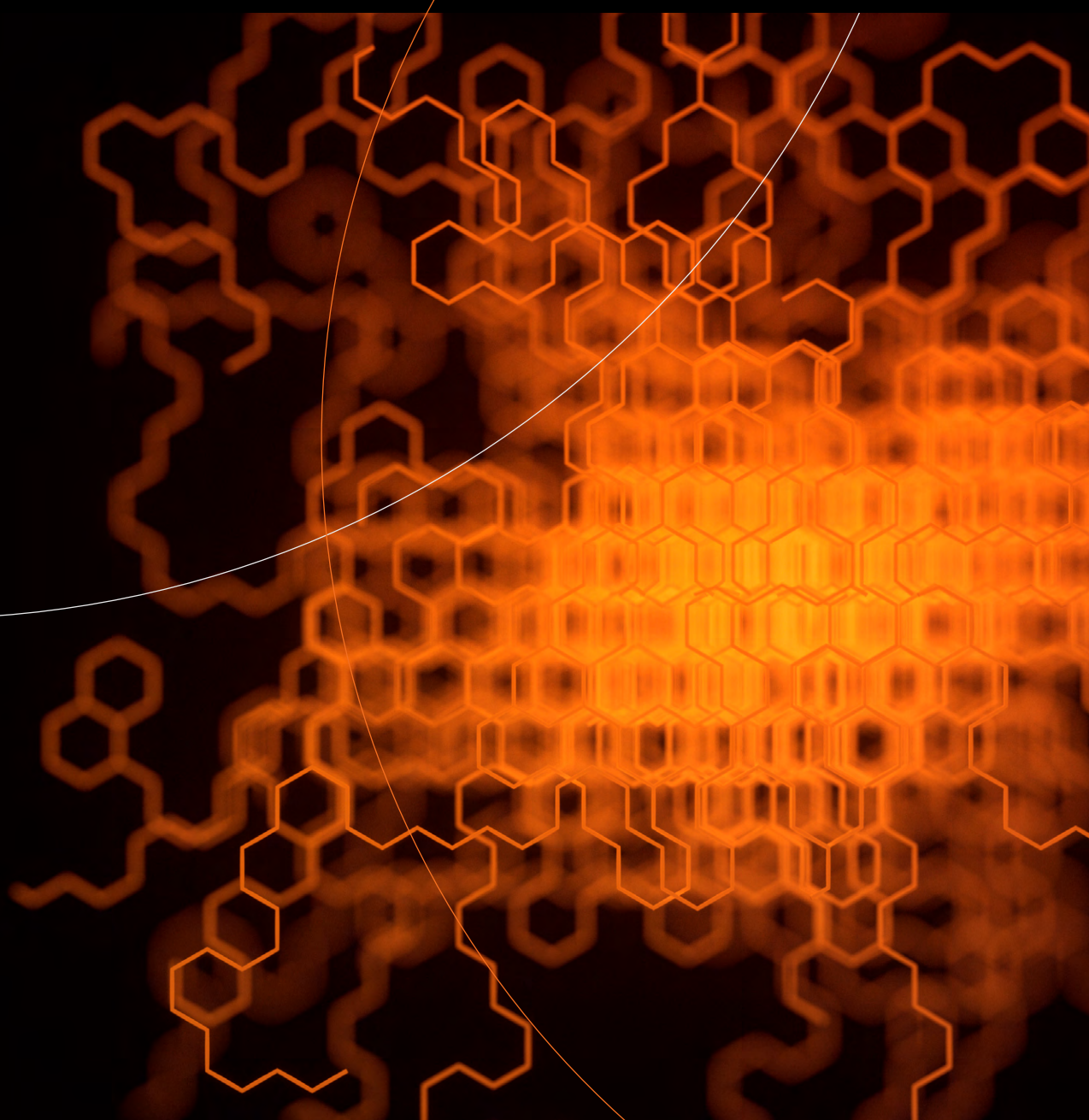


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ABM tech evolution

How and when to deploy technology
for account-based marketing

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Introduction

What tech should be in your ABM stack?

The idea of account-based marketing has come a long way since the Mad Men days of buttering up a small number of big name prospects and clients. Yes, an ABM strategy focuses on winning and retaining only a handful of high value deals. But while the volume is low, the complexity is high.

These are relationships that grow over months, years, decades even. There are dozens of stakeholders in each key organisation, each with different needs and agendas. Of course, people move jobs and roles but thanks to social media and content marketing, there are possible touchpoints with this shifting group every day.

With such intricacy and involvement over such a long period, a manual approach doesn't even come close. You end up tripping over your leads. The future of ABM is technology-driven. It is data-rich, insightful and automated. Software and systems are finally at a point where, with the right strategy in place, technology can fuel the whole ABM process.

An effective stack can run everything from identifying, targeting and tracking accounts and prospects, to expanding into organisations, developing content and updating sales and marketing teams. This is just the start of ABM technology developments, as the Internet of Things will testify.

There is much talk about ABM being a buzzword but data points to the fact that it's here to stay. Google searches for the term "account-based marketing" continue to rise steadily (fig. 1) and our own research shows 63% of B2B marketers see ABM as an important part of their strategy. This year, 80% are increasing their focus in the area. A significant shift is taking place in marketing departments across the country.

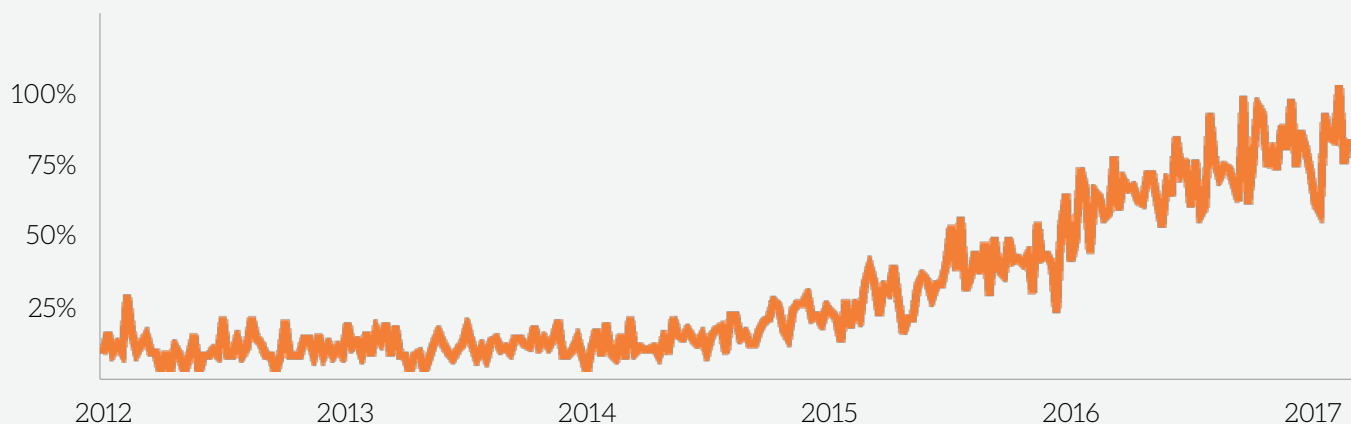
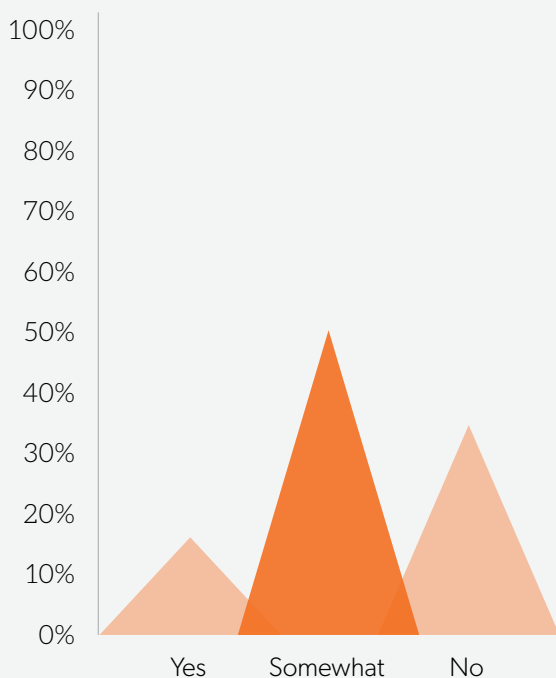


Figure 1. Proportion of searches for 'account-based marketing' worldwide over the past five years according to Google Trends

Despite this move, few companies have perfected their process. Indeed, introducing an ABM strategy is far from simple. With so many ever-evolving software options, the possibilities can seem overwhelming.

Do you feel you have a good understanding of the tech that's currently available for ABM?



Our research shows just 16% of B2B marketers are confident they have a good understanding of the technology currently available for ABM. In fact, this lack of clarity over what's available and what it can do is the number one challenge marketers face when implementing an ABM strategy.

The top three challenges marketers face in relation to technology and ABM

1. A lack of clarity over what's available and what it can do
2. Insufficient resources and internal skills to use it to its full potential
3. Difficulty justifying the importance of new tech to key stakeholders.

Balancing the voice of the vendors

Moreover, tech vendors have become increasingly dominant in the narrative surrounding ABM, to the extent that their narratives (which are inevitably and understandably driven by the need to promote their solutions) are starting to drown out the more objective and unpartisan voices.

There is no doubt that vendors have furthered the cause of ABM, and their solutions have helped some brands achieve significant marketing success. But at its worst, vendors' increasingly excellent marketing is convincing marketers and brands to make tech investments that are ill-suited – perhaps at that time, or ever. This can be a potentially disastrous decision, both for the careers of the individuals concerned, and the fate of their employers.

A key purpose of this report, therefore, is to provide some objective balance to the narrative of the vendors, and help marketers make better informed decisions on if, how and when they use technology. If history has taught us anything about technology in marketing, it's that it's never a panacea.

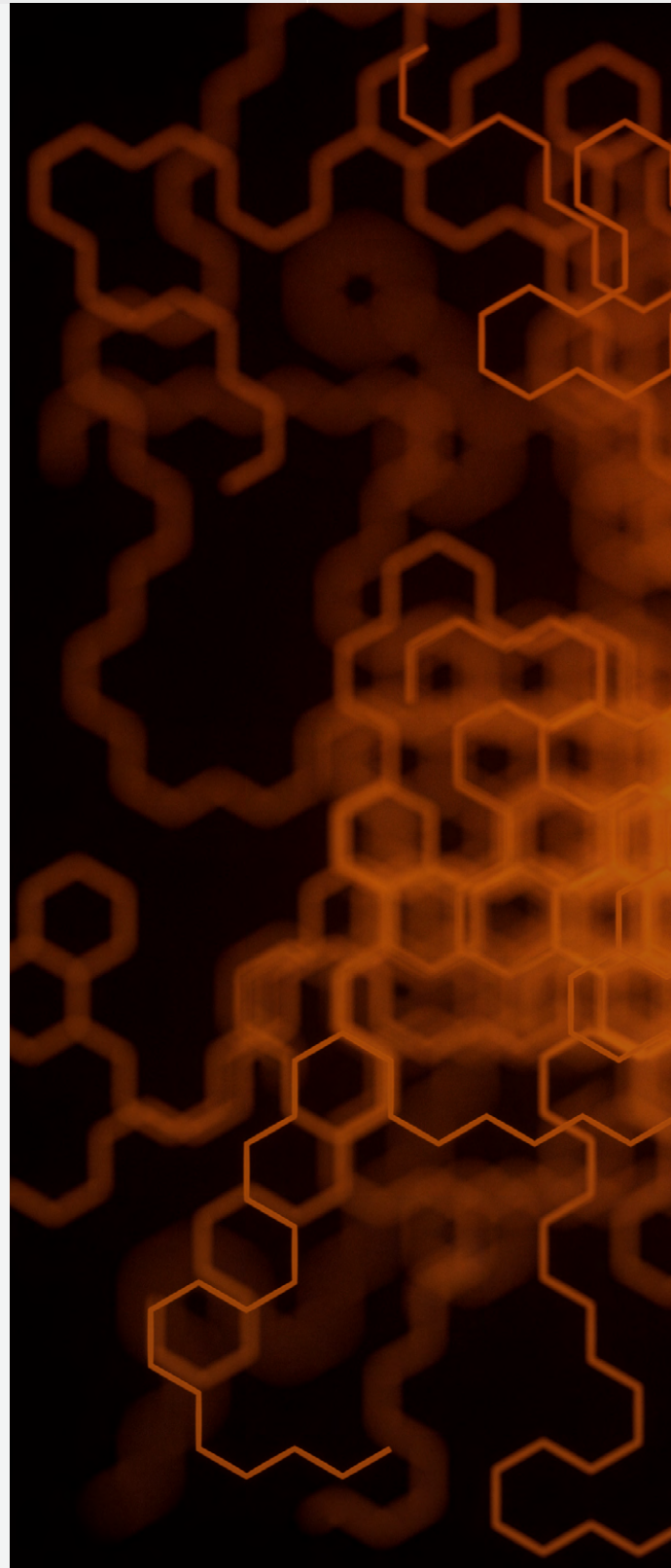
About this report, and our ABM Maturity Index

To help marketers overcome the challenges listed overleaf, (and others), we have developed an ABM Maturity Model, which plots the development of ABM activity in five stages across five key criteria. The objective is to provide a roadmap that enables B2B marketers to accelerate and scale up their use of, and success derived from, ABM.

We developed this model through a collaborative research process, pulling on our internal knowledge of ABM, having run training courses on it for several years, plus a survey of B2B Marketing's wider audience, and specific discussions with individual experts on the topic.

We have defined the five stages of ABM development as:

- › **Stage 1: ABM Aware** – where an organisation is aware of ABM, but has no formal or official tactics or strategy in place or underway.
- › **Stage 2: Defining ABM** – during this phase, an organisation will scope and define the requirements to deploy ABM, with a view to pilot or low-key rollout.
- › **Stage 3: Early-stage ABM** – this is the first meaningful (or intentional) ABM activity that an organisation conducts, beyond planning or scoping.
- › **Stage 4: Mature ABM** – at this point, an organisation is relatively sophisticated in terms of its ABM, with a successful track record of activity, and most of the systems and processes in place, albeit sometimes at a moderate level.
- › **Stage 5: Advanced ABM** – where ABM is a recognised central driver to future business success, with the latest technology deployed.



The five criteria that we are using to track and demonstrate ABM maturity against, are:

- 1. Account definition** – the level of understanding on the accounts that you're targeting, and your ability to reach them.
- 2. Processes** – development, understanding and formal documentation of means for collaboration and co-operation between different teams and functions.
- 3. Structure and leadership** – as use of ABM matures, the boundaries between sales, marketing and customer success functions will blur, and leadership centralise.
- 4. Technology** – marketing is increasingly reliant on technology, and the more sophisticated your ABM activity, the more likely it is to rely heavily on tech.
- 5. Measurement** – ABM requires a different means of measurement and set of metrics for success and return on investment.

This model is the subject of its own dedicated report, explaining the methodology in detail, and formally launched at the B2B Marketing ABM conference: *Account-based Everything* in November 2017.

This particular report, however, will focus specifically on technology for ABM, demonstrating how an organisation's use and deployment of it is likely to evolve as its understanding and use of ABM becomes more sophisticated. Moreover, via the 'ABM Landscape', we'll also seek to map out which technology is relevant and appropriate at each stage of an ABM journey.

Please note that...

By definition, a model is a generalisation and simplification of a huge variety of immensely complex real world scenarios, attempting to distil the experiences of all companies and marketers in the real world into a comprehensible, digestible format. As a result, and as with any model, it is possible that the various stages identified do not precisely match those experienced either previously or currently in your organisation. If that's the case, we look forward to your feedback, and your assistance in refining this model for the future, to make it more reflective of ABM as it continues to evolve.

Overview of the ABM Tech Maturity Model

As outlined here, our ABM tech model takes the five stages of ABM maturity that we've defined, and measures use and deployment of technology across them. The chart below provides a topline overview of technology at each stage of the model.

ABM maturity stage	1. ABM Aware	2. Defining ABM	3. Early stage ABM	4. Mature ABM	5. Advanced ABM
Tech deployment.	Core tech platforms (CRM and MA) absent or fragmentary deployment with limited integration	Core tech platforms deployed, but limited automation, personalisation or integration	Platforms integrated, plus widespread use of automation, personalisation and customer insight tools.	Integration with third-party data resources for real time updates, plus use of specialist ABM campaign tools, retargeting tech and dashboards.	Integrated and comprehensive ABM martech stack, including orchestration tools.

We'll describe each of these stages in detail in the sections to follow explaining the challenges inherent in the use and deployment of technology, and we'll list the various platforms or vendors that are likely to be relevant at each stage. These vendors will also be 'mapped' on the ABM tech landscape, which you can see on page (15).

About tech for ABM

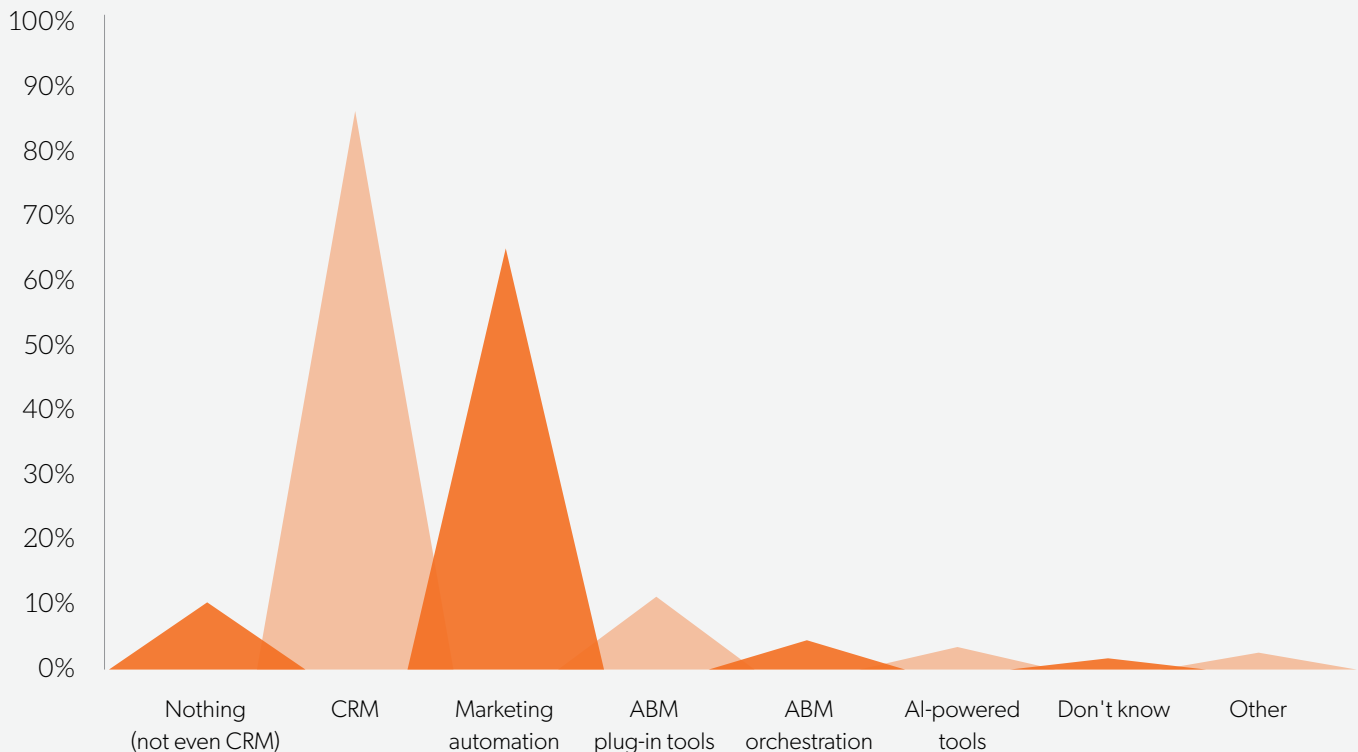
Our research showed that current levels of ABM-specific technology are extremely low among B2B marketers, with only limited investment to date.

However, it's worth noting, much of the technology and/or vendors featured in this report predate ABM, and even to this day may not formally acknowledge themselves specifically designed to facilitate ABM.

There are two reasons for this:

1. Many of the processes that enable effective ABM fall under the remit of 'just good marketing' and as such have been around for years, if not decades. Consequently, so is the associated technology.
2. Marketing is a fashion industry – currently ABM is one of the hottest topics, and some vendors are quicker to follow trends than others.

What tech do you currently have in place and use for ABM?



Stage 1:

ABM Aware

Core tech platforms absent, or fragmentary deployment with limited integration

Technology use is non-existent or in its infancy at this stage of the ABM Adoption Model.

While core marketing platforms – such as a CRM system and marketing automation – may well have been introduced, they are only being used in a fragmentary way. There are different levels of functionality across departments and there is little or no integration. Indeed, sales and marketing are working mostly in isolation, although there could be some co-operation when it comes to key account selling.

Where a CRM system is in place, account lists are patchy and created manually, based on internet searches and industry knowledge. There may be an agreed group of companies that sales and marketing want to target based on SIC codes and size but they haven't been defined a value. Similarly, there may be a list of the functions and titles of the people to target but there is no understanding of the wider decision-making unit (DMU). There's currently little to measure so, unsurprisingly, there is no effective measurement in place.

In order to move to Stage 2, marketers need to research and learn how to most effectively use and implement their chosen CRM and marketing automation systems – developing account information with the sales team. Their biggest challenge will be getting to grips with, and making the most of, the technology already in place.

Relevant tech categories

CRM: A Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system analyses customer data. This is the lynchpin of all ABM stacks and everything will need to integrate with it.

Key vendors:

- › Salesforce
- › Sugar
- › Microsoft Dynamics
- › Hubspot CRM
- › Act
- › Base
- › Contactually
- › Highrise
- › Infusionsoft
- › Insightly
- › Maximizer
- › Oracle CRM
- › Pipedrive
- › Prosperworks
- › Really Simple Systems
- › Sage CRM
- › Zoho

Marketing automation: Focused on moving leads through the funnel, this software automates marketing activity. It usually has a particular focus on email marketing. These can crossover with CRM systems.

Key vendors:

- › Act-On
- › Oracle Eloqua
- › Hubspot
- › Marketing Cloud (SFDC)
- › Marketo
- › Pardot (Sales Cloud, SFDC)

Stage 2:

Defining ABM

Core tech platforms deployed, but limited automation, personalisation or integration.

The essential technology building blocks of an ABM programme are in place and companies are working towards using them effectively.

The core platforms of a CRM system and marketing automation are being universally deployed by companies at Stage 2. They're working towards using both to their full potential and across teams. However, at best, there's only limited use of automation and personalisation functionality. At times, sales and marketing teams even communicate important developments manually rather than using CRM.

Target account definitions are progressing well. By now, thanks to the use of account selection software, the majority of companies are recorded in the CRM by SIC code, geography and size, and a potential value has been assigned to each.

Some simple technology processes to collect data are also starting to be set up, such as using LinkedIn to track people's moves and then manually updating the CRM system. In the main, these processes are ad hoc and not automated.

Measurement is taking place through the CRM and is reported based on the value and direction of sales. Further metrics measured at this stage include: the number of engagements with key stakeholders, click through rates, product page views, content downloads, call durations and results, inbound enquiries received and retention rate.

Getting to Stage 3 is about starting to create a strategic ABM stack that makes the most of automation and personalisation. The biggest challenge is likely to be selecting the right intelligence tools to create a powerful stack that delivers results.

Relevant tech categories

Account selection tools, such as data providers and sales intelligence: these tools have various names and can help with everything from identifying key accounts, to prioritisation and segmentation.

Data and contact resources: These vendors provide access to data and contact information on decision makers.

Key vendors:

- › B2B Signals
- › Infer
- › DiscoverOrg
- › Aberdeen Group
- › Blue Group
- › LeadGenius
- › Leadspace
- › Zoominfo
- › Aberdeen Group
- › Blue Group
- › Martech Tracker
- › Leadscale
- › Data.com
- › Reachforce
- › Headreach
- › Synthio
- › Oceanos
- › Leadiro
- › Netprospex
- › Social123
- › ALC

Sales insights: These solutions allow marketers to mine insights into individual or groups of decision makers, enabling focused and relevant engagement.

- › Dun & Bradstreet
- › LinkedIn
- › Agent3
- › DiscoverOrg
- › Experian PH Search
- › Leadbridge
- › Spiderbrook
- › XiQ
- › Node
- › Datafox
- › Insideview
- › Mattermark
- › Owlur
- › Crunchbase
- › Nova
- › idatalabs
- › Crystal
- › TalentIQ
- › Leadgnome
- › Fullcontact

Stage 3:

Early-stage ABM

Platforms integrated, plus widespread use of automation, personalisation and customer insight tools.

Core platforms have been integrated and automation and personalisation functionality are widely used.

By Stage 3, a strategic stack is being built and the programme moves from piloting ABM to implementing it fully, even starting to test, measure and improve.

The sales and marketing teams are aligned and using the CRM system in the same way to update data and responses. Communication is no longer manual and made easier using sales enablement software.

Key accounts have been fully mapped out and although the CRM is not yet fully populated with names, all companies have been assigned owners within the CRM system.

Different campaign approaches, often fuelled by content and events, are being tested as new engagement tools and added to the stack. These are often personalised and are making use of automation. They're being run and adapted to improve results.

Organisations at this stage are starting to report Return on Marketing Investment (ROMI) figures using manually created spreadsheets and sales figures.

Progression is about developing the programme until it's data-led and almost scientific in its approach to arriving at customer insights. The biggest challenge is likely to be maximising the rich insights now available.

Relevant tech categories

The tech platforms listed in this section are generally focused on engagement and distribution, with the aim of enabling marketers to increase the level of sophistication. (Messaging and other activities.)

Content tools: Allow ABMers to create dynamic and engaging content and other materials to attract the attention of buyers – either in an outbound or inbound format.

- › Acquia
- › Uberflip
- › Lookbook HQ
- › Passle
- › SnapApp
- › Adobe
- › Storify

Events tools: Enable the creation, execution and integration of live event activities within an integrated ABM programme.

- › Cvent
- › Attend
- › Eventbrite
- › Bizzabo
- › Etouches

Personalisation: Support marketers conducting increasingly personalised communications and messaging.

- › BrightInfo
- › Hubspot
- › Captora
- › Marketo
- › Crystal
- › Optimizely
- › Demandbase
- › Pardot
- › Evergage
- › Triblio

Stage 4: Mature ABM

Integration with third-party data resources for real-time updates, plus use of specialist ABM campaign tools, retargeting tech, and dashboards.

A strategic tech stack is in place so ABM can be fully automated, personalised, data-rich and insightful.

For many, this will be the stage to aspire to.

By now a strategic tech stack is in place, made up of a strong CRM system fuelled by marketing automation, a wide range of content tools and databases that allow always-on campaigns. The stack is so developed that it's fully integrated with third-party data resources via APIs, enabling real-time automated updates, and integration of CRM and/or marketing automation with dedicated ABM tools. Retargeting is making the most of online campaigns. Tools such as Feedly and Google Alerts have been linked to the CRM software to identify reasons to get in touch with people.

Predictive analytics software is identifying trends. Indeed, the technology is in place to improve organisations' understanding of how accounts are likely to behave and the actions that will maximize the chances of a positive response.

This has all been made possible by the close working of one internal team made up of both sales and marketing. This team is powered by technology – such as collaboration tools like Slack and Basecamp, or using the CRM system as the main hub for communication.

Organisations have used account selection tools to become aware of every possible account and person they want to target. When it comes to measurement, a ROMI dashboard is in place and shows significant business impact.



To move up to Stage 5, organisations need to introduce an AI approach to dealing with account definitions and audience mapping. They must deploy a martech stack with orchestration tools that enable the management of highly complex, multi-dimensional programmatic ABM. The biggest challenge is likely to be creating a system by which customers become part of the innovation and decision-making processes.

Relevant tech categories

Predictive analytics: These tools mine large data sets to identify trends and patterns that improve the understanding of accounts and identify potential new accounts, targets or opportunities, based on firmographic data (rather than social activities, as with intent technologies – see below).

Example vendors:

- › 6sense
- › Bombora
- › Cyance
- › Infer
- › Lattice Engines
- › Mintigo
- › Radius

ROMI dashboard: Real-time dashboards such as these help marketers stay on top of the KPIs that matter to them at a glance and share performance effectively with stakeholders.

Example vendors:

- › Cyfe
- › Geckoboard
- › Klipfolio
- › App Insights

Retargeting: For campaigns that use advertising, retargeting ensures that people see your campaign multiple times, even after they have left your website.

Example vendors:

- › AdRoll
- › Demand Base
- › Kwanzoo
- › Listenloop

Intent platforms: These technologies identify potential opportunities based on actual online activity within the market, rather than a result of firmographic criteria, as with predictive platforms (see below).

- › Bombora
- › MRP
- › HG Data
- › Datanyze
- › Ghostery
- › Builtwith
- › KickFire
- › Sifterly
- › Techtarget
- › Netline
- › The Big Willow

Stage 5:

Advanced ABM

Integrated and comprehensive ABM martech stack, including orchestration tools.

AI and orchestration technology has enabled the ABM programme to be hyper-relevant and customer-driven.

ABM has moved far beyond sending out regular communications; relationships with accounts are two-way, synergistic and lead to collaboration and joint working. The experience the customer receives is personalised and beats expectations.

By this point, orchestration tools are in place to ensure insightful always on-campaigns that adapt to buying stages, personas and even particular accounts. Accounts have been digitally scored using AI for insight and campaign planning to make the most of orchestration opportunities.

Due to the impact of the ABM programme and the effectiveness of the technology, a fundamental shift has taken place within the organisation; there is now one overarching ABM team driven by a strong senior leader that transcends sales, marketing and customer labels.

At Stage 5, ABM is fully realised and demonstrating its value in real time and in-depth.

Relevant tech categories

AI tools: ABM-related tools powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI) ensure a marketing programme is constantly learning and developing. They can identify, for instance what contacts care about, what they're reading and what they're working on. This helps create one-to-one connections at scale.

Example vendors:

- › IBM Watson
- › Salesforce Einstein
- › Albert

ABM orchestration tools: These tools allow marketers to develop automated campaigns for different buying stages, personas and accounts, and across different business units in large organisations.

Example vendors:

- › Engagio Playmaker
- › Terminus

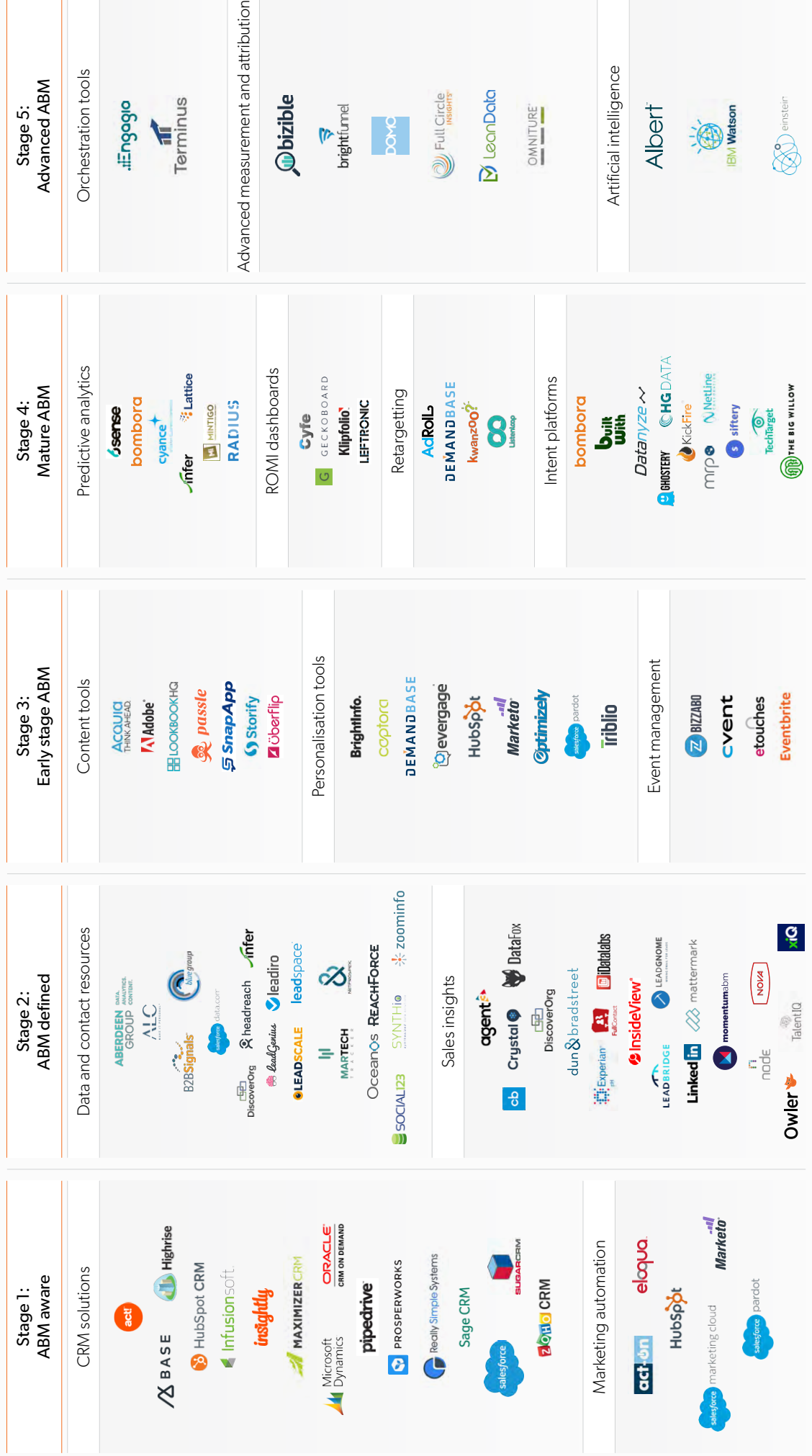
Advanced measurement including marketing attribution: While a CRM should have in-depth measurement capabilities, there are other tools that can be introduced to improve data collection.

Example vendors:

- › BrightFunnel
- › Domo
- › Full Circle Insights
- › Leandata
- › Omniture

The B2B Marketing ABM Technology Maturity Map

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.



Some notes on this ABM tech map

It's important to note that vendors listed in the early, or left hand stages of the map, will continue to be relevant as ABM sophistication grows, although possibly in different ways and at different times.

We've tried to make this map as comprehensive as possible, but given the exponential growth of the B2B martech landscape, and the breadth of the categories described, it's likely that one or two relevant vendors may have slipped through the net. We'll be regularly updating this map to keep it as relevant as possible.

It's also worth noting that, in some instances, the platforms listed may inhabit multiple functional areas and therefore potentially sit in a variety of columns. To minimise repetition and duplication, we've tried to keep this schematic and accessible as possible, and therefore sought to include each logo in only the most relevant areas.



Conclusion

There's no such thing as the perfect technology stack, for any form of marketing, least of all ABM. Indeed, the right stack is based around the nuances of each organisation – its set up, skills, resources, goals and audiences.

Yet there are certain questions every business should ask before introducing each new element to their ABM infrastructure:

- › What is the clear link back to the overarching strategy and objectives?
- › Will it work across teams?
- › Does it fit with the likely future marketing and business scenarios of the company?

Of course, recognising this is complex, this guide outlines the ABM Maturity Model today, but there is no doubt it will develop quickly as vendors merge and emerge, categories change and we come to demand more insights from the Internet of Things.

One of the most important messages from this guide is that technology is not always the answer – certainly not at the early stages of ABM adoption, where most marketers find themselves right now. It can unquestionably be an enabler, but only when used at the right time, and deployed in the right way – the promises of vendors and consultants should be treated with a reasonable degree of cynicism.

The key to tech success? Integration

Inevitably the biggest challenge with technology is effective integration – without this, investment is likely to be wasted. As your use of technology for ABM grows, so too will the integration challenge. It will be essential to be mindful of this, and ask difficult questions of the vendors and consultants concerned at the right times to avoid making the wrong decision or planning the wrong route.

Due to the relationship-led nature of account-based marketing, it will never be fully automated. But organisations will reach a point where ABM is so automatic that they can structure themselves around key accounts, making them central to decision-making. Audience understanding will be so deep that customers drive innovation. And, vitally, information from the Internet of Things will fuel deeper understanding of audience behaviour, providing opportunities to engage at the right time with the right solution.

Perhaps the one thing we can say with absolute certainty is this report is only the beginning: ABM is likely to become an increasingly important part of B2B marketing, and consequently getting your ABM tech right will be one of your critical challenges.

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