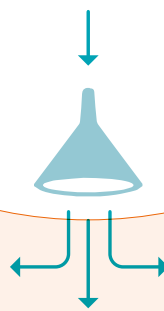


# 5 tips to ensure success in early stage ABM

## Template



If you've been sold the benefits of ABM, you're in good company. There is a great deal it has to offer, from the obvious gain of greater revenue and improved customer relationships to the less obvious advantage of better sales and marketing alignment.

We've determined the five key elements of delivery that will ensure success in early stage ABM, outlining what those elements are and how to overcome the common hurdles in each.

## 1. 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, especially in terms of the timeframes in which to deliver them.

The key message should be that ABM is an 'in it together' approach between sales and marketing. This is not you doing something for sales – 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.

**Advice:** *Don't mistake friendliness for alignment. Just because you get on well with sales doesn't mean you're aligned. Proper alignment is based on crystal clear goals that work for both sides, and shared, equal responsibility for delivering them.*

## 2. Account definition

ABM can bend to fit every business model and objective. You can use it to win new accounts or grow existing business. You can apply it to a few customers, or a very large number. Regardless of the method, it's important to factor in some quick wins by choosing accounts that are likely to give you measurable results early on. Early success doesn't have to mean ROI - it could be something faster and easier to achieve, such as an improved NPS, engagement or number of people you know in the DMU.

Most marketers are using ABM to win new accounts (51%) versus growing existing ones (34%), yet it is much harder and time-consuming to apply ABM to accounts you don't already know. Opting to grow or retain existing accounts gives you a head-start on customer insight and grants the opportunity to support up-sell and cross-sell, which many marketers no longer tread.

**Advice:** *If you're starting ABM with limited budget, resource or time in which to prove success (which is most people) it's vital to deliver measurable success early on. Pick a small number of accounts that represent value to your business while also being accessible within your timeframe.*

## 3. Data and insight

Data and insight is by far the biggest challenge facing marketers in ABM today. A whopping 86% of the 300 B2B marketers surveyed by B2B Marketing saw this as a problem. Don't underestimate the effort it involves.

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

Selecting a large number of accounts and/or those you don't already know will also make information-mining much harder.

**Advice:** *Despite the financial cost, third-party data providers can help elevate the burden on marketing and particularly sales. 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.*

## 4. Technology

Only 22% of B2B marketers feel they have a good grip of the technology available to support them in ABM. There is 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. The CRM is the backbone of your ABM programme yet 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. For this reason, it is as crucial to sales as it is to marketing, yet many marketers fail to use it proper. Getting to grips with your CRM will help position you as an equalled aligned partner to sales.

**Advice:** *Improving its use internally may mean upgrades, training or incentives, but your staff won't become CRM superstars overnight. 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.*

## 5. Content and 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 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. 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.

**Advice:** *Your efforts in ABM won't amount to anything if you don't take the time to deliver marketing content that hits home. Make it personal, make it unique and don't forget the valuable role that agencies can play here.*

Elements of delivery	Stage 1 Understanding	Stage 2 Preparing	Stage 3 Delivering	Stage 4 Upscaling	Stage 5 Perfecting
<h2>Alignment</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Cultural &amp; customer fit assessed</li> <li>▶ Execs./board support ABM</li> <li>▶ Initial budget allocated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Initial ABM team has been created</li> <li>▶ Key stakeholders are on board</li> <li>▶ Sales &amp; marketing agree objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Sales &amp; marketing are working collaboratively</li> <li>▶ ABM team delivering on agreed objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Greater budget &amp; resource allocated</li> <li>▶ There are internal champions at many levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ ABM supported company-wide</li> <li>▶ Full collaboration with sales &amp; other stakeholders</li> <li>▶ Marketing's status has improved</li> </ul>
<h2>Account definition</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Key stakeholders see the value of personalisation, yet no accounts are selected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Accounts are scored, selected, segmented &amp; agreed</li> <li>▶ Sales &amp; marketing have mapped the DMU &amp; buying process</li> <li>▶ Standardised sales account plans have been created</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Small-scale targeted marketing is delivered</li> <li>▶ Customer engagement has improved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Large-scale targeted marketing is delivered throughout the buyer journey</li> <li>▶ The deal size/win rate has increased</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Targeted marketing is used to prospect &amp; retain/upsell</li> </ul>
<h2>Data &amp; insight</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Existing customer insight is audited</li> <li>▶ Data requirements are mapped</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Research &amp; third-party data is sourced</li> <li>▶ All data is clean &amp; inputted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Data is regularly shared &amp; updated</li> <li>▶ Data is used to deliver targeted marketing on a small scale</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Centralised data is used to deliver targeted marketing on all touch points</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Data insights are consistently delivering increased sales</li> <li>▶ Data is used for strategic company decisions</li> </ul>
<h2>Technology</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ CRM &amp; MA systems are in place &amp; used frequently</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ CRM &amp; MA systems are regularly updated &amp; properly used</li> <li>▶ Additional tech for data/contact resources &amp; sales insights installed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Content, personalisation &amp; event management tech is installed</li> <li>▶ Website starting to deliver dynamic content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ ABM ROMI dashboard in place</li> <li>▶ Retargeting &amp; intent platforms installed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Orchestration, advanced measurement &amp; attribution tools installed</li> <li>▶ All tech fully deployed &amp; staff regularly trained</li> </ul>
<h2>Programme &amp; content execution</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Marketing efforts are delivered in sympathy with (not in adherence to) ABM philosophies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Customer needs/challenges are defined</li> <li>▶ Content is audited</li> <li>▶ Programmes are planned</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Content serves bespoke propositions, based on detailed customer insight</li> <li>▶ Content hits the right person at the right time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Targeted campaigns are being delivered at every point of the buyer journey</li> <li>▶ Marketing adds strategic value to RFPs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Sales are successfully &amp; consistently leveraging targeted campaigns</li> </ul>