approach between sales and marketing. This is not you doing something for sales and they must be willing to shoulder the burden of delivery with you.

Thankfully, ABM doesn't just require collaboration between sales and marketing, it creates it. It is a self-perpetuating machine.

Account definition

Most marketers are using ABM to win new accounts (51%) versus growing existing ones. It can be tempting to go after big untapped brands, particularly when sales are eager to open doors to them, but don't underestimate the amount of effort both sides will have to put in. This is the difference between beginning the marathon with a head start versus a weight on your back.

Opting to grow or retain existing accounts also gives marketing the opportunity to go where most don't tread – that is back over common ground. Marketers have historically been focused on new business and it's not often that they support the process of up-sell and cross-sell.

Regardless of which objective you pick, it's important to factor in some quick wins by choosing accounts that are likely to give you measurable results early on. These may not be your big ticket accounts but early success doesn't have to mean ROI – it could be something far faster and easier to achieve, such as an improved NPS, open rates or stronger client/prospect relationships.

Data & insight

Data and insight is by far the biggest challenge facing marketers in ABM. A whopping 86% of those surveyed see it as a significant problem. The alarmingly clear message is not to underestimate the effort it involves.

ABM is a data-driven approach and marketers will be reliant on account information to make informed moves, particularly at two crucial junctions – account selection and campaign planning. The wrong information, or not enough, will severely impede progress.

The largest group of B2B marketers we spoke to (45%) have successfully audited their existing customer information and have mapped the gaps that are left. Filling those gaps can be hugely time-consuming and put considerable burden on both sales and marketing – this in turn can create conflict and programme delays. Remember you don't have to do this alone – there are many third-party data providers that can help.

If you're still struggling you may want to adjust the number of accounts you're targeting, or choose ones you already know more about.

Content & programme delivery

Your challenge is in putting together bespoke content and marketing that makes the customer sit back and think 'these people really understand my business'. This is the part where your team can come alive. ABM delivers an opportunity to apply creative thinking and innovative approaches. It's a marketer's playground.

Yet the temptation when most start out is to dip into and repurpose existing content. It's okay to do that if you're sure it satisfies a specific customer goal, however, think about how to repackage and personalise it so that it feels like it's been created just for them. And while this is a good start, ABM grants opportunities for much more.

Experiment with how you can connect to the customer and don't be afraid to move on from success. It is tempting to repeat a great campaign with a similar account, but that's a process of diminishing returns. Ultimately, the more you borrow the less impact it has.

Technology

Only 22% of B2B marketers feel they have a good grip of the technology available to support them in ABM. There is in fact a great deal on offer, but in these early stages there is only one piece of tech you need to use and master, and that is your CRM system. Not everyone has invested even in this most basic of equipment – 17% have yet to do so.

It's through your CRM system that you understand your customer, pooling your information and managing your interactions with them. Your staff won't become CRM superstars overnight; it will take education for these new tasks to become effortless. It may also require you to tailor your teaching approach. Allocate a period of time for your staff to learn – but make clear that once the honeymoon is over, using CRM will be non-negotiable.

Pre-conceived ideas and negative past experiences can have a detrimental impact on uptake. It needs to be tackled if you want to coax employees toward better use of the system. There is no silver bullet to sales' adoption, but you can create cultural change by demonstrating the value in business and personal terms.

About

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