

# Precision demand marketing:

Why the only process that matters is the buyer's



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# Foreword



David Rowlands,  
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At the heart of all marketing, and arguably business in general, there is one process that matters above all else – the buyer's.

It doesn't matter how great your marketing is, or how prodigious your sales team are, the person who decides if your business survives or dies is the buyer. Perhaps that's a bit over the top, but it's important to stress that the buyer is the most important person in the process. After all, they hold the keys to your revenue.

While marketing is forever coming up with creative and inventive strategies, sometimes it can fall

afoul of putting its own process first. Demand generation strategies are particularly guilty of this, while ABM – however brilliant – is rarely enough to appeal to all buyers (existing and prospective alike) when used in isolation.

With this in mind, we conducted a survey with 100 B2B marketers to ask how focused they are on the buyer, how confident they are in their understanding of the buyer's process, how integrated their different channels are in terms of targeting the buyer, what proportion of the budget they're placing on demand gen and ABM, and more.

Ultimately, we wanted to find out how central the buyer's process is to most marketers today, and perhaps where they could improve on this front.

As we will see, the results demonstrate that a more sophisticated approach to targeting the buyer is required – a process that blends the best of both ABM and demand generation, communicating with buyers when they want to communicate, in the channels they want to communicate in. Enter, precision demand marketing.



# The era of precision demand marketing



Chris Wickson,  
GM EMEA,  
Integrate

Even before the global events of the last 18 months, few could argue that effective B2B marketing was becoming increasingly challenging. In spite of technology advancements and greater access to intelligence, B2B marketers continued to struggle with engaging prospects and generating qualified leads and, quite frankly, have for years. One can't help but ask whether marketers have been set up to fail. The short answer is yes.

For decades, sales and marketing teams have presumed control of the buying process. From the marketing-driven emergence of the marketing automation era 10–15 years ago, to the sales-driven tactics and tools of ABM in more recent years, both of

these approaches have attempted to push B2B buyers through an artificially imposed framework. Such that with the right combination of spend, demand activity and resources, buyers will engage in a formulaic way for qualified pipeline generation. Dubbed 'helicopter marketing', revenue teams, demand processes, tech stacks and budget decisions adhered to this approach, reducing the process of lead generation and buyer engagement to a mere numbers game.

The marginal success of this approach fuelled the zeitgeist that 2020 would be the year of nirvana, where 'hero' marketing executives would emerge, showcasing the ability to control the buying process through journey frameworks with predictable, provable revenue, supported by lofty investments in martech. Build it and they will come.

Yet, somewhere along the way, buyers went a different direction, quietly evolving as marketing and sales teams engaged in a tug-of-war for control. It has arguably taken a global pandemic to reveal the crack in this flawed approach and re-focus marketing and sales' attention where it should have always been – on the buyer.

Today more than ever, B2B buyers are in the driving seat and "expect to engage with us using the channel of their choice at any given moment in time"\* and at any point they choose in their buying process. As marketers, we have to be ready to leave behind our old ways of marketing and sales-driven approaches that inhibit scale and speed to lead – and deploy an omnichannel, buyer-driven strategy that ensures precision in market, delivering the right message at the right time and for the right buyer.

This buyer-driven approach is called precision demand marketing. As we enter this new era in B2B marketing, the best-in-class revenue teams will deploy a precision demand strategy that is responsive, but measured, to meet buyers where they are. When executed properly, this strategy helps marketers orchestrate personalised experiences at scale for their B2B audiences by boosting buyer trust, confidence and engagement to accelerate predictable pipeline with precision.

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\*McKinsey & Company, 'Digital Sales & Analytics: Driving Above-Market Growth in B2B', (May 2018).



## Section 1

# How did we get here?

## 1.1 The evolution of growth marketing

Humans and octopuses are said to be among the most evolutionarily distant animals. Our common ancestor lived about 600 million years ago. Both species are highly intelligent, and each has its flaws. Octopuses can think with their tentacles, but, without armour or protection, are prey to many predators. Despite humans' big brains, meanwhile, they can be somewhat prone to error and poor judgement.

The dominant strands of growth marketing – demand generation and ABM – can be thought of similarly. Both strategies forked from marketing automation, each seeking to solve its own challenges. First, about a decade ago, came demand generation, which harnessed automation to create processes at scale, thus trading off some precision. Then, a few years later, emerged ABM, with marketers doubling down on precision, while trading off scale.

With the benefit of hindsight, smart marketers today are waking up to the strengths and weaknesses of each siloed strategy. Because, unlike evolution, marketers can intelligently design their approach – we don't have to choose between ABM and ideal demand strategies. But, in order to see which parts to take forward and which to leave behind, we need to get our priorities straight. It's about the buyer's process – not marketing's.

## 1.2 Processes and people

Marketing automation led to a 'marketing-driven' mindset. Caught up in their shiny new technologies and tools, practitioners believed the marketing process

in itself was of central importance. Pretty soon, the limitations of this became clear. For starters, everyone was doing it. Buyers – who, in an increasingly digital world, call the shots – were getting savvier. Marketing became impersonal and faceless. As a kick-back to this, then came the customer experience revolution and ABM.

"Really good marketers naturally have the buyer front and centre," says Andrea Clatworthy, head of account-based marketing at Fujitsu, "and have their feet firmly in their shoes when planning and executing strategies and activities. In my opinion, it's the rise and ease of the vanity metric, and the addiction to using it, which perhaps means marketers are forgetting their buyer, and their needs." Indeed, martech simplified and scaled many marketing activities, but quantity so rarely means quality. Go too far the other way, meanwhile, and marketers risk falling foul of single-channel ABM approaches, limiting their pipeline, ignoring ideal customers, and losing revenue.

Smart marketers are recognising that both strategies have their merits, as well as their pitfalls. Demand generation is scalable. ABM is precise. Marketers need to engage with buyers throughout their decision-making processes in the channels they want to operate in. This means using omnichannel strategies with precision – not single-channel ABM strategies, or just blind marketing automation tactics. Ultimately, it means delivering the right message at the right time to the right buyer.

Covid-19 has accelerated the digitisation of the working world. This means marketers need to adjust – fast. With clients won and lost entirely in the digital theatre, brands that aren't competing in every meaningful channel, at all times, will fall by the wayside.



## Section 2

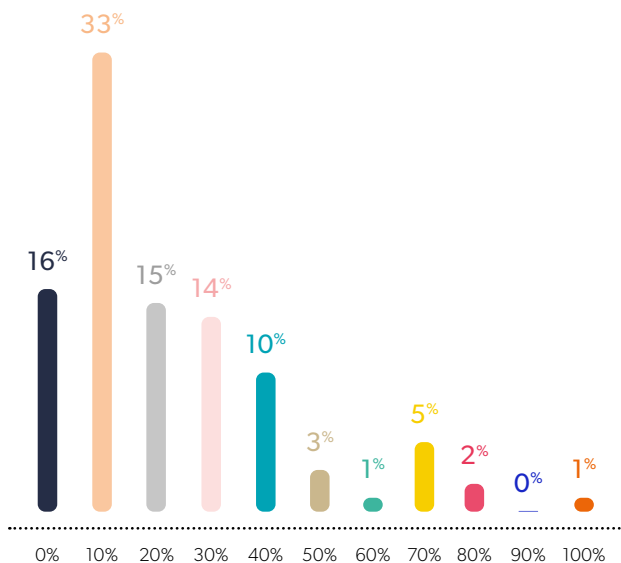
# The changing tides of growth marketing

### 2.1 The state of play

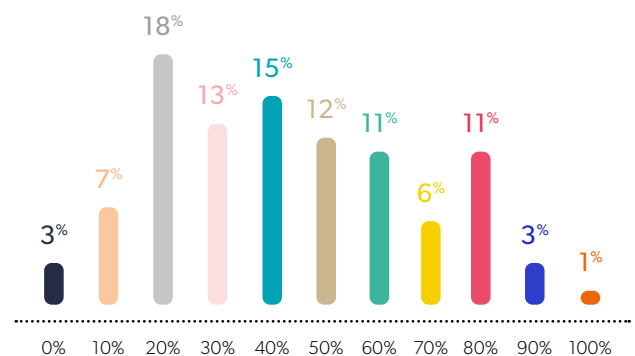
So that's the history, but how does it look in practice? Which approach are practitioners taking today? According to our survey, some 37% of marketing departments singularly practice demand generation, targeting named individual decision-makers. Just 11% go all-in on ABM, focusing their efforts on known

accounts. Far and away the most popular tack is a blend of the two, with 48% of marketers using both. On the surface, it's promising to see almost half of marketers are realising the benefits of taking a holistic approach, but it begs a question: how integrated are we talking? We may find the answer by following the money. So, we asked how marketers spread their budgets across these approaches.

To the nearest 10%, what proportion of your marketing budget do you currently allocate to ABM?



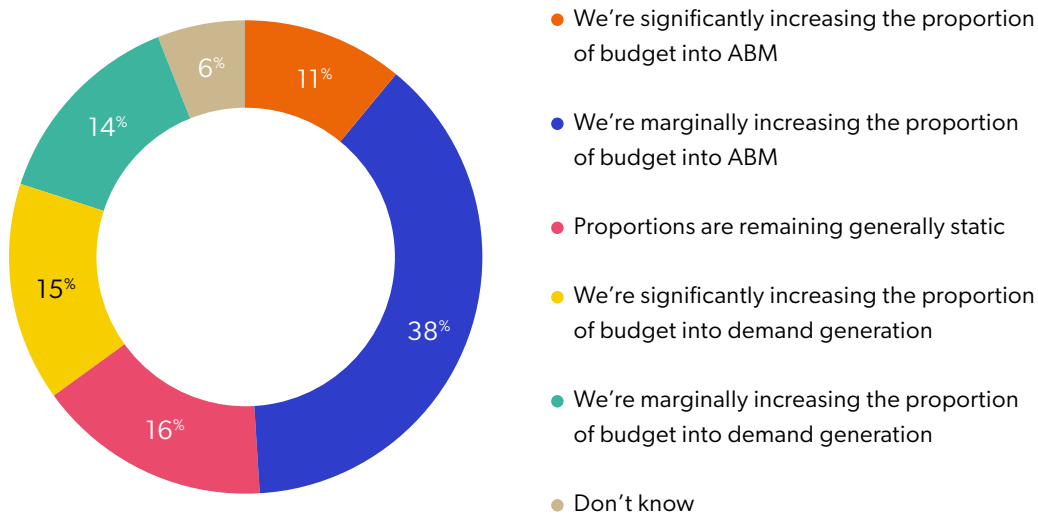
To the nearest 10%, what proportion of your marketing budget do you currently allocate to demand generation?



While just 1% of organisations go all-in on either ABM or demand generation, clearly demand generation is the most heavily invested approach. But a look in the rear-view mirror can be revealing: by looking at the history, we can spot future trends. Some 49% of marketing teams have seen increases in budget allocated to ABM over the last few years. The same can be said for just 29% of marketers as regards to demand generation. So, while demand generation is still the most popular approach, the tides are changing.

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### What's been happening to the proportion of budget allocation over the last few years?



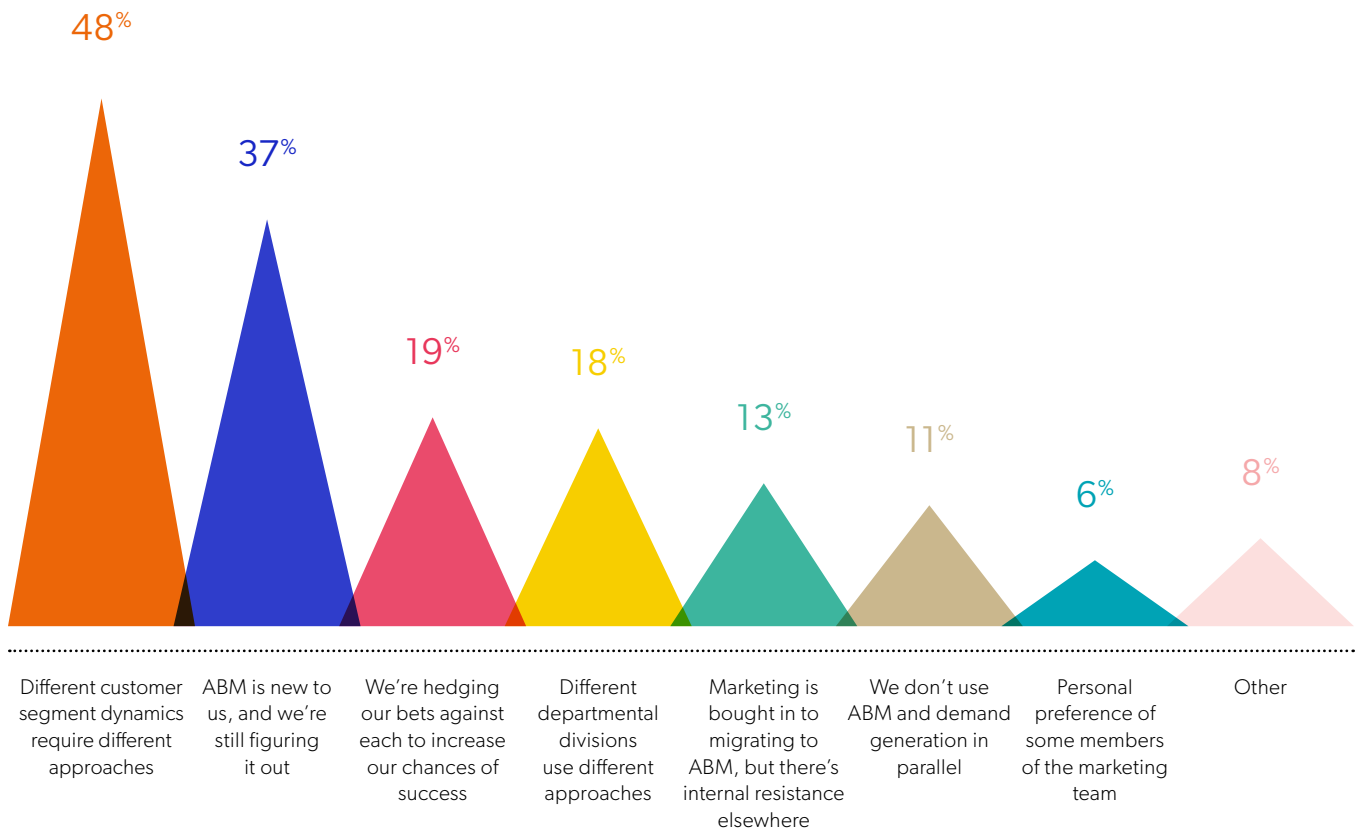
This is reflected in marketers' confidence in their approaches to each. Just over half say their demand generation efforts are 'quite mature', while a further 17% go as far as to say they're 'very mature'. If we compare that to ABM, only 32% said their approach is 'quite mature', and a tiny 6% believe it's 'very mature'. And while the vast majority (62%) admit to having a rather unsophisticated approach to ABM, just 31% said the same about demand generation.

## 2.2 The risks of operating in isolation

Clearly, very few marketers have full confidence in their approaches to ABM and demand generation. This in itself isn't an issue, as long as they're supporting each other. But here's the problem. The old-school of one-to-one ABM encourages marketers to go all-in. By definition, this means ignoring accounts that may fit ideal customer profiles. Similarly, demand generation-only strategies will fail to build deep and meaningful relationships with buyers.

*So, while demand generation is still the most popular approach, the tides are changing*

Which of the following best describe your rationale for running both ABM and demand generation programmes in parallel? Please select all that apply.





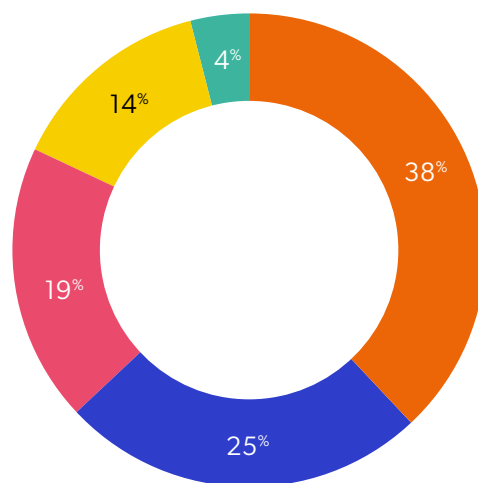
To dig a little deeper, we asked our respondents to describe their rationale for taking a blended approach. The most common reason is, quite understandably, that different customer divisions use different approaches, with almost half (48%) of marketers in agreement. The next most common rationale (37%) is that ABM is still new to the organisation, suggesting they're reluctant to put all their eggs in that basket.

"Considering any approach in isolation will inevitably mean you are not addressing the entire market," says Andrea, "so adopting different approaches for different segments of your market, and used cleverly, should give you the coverage you need and therefore reduce the risk of missing a buying signal from a customer."

ABM is just one item in a marketer's toolkit. In today's digital world, marketers need to be able to turn on a sixpence to respond to the needs of the buyer and home in on opportunities as they arise. We asked our sample about their ability to refine their strategic approach. The most common response (38%) was 'pretty agile, but could be faster and more effective.' A quarter (25%) said they're already 'highly agile, and able to pivot quickly and effectively,' while almost one in five say they're 'barely' or 'not at all agile enough to effectively respond to new opportunities.'

***ABM is just one item in a marketer's toolkit. In today's digital world, marketers need to be able to turn on a sixpence to respond to the needs of the buyer and home in on opportunities as they arise***

How agile would you say you're able to be to refine your strategic approach in response to new opportunities or changing client demands?



- We're pretty agile, but could be faster and more effective in our response
- We're highly agile, able to pivot quickly and effectively
- We're partly agile – we can do it well in some scenarios, but not in others
- We're barely agile – it takes a long time to pivot and it's not effective when it happens
- We're not agile

## 2.3 Omnichannel and the buyer experience

Before Covid, sales reps were able to meet buyers on their own turf, and use their powers of persuasion when they got there. Now, more than ever, B2B buyers self-educate on digital channels. Deals are won and lost behind screens, so marketing's ability to deliver a seamless customer experience is now increasingly pivotal in the sales process. But are they confident in their abilities to connect channels and keep up with the pace of change?

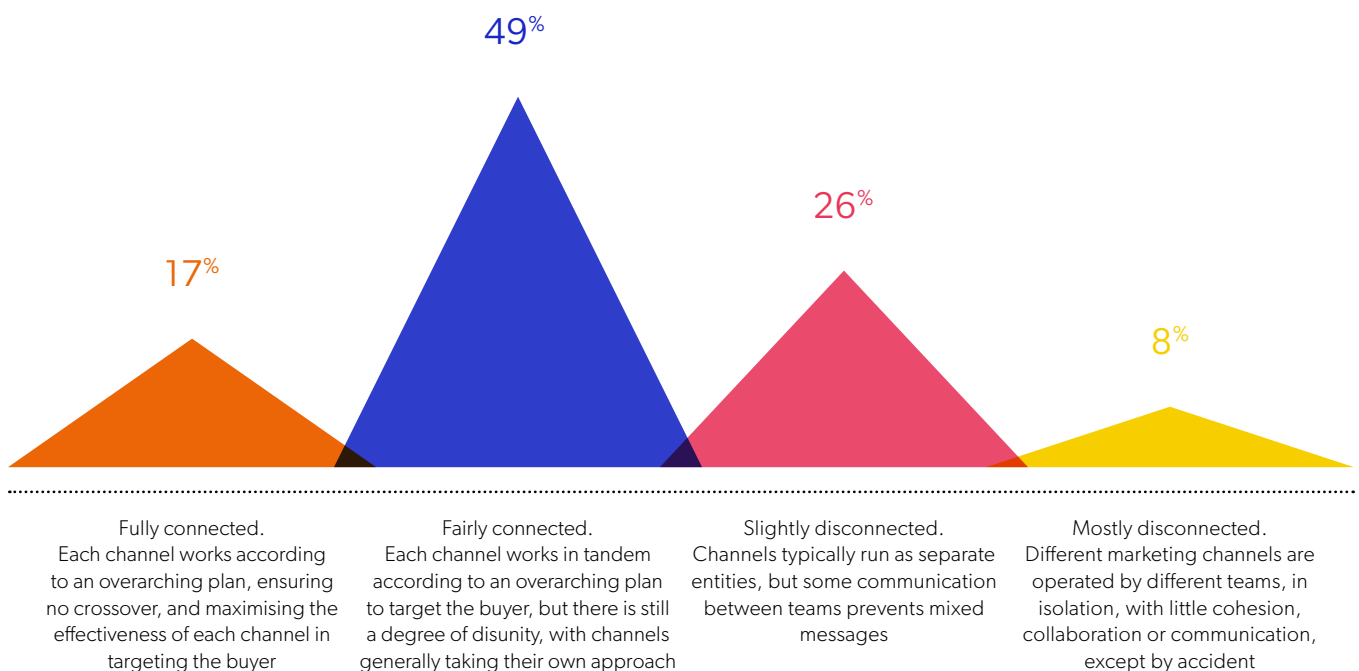
## 2.4 Orchestrating campaigns

Over a third (34%) say their channels are either mostly or slightly disconnected, with different ones operating in

isolation, and with little cohesive messaging. Almost half (49%) are fairly connected, with each channel working in tandem according to an overarching plan to target the buyer. Just 17% believe they're fully connected, with each channel orchestrated to deliver a plan.

"The buyer, or buying group, are human beings," says Andrea, "and, as such, have a finite capacity to receive, digest and retain information. Being consistent with messages is really important so that they are not confused about who you are, what you do and what you can help them with." The fact fewer than one in five marketers are executing effective omnichannel marketing is alarming, particularly when you consider the efficiencies that consistency can unlock. As Andrea explains: "[...]from an internal perspective, it's much easier and cheaper to define one set of messages and consistently use them across channels, for a good chunk of time. It's likely to result in better ROI and better brand recall."

How effective are you at integrated omnichannel marketing, with all activities operating cohesively?



## 2.5 Targeting and data insights

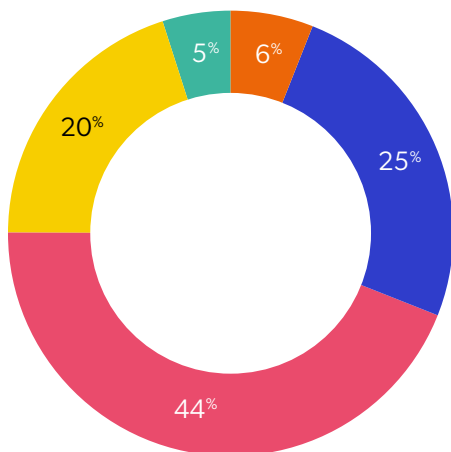
Central to any omnichannel strategy is a detailed understanding of the buyer journey, and the ability to target them accordingly. This enables marketers to match their content and their messaging with the right channel. So, how are they getting on with targeting?

Overall, regardless of which strategy – ABM or demand generation – they use, marketers are pretty confident in

their ability to target the right customers, accounts or buying committees. Almost half (48%) are pretty or super confident in their abilities to do so. So, while there's room for improvement, targeting is clearly a strength for many. But how about the other key component of omnichannel: the pairing of martech and data to provide the right insights for effective marketing? Well, this is a slightly different story. A quarter are unconfident or actively worried about that. In fact, just 31% are as confident in this area as they were in their targeting.

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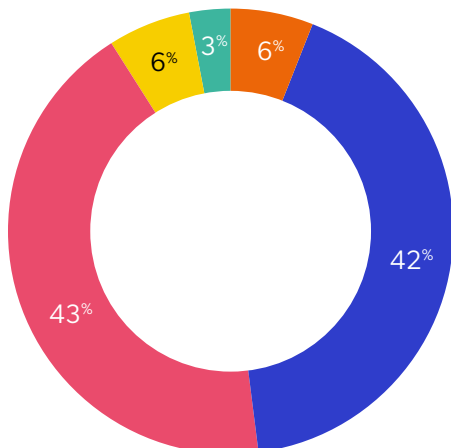
How confident are you about the ability of your martech or data provider ecosystem to provide data and insight you need, etc?



- Super confident – we have ample data and insight and our ecosystem is highly integrated
- Pretty confident – there are some areas required for improvement, but it generally works well
- Partly confident – some platforms integrate well, others don't
- Not confident – integration is rare or partial at best
- Worried/anxious – no or virtually no integration

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Regardless of strategy (ABM or demand generation), how confident are you in your ability to target the right customers, accounts or buying committees?



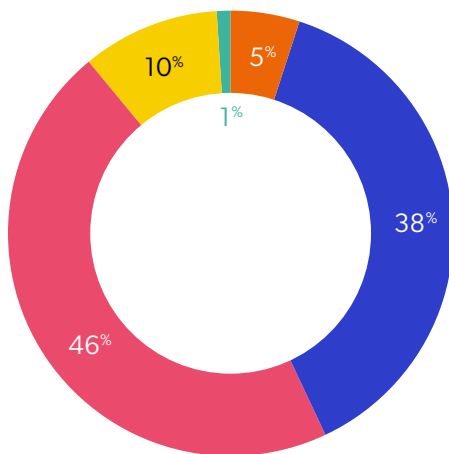
- Super confident – we have real clarity and accuracy
- Pretty confident – we generally get the job done, but there's lots of room for improvement
- Partly confident – good in some areas (business units or audiences), but weak in others
- Not confident – if we get it right, it's more by luck than judgement
- Worried/anxious – this is a real area of concern

## 2.6 Measurement and data governance

So, marketers' targeting is pretty good, but their insights and data are left wanting. Another key component is agility – being able to read and respond to the buyer's experience. In other words, iterating campaigns in real-time based on the measurement and visibility of results. Broadly speaking, marketers are confident in this area, with 89% positive about their ability.

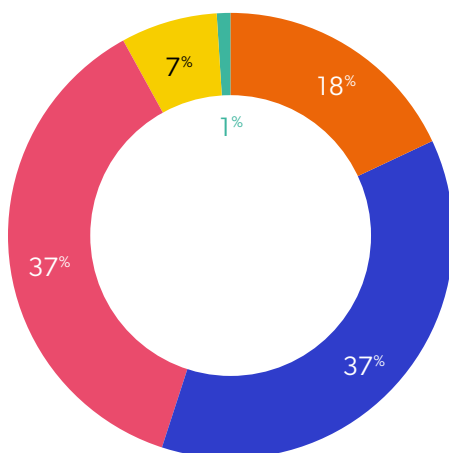
With this insight, we're beginning to build a clearer picture of the B2B buyer and their experiences across channels. Another area of increasing importance to precision marketing is data governance – in other words, getting details on target buyers and accounts that enable marketing and sales to achieve their goals. Our data shows marketers are fairly confident in this area, with 18% having a comprehensive and robust governance procedure in place, and a further 74% having a pretty solid – if somewhat patchy – approach.

How confident are you in your ability to measure the effectiveness of campaigns in real-time, and have visibility of results?



- Super confident – we can measure everything and have comprehensive visibility on results
- Pretty confident – we can measure most things, and have good (but not complete) visibility
- Partly confident – we can measure some things, but there are big gaps or grey areas
- Not confident – random incidents of measurement or transparency only
- Worried/anxious – no or virtually no ability to measure, or visibility of results

How confident are you as regards data governance, and whether your data is marketable, actionable and compliant?



- Super confident – we have comprehensive and robust governance procedures in place
- Pretty confident – we have good governance procedures, but need some work in terms of scope and robustness
- Partly confident – we have governance, but it's patchy: good in some places, poor in others
- Not confident – our governance is limited at best, and absent at worst
- Worried/anxious – this is a significant gap that needs urgent attention

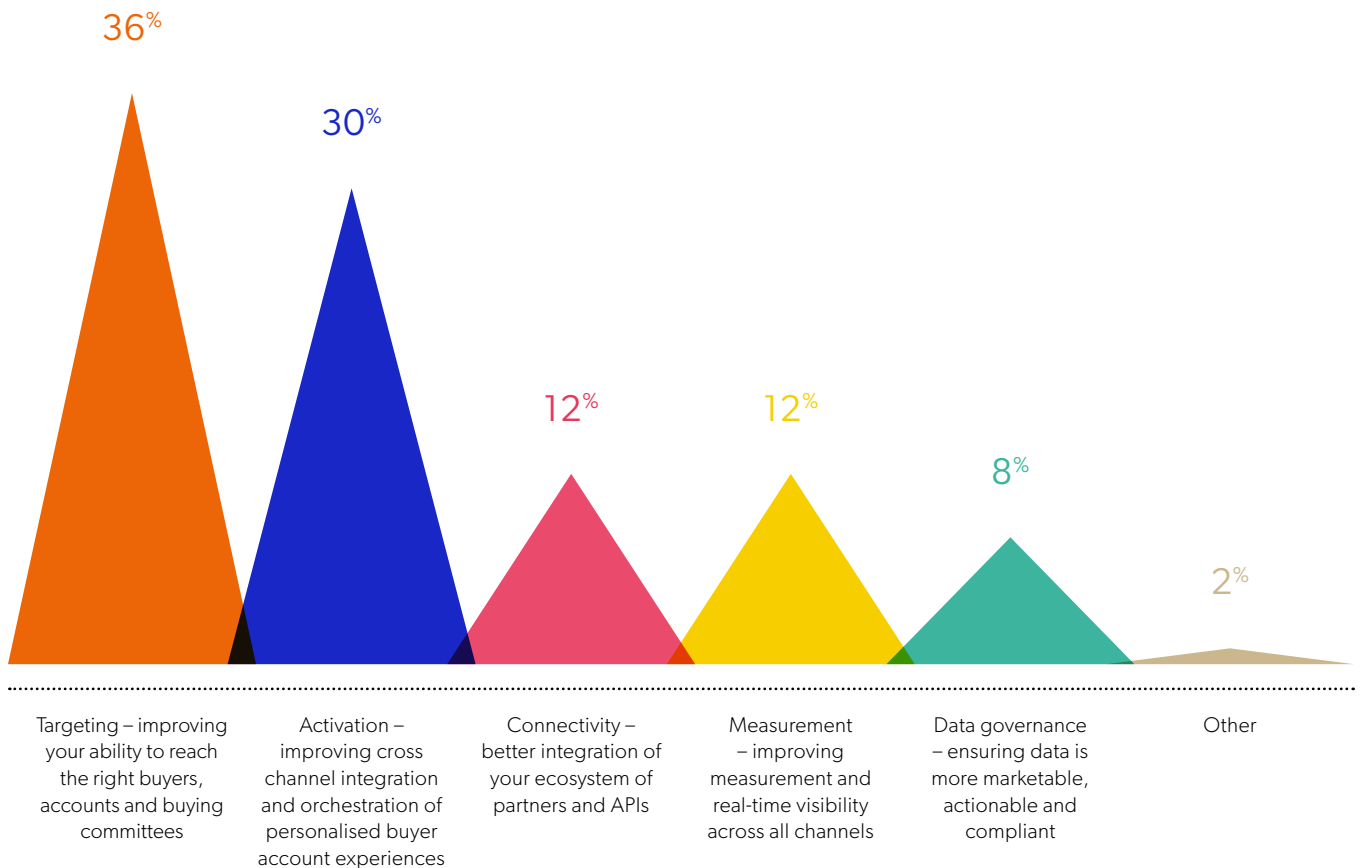
## 2.7 Prioritising areas for improvement

So, let's take stock of these findings.

Marketers' confidence in their ability to conduct effective omnichannel marketing is the lowest among those crucial areas explored, followed closely by integrating martech. Meanwhile, marketers were most bullish about their abilities in targeting and data governance. So, how does this stack up in terms of priority? The key to effective precision marketing is lining up these areas to truly meet the needs of the buyer.

Interestingly, targeting is seen as the great priority, despite marketers most confident in their ability to get it right. It's promising to see that activation (30%) and connectivity (12%) are the next biggest priorities, given that these are the areas in which marketers lack confidence. It appears that marketers need to reprioritise their ability to measure, as their willingness to improve in this area perhaps doesn't match up with their relative lack of confidence.

Which of the following aspects of your marketing do you regard as the highest priority to improve?



## 2.8 Understanding the buyer process

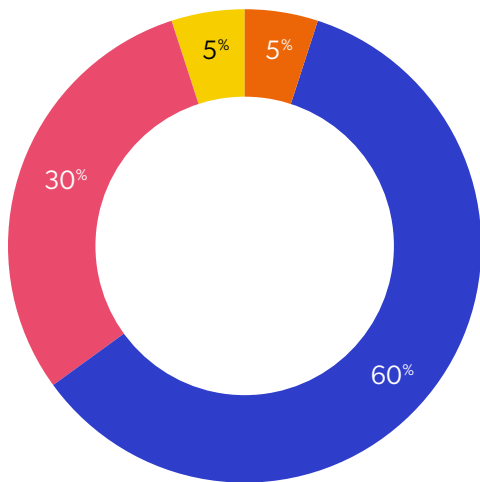
Marketers have to present their brand or messages in compelling ways to cut through the digital noise. Because, after all, it's not the process or the technology that generates revenue – it's the buyer. Surely then, it would stand to reason that, given ABM is all about homing in on one or a select few accounts, practitioners' understanding of their buyer would be greater. Well, not quite.

Almost a third (30%) of respondents aren't at all confident they understand their ABM customers' buying process. It's a little more promising to see that 60% have a fairly good

understanding, although just 5% are highly confident. Now let's compare these figures to non-ABM customers. Closer to a quarter (26%) aren't at all confident they understand their buying process. In this area, a greater number of marketers are both 'quite confident' (65%) and 'highly confident' (8%).

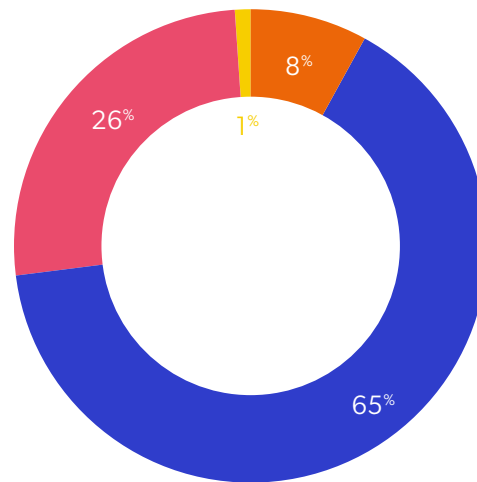
Clearly, there's no one-size-fits-all approach to understanding the buyer. And, despite doubling down on select accounts, many marketers are still in the dark about their ABM customers' buying process. So, how do they envisage their strategies evolving over time and what barriers do marketers feel they must overcome?

How confident are you in your understanding of your ABM customers' buying process?



- Highly confident
- Quite confident
- Not confident at all
- N/A

How confident are you in your understanding of your non-ABM customers' buying process?



- Highly confident
- Quite confident
- Not confident at all
- N/A

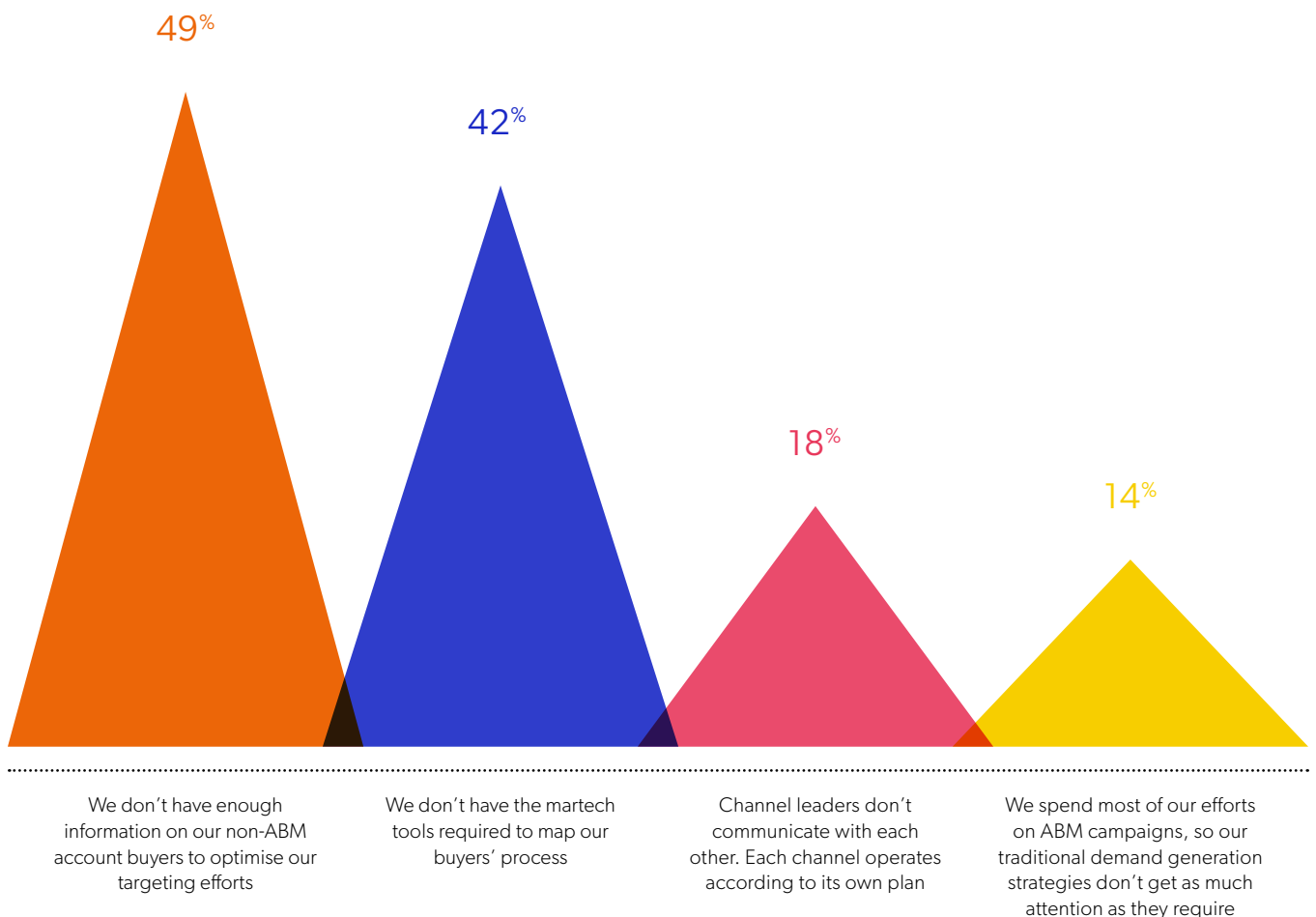
## 2.9 The future of growth

Clearly, ABM's focus on accounts has led to many practitioners not fully understanding their customers' buying process. As a strategy that uses inbound tactics and scale, what barriers do marketers face in making their demand generation campaigns more targeted? According to our survey, the greatest blocker to

precision is not having enough information on non-ABM account buyers to optimise targeting efforts, with 49% of marketers struggling in this area. The next biggest barrier is not having the martech tools required to map the buyer's process, with 42% of marketers agreeing. Communication breakdown among channel leaders (18%) and ABM subsuming budget (14%) were also key challenges.

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What barriers do you face in creating more targeted demand generation campaigns? Please select all that apply.

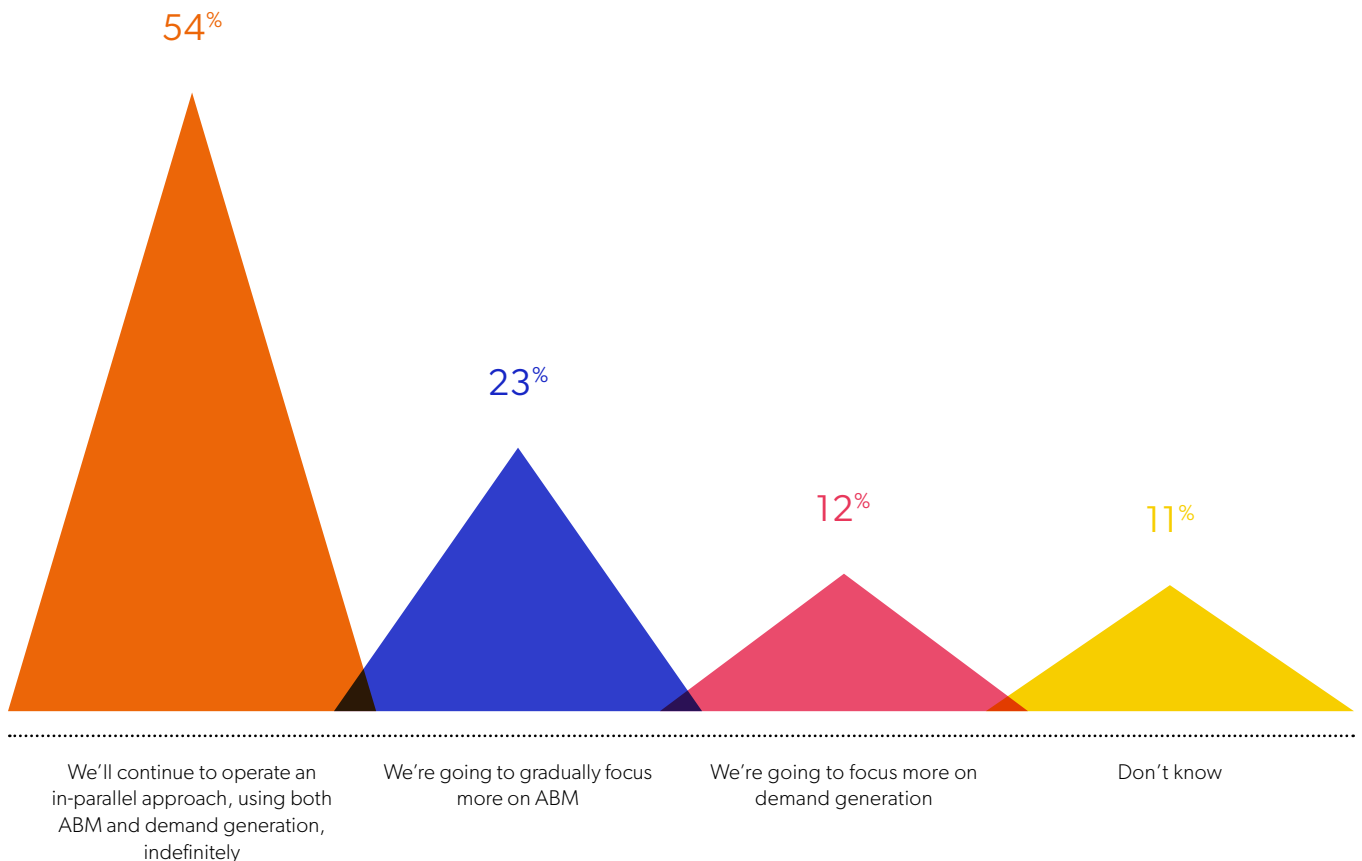


So, what's the outlook? It's clear that both strategies have their own challenges. We asked our respondents how they see their approach evolving. Over half (54%) say they'll continue to operate a parallel approach, using both ABM and demand generation indefinitely. Some 23% will gradually focus more on ABM while 12% will focus more on demand generation, leaving 11% on the fence.

*Taking a blended approach and orchestrating precision demand is how smart marketers are moving forward in this digital world*

Taking a blended approach and orchestrating precision demand is how smart marketers are moving forward in this digital world. Let's again take stock of what we've found in this study and where the macro factors are pointing towards for effective growth strategies of the future.

What do you think is the future for your customer acquisition marketing?







## Section 3

# The next frontier for growth marketing

## 3.1 Cue: Precision demand marketing

In this digital-first world, those left relying on single-channel or blind automation tactics will be left by the wayside. If ABM is a sledgehammer and marketing automation is a scattergun, precision demand marketing is a swiss army knife. Building a 360 degree view of the needs of the buyer, precision demand marketing enables marketers to truly deliver the right messages to the right buyer at the right time. As Scott Vaughan, chief growth officer at Integrate, puts it: "Precision demand marketing is a strategy to empower marketing teams to deliver an omnichannel buyer experience with an account-based foundation." From a practical execution standpoint, this means focusing on:

- › Identifying known and unknown buyers, buying groups and accounts.
- › Activating campaigns across channels.
- › Connecting teams, campaigns, data, tech and essential processes.
- › Measuring and optimising for performance across channels and accounts.
- › Governing all lead, buyer and account data to ensure compliance and marketability.

## 3.2 The barriers to overcome

New frontiers are seldom arrived at without challenges. Shaking off the shackles of the status quo will take at least two significant mental leaps.

### #1. The marketing mindset shift

First things first. We need to dispel the idea that the marketer's process is paramount – it's the buyer's we should care about. "Most of the marketing organisation is organised by function – digital, social, web, events, etc." Scott points out. "The result is that campaigns are executed this way, with each unintentionally competing for the buyer's attention." This often leads to silos that don't align with buyers, accounts or buying groups.

### #2. Sales is not the customer

Here's another entrenched problem in many organisations. Remember, sales is our partner – not our customer. The buyer's process has always been more important than sales', but since interaction and engagement with buyers has been drastically curtailed since the pandemic, the balance has been tipped even further. "Since B2B buyers are doing the bulk of their research and decision committee work online," says Scott, "there's an urgent need to increase marketing's role in identifying, engaging, educating and advancing the buying and the selling process."

### 3.3 Seven steps to precision demand marketing

Marketing isn't a lead factory. Artificial scoring and automated emails are only contributing to the noise. Smart marketers today need to take an always-on approach, using data to give their buyers more control along the journey. They need to develop revenue generation strategies which home in on the mix of ideal customers, target accounts and interest buyers. Or, as Scott put it, being "open for business – but with precision."

"To get started with precision demand," he explains, "begin connecting a few channels and the resulting data and tech." For example: "Marketers can connect their advertising investment to target known and unknown buyers and accounts, and then use content syndication to use your long-form content to develop opt-in key personas within their buying groups at key accounts. They can orchestrate these programmes in an always-on motion to identify accounts in the market and use data to optimise your effort."

Before you can go ahead and roll out your precision demand strategy, Scott outlines the foundations that need to be laid:

1. Understand and map your ideal customer profile buyers' and accounts' purchase process – not just your sales and marketing process.
2. Identify your total available market and reality – not just the accounts you, your sales or tech identify.
3. Establish clear roles, joint success metrics and regular optimisation sessions across your marketing team, and with sales.
4. Organise around the buyer and accounts by connecting teams, workflows, journeys, tech and data to inform programmes.
5. Connect your channel activities to one thematic or outcome-driven buyer journey.
6. Move from random, internal-driven campaigns to an always-on approach around core themes your buyers and accounts care about (remember, a maximum of 15% of your target accounts are in market at any time).
7. Focus on getting your data right. Set a goal of building 70–80% of your database as opted-in and compliant contacts that match your buying committee personas within your target accounts.



# About

## B2B Marketing and Propolis

**Powered by the community, for the community.**

Established in 2004, B2B Marketing is now the number one go-to resource for B2B marketers across the globe.

Right from the start, we had a clear mission that remains as strong and clear today: to provide marketers at business brands with the tools, insight and inspiration they need to grow and succeed – as both individuals and businesses.

To do this, we need to continually evolve to make sure we are delivering what you need.

**This is why Propolis was born – our exclusive community for B2B marketers.**

We're proud to serve as the focal point for the B2B marketing sector, and to be a force for greater connectivity, enabling marketers and leaders to share experiences and learn from one another.

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## Integrate

Integrate is the leader in precision demand marketing – an emerging category to help B2B marketers develop and deliver an omnichannel demand strategy, convert leads to revenue, and drive marketing ROI. Integrate works with high-growth and enterprise organisations like Salesforce, Microsoft, Akamai and Pluralsight to power their precision demand marketing strategies. Over the past decade, Integrate has evolved from solving the complex challenges across each demand gen channel to powering account-based, buyer-driven omnichannel experiences. Today, Integrate's Demand Acceleration Platform helps marketers orchestrate connected buying experiences that drive qualified conversations at scale and accelerate revenue generation.

For more information, please visit [integrate.com](http://integrate.com).





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