

THE LITTLE
clear
GUIDE TO
ABM
ACCOUNT BASED MARKETING

What is Account Based Marketing (ABM)?

ABM is about combining sales and marketing efforts around specifically-defined businesses/accounts deemed to have high yield potential, through customised or personalised insight and content.

B2B marketers often try to reach as many companies as possible within their target market, filling the sales funnel with lots of leads. ABM is much more selective, homing in on a selected few.



What's so new about this?

Sales teams typically have key account managers. Their role is to ensure they provide helpful information and insight to nurture the individual contacts in those key accounts. ABM supports this activity – generating content and using marketing technology to select and communicate relevant, targeted content to similar, high value accounts. It's usually implemented through marketing automation platforms, so that customised content can be automatically delivered intelligently, at the right time, cost-effectively, and at scale if required.



What are the benefits of ABM?

1. ALIGNING SALES AND MARKETING EFFORTS THROUGH ABM SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVES RESULTS

Marketing becomes more effective, and sales conversion typically rises.



2. CUSTOMISATION OF CONTENT MAKES A BETTER IMPRESSION

82% of prospects say content targeted to their specific industry is more valuable*

67% say content targeted to their job function is more valuable*

49% say content targeted to their company size is more valuable*



*MarketingSherpa

3. ABM IS PROVEN TO HELP REDUCE THE LENGTH OF A SALES CYCLE

Many questions are already answered through the nurturing process and your credibility is well-established.

4. ABM IS MORE MEASURABLE AND PROVEN TO IMPROVE ROI

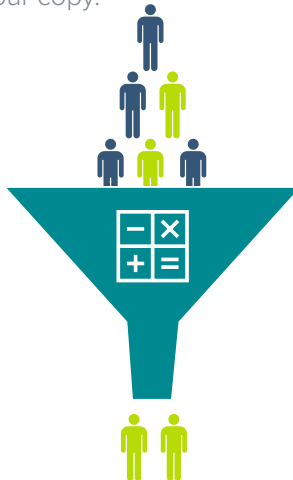
According to Demandbase in eWeek, 60% of users reported a 10% revenue increase after one year and 19% reported a 30% increase.

How do we set up ABM?

1. WORK THE FIGURES

All good marketing programs start with a plan and setting out goals, and ABM is no different. But it's not just setting an arbitrary number of required leads. Look a bit deeper – the number of leads you need going in to the top of the funnel every month will depend on multiple factors. We've created a handy ABM planning document, that includes a way to calculate how many leads you need.

Contact us to get your copy.



2. AGREE ROLES

As we know, aligned sales and marketing teams bring the best results. In order to achieve the number of leads you've identified in step one, collaboration is important. By agreeing roles and responsibilities early on, working processes become more efficient, and your prospects will follow a much smoother journey.



3. IDENTIFY HIGH VALUE POTENTIAL ACCOUNTS

This isn't necessarily as easy as it sounds. Unless you have some insider conversations, you may not be certain of exactly what prospects want and need, and on what scale.

However, careful analysis of your best current customers may well provide the clues to finding like-minded organisations. Usually you'll know some business your competitors have, or previous opportunities you wished you'd won. You can start ABM with just a couple of target companies.

An ABM approach can also be used to target by industry, size, role or business challenge, and this needs much less personalisation. Here, activity is tailored around these aspects rather than being personalised to individual accounts.



4. IDENTIFY THE MESSAGING AND CONTENT

Start by identifying the most significant issues or challenges your targets are facing. Then position your messaging around the thinking and approach you bring to help resolve those problems.

Don't try and sell your solutions explicitly. In the early stages of contact it's about sharing opinions and helpful information. Overt product and service details will switch off potential prospects. Be seen as an expert who understands the challenges and has vision of the future. Thought-leadership is typically the best way to capture interest, raise awareness and establish credibility.

Mapping out your content in advance can sometimes feel a struggle, but it is important to ensuring that you get the right information across at the right time. We've included a content mapping template in our ABM planner to help you get everything in order.

5. REFINE THE MESSAGING AND CONTENT TO PERSONAS/ROLES

You'll need to generate enough content to satisfy the interests of several personas and roles – those with influence within your target organisations. Once you know the challenges, examine them through the eyes of the C-Suite, the user, procurement and any others who influence the buying decision or selection criteria.

Content will likely include videos, case studies, articles, dedicated landing pages, calls to action, etc. Arrange assets into persona groups and ensure you have enough for each of your audiences. On the simplest level you can just make sure each piece contains something of interest for each audience rather than having a whole suite for each, but the more you can break it down per audience, the better.

Sales teams might already have specific knowledge about individuals in your target organisations too. Use this to your advantage in the messaging you create, as the more personal it feels, the greater the engagement and the more likely they will make an enquiry.

To help you identify your personas, our ABM planner includes a table you can use to create a complete picture for each.

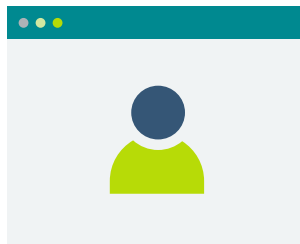
6. USE ALL CHANNELS, SOFTWARE TOOLS AND AUTOMATION

For any named contacts, you can simply send them interesting, relevant content, but named contact points are usually limited, and you can't always know when the time is right to make contact.

The good news: tech can help. IP identification software on your website can be used to give a personalised experience by displaying appropriate content in real time and allowing you to track engagement.

By educating and nurturing that contact, coupled with automated outbound marketing, you can accelerate their research process and get them on a buyer journey to a quicker sale.

Use outbound emails where you have a targeted list, as well as retargeting ads and social media to drip-feed content that leads prime targets to your website. Depending on how specific your planned ABM approach is, paid advertising through LinkedIn, Twitter and Google can also give you customer matches, based on industries, roles or specific organisations.



Software can also be used to follow and sync customer behaviour across all communication channels, so depending on your investment in technologies and analysis, you can feed dynamic content based on behaviours, roles, origin, channels and more.

The table below shows a summary of leading tech providers.

What tech do you need?

Tool	Role	Key players
Marketing automation platform / CRM	The hubs of your ABM tech stack	Salesforce, Marketo, Oracle, HubSpot
Predictive	Provides info needed to devise ABM tactics	Infer, Mintigo Sense, SalesPredict
Website personalisation	Track visitors, sources and actions to deliver personalised experience	Optimizely, Triblio, Evergage, Bound360
Data management & measurement	Ensure usability of data collected from ABM programs	Engagio, LeanData
IP targeted advertising	Ensure ad budget is spent only on reaching targeted companies	Vendemore, Terminus, Demandbase
Automated outbound demand generation	Engage decision makers at targeted companies with long-form content	Integrate

7. PERSONAL FOLLOW UP

When an organisation or individual has demonstrated a certain level of interest, agree with the sales team when it should be considered a ‘qualified’ lead for direct sales contact.

Direct follow-up and face-to-face interaction is still essential, as real human contact is a vital part of the mix to build belief and trust. ABM supports this by ensuring the sales team has more relevant marketing content to use. They can reference it in conversations to keep the dialogue open – for example by directing prospects towards more articles relating to their issues and commercial challenges.

ABM content is well-planned and executed, meaning it is typically more ‘on message’ than sales teams presenting their own materials. This leads to a more confident and joined-up sales effort, ensuring your organisation becomes known for the thinking you want to promote.



You can also repurpose your ABM content for speaker opportunities and meetings, again maximising the opportunity through face-to-face exposure. Plan to be at events where you know your target organisations/individuals will be.



ABM does not negate any effort around human contact; but it does focus efforts on attracting the prospects who are very the best fit for your offer. By issuing carefully curated, relevant content based on behaviours, prospects are far more receptive to marketing. Since the prospect is intelligently nurtured, your offer and capabilities are already front-of-mind when a sales opportunity arises.



We often find an 'outsider' perspective on ABM activity gives a much more objective view. If you're looking for support with your ABM efforts, email us on thinking@clearb2b.com



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The difference is clear thinking