

GUIDE

The Complete Account Based Marketing Framework

4 Critical Steps to Follow for ABM Success



Account Based Marketing is clearly a popular endeavor these days. A [Demandbase survey](#) found that “71% of B2B organizations are either using ABM, interested in adopting the strategy or are testing it.”

But even with Account Based Marketing on the rise, a vast majority of people are unclear what the term means. In a survey of 120 marketers, [Forrester found](#) that “73% agreed that ABM is a term that lacks specific meaning and is used inconsistently today.”

That finding is unsurprising because Account Based Marketing as it currently stands has many different definitions. [Marketo defines](#) ABM as a “strategy that concentrates sales and marketing resources on a clearly defined set of target accounts and employs personalized campaigns.” [Engagio says](#) ABM “creates hyper-personalized interactions...that enable sales and marketing teams to land more accounts.”

While these definitions are certainly true of ABM, the discipline encompasses many more concepts, practices, and processes than meets the eye.

Let’s dispel a few myths right here, right now:

- ABM is not a technology
- ABM is not independent and siloed
- ABM is not new

ABM is an approach that incorporates a wide variety of marketing and sales ideas to focus efforts on a carefully selected list of target accounts. Account Based Marketing isn’t a single component of Sales or Marketing, but rather a strategy that integrates with every effort in both areas.



Account Based Marketing Tactics and Activities



Digital Marketing

Website Experience

Marketing Automation
(Email)

Ads & Retargeting



Sales Planning

Account Selection

Account Prioritization

Account Mapping

Account Research &
Tribal Knowledge

Account Plans &
Whitespace



Sales Activities

Sales Email Prospecting &
Communication

Phone Prospecting &
Communication

Direct Mail



Sales Enablement

Sales Asset
Management / SEA

Training, Learning,
and Coaching



Analytics/Measurement

Web Engagement

Marketing Automation
Engagement

Sales Dev Engagement
/ Performance

Content Engagement

Pipeline Attribution

Seismic defines ABM as:

“A strategy enhanced and made scalable by process and technology that spans nearly all disciplines of sales and marketing and enables those teams to be hyper-relevant and hyper-personalized to the right prospects at the right time.”

To run a successful Account Based Marketing strategy requires a deep understanding of how it affects Sales and Marketing, a framework for implementation, and a strategy for measuring results. Follow these four steps for Account Based Marketing success.



01

Calibrate your traditional marketing playbook to the account-based level

Traditionally, marketers are concerned with casting a wide net to try to catch as many leads as possible. However, ABM deliberately narrows the scope of Marketing's efforts to hone in on a specific target. All of the tools and tricks in marketing's playbooks still apply when it comes to ABM, they just need to be calibrated for success when deployed on an account-based level.

Account-Level Demand Creation

Marketers are used to trying to engage as many people as possible. Their campaigns are measured on a wide scale, judging their effectiveness on how many web visits are generated or how many times a piece of content is downloaded, for example.

Using these measurements Marketing can effectively employ lead scoring to better qualify prospects. When a prospect has performed enough quality activities they are then ready to be handed off to Sales. But, what happens when the leads are already identified and being routinely targeted?

In Account Based Marketing situations, Marketing is looking to engage specific stakeholders in an account that have been previously identified and are well-known. This is a coordinated effort with Sales, who are also regularly engaging with decision-makers.

Measuring engagement is just as critical – if not more – as it is for lead gen marketing. However, instead of measuring the success of campaigns, the analytics in ABM are more granular. Studying account-level engagement will reveal important insights into what efforts are resonating with key decision-makers. Taking a magnifying glass to Marketing engagements allows for more informed decision making, and better crafted touches.





Digital Marketing & Account Based Marketing

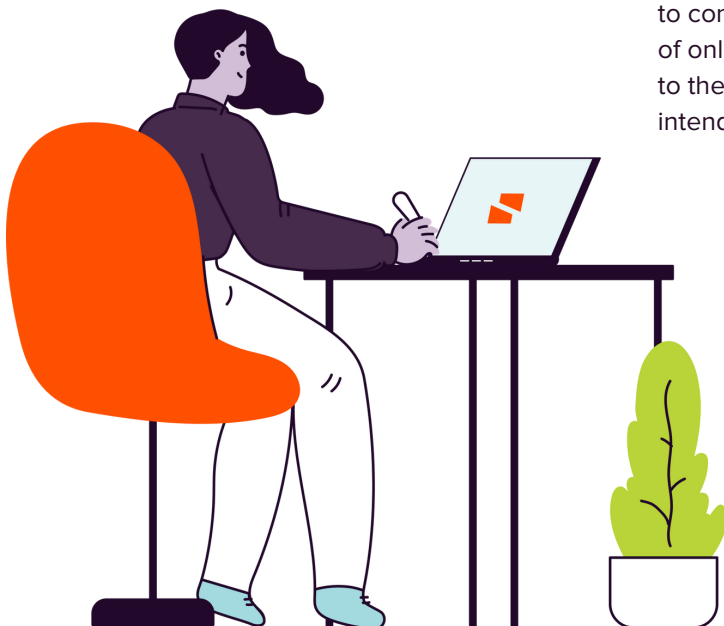
Account Based Marketing at its core is an attempt to provide focused, individualized attention on buyers. When it comes to the efforts Marketing is making to engage with these accounts, the approach again needs to be specifically tailored.

Digital marketing outreaches are often, by necessity, generic to a certain degree. Some aspects may be personalized – such as including a first name in an email blast – but seasoned, high-level professionals (exactly the people Account Based Marketing is attempting to reach) will see right through those techniques.

Marketing then needs to provide unique and genuine engagements for decision-makers. Using common marketing techniques in new ways creates these coveted Account Based Marketing opportunities.

Digital advertising has evolved to accommodate capabilities that fit hand-in-hand with ABM. Retargeting campaigns allow Marketing to leverage insight about a buyer's interests and serve them ads on other areas of the web. Creating ads that specifically speak to a target's stage in the Buyer's Journey is an effective way to increase awareness and engagement.

Personalized web experiences also offer a chance to serve up content that is contextually relevant and more engaging than generic content meant for users who are less informed, or in different stages of the Buyer's Journey. Users are more receptive to content that is relevant to their needs. [Janrain found](#) that 74% of online users become frustrated when content does not relate to them. Providing content that deeply resonates with an intended target is key to Account Based Marketing.



Personalized Content to Bolster Sales

When pursuing an Account Based Marketing strategy, Marketing's role when it comes to content undergoes an important shift. Instead of being an inbound function attempting to source new leads, Marketing creates content that serves as support for outbound Sales efforts.

When Sales is engaging their targets within an account it is imperative that they are able to provide those key contacts with content that is relevant to their situation. Marketing should be creating content that directly supplements those conversations and speaks specifically to the intended audience.

Examples of the kind of personalized content Marketing can deliver to Sales to aid in their outreach efforts include:

- *Case studies that focus on scenarios that are highly relevant and similar to the target account.*
- *Presentations customized for the targeted account that highlight specific products and solutions that solve problems unique to the account.*
- *eBooks composed of concepts, ideas, and thought leadership about topics that specifically resonate with targeted decision-makers.*

Customized content begins to break down a barrier that many high-level decision-makers erect. They are more likely to be receptive to content that clearly speaks to issues they face day-to-day. ITSMA found that 75% of executive will "read unsolicited marketing materials that contain ideas that might be relevant to [their] business."

Account Based Marketing incorporates hyper-personalization techniques that create more meaningful engagements from Marketing. This provides Sales with inroads and forms the basis for stronger relationships with an account. ABM is a powerful strategy for creating a true symbiotic relationship between Marketing and Sales. Let's take a look at how Sales will need to focus their efforts when utilizing Account Based Marketing.



02

Configure your sales funnel to maximize time spent selling to large target accounts

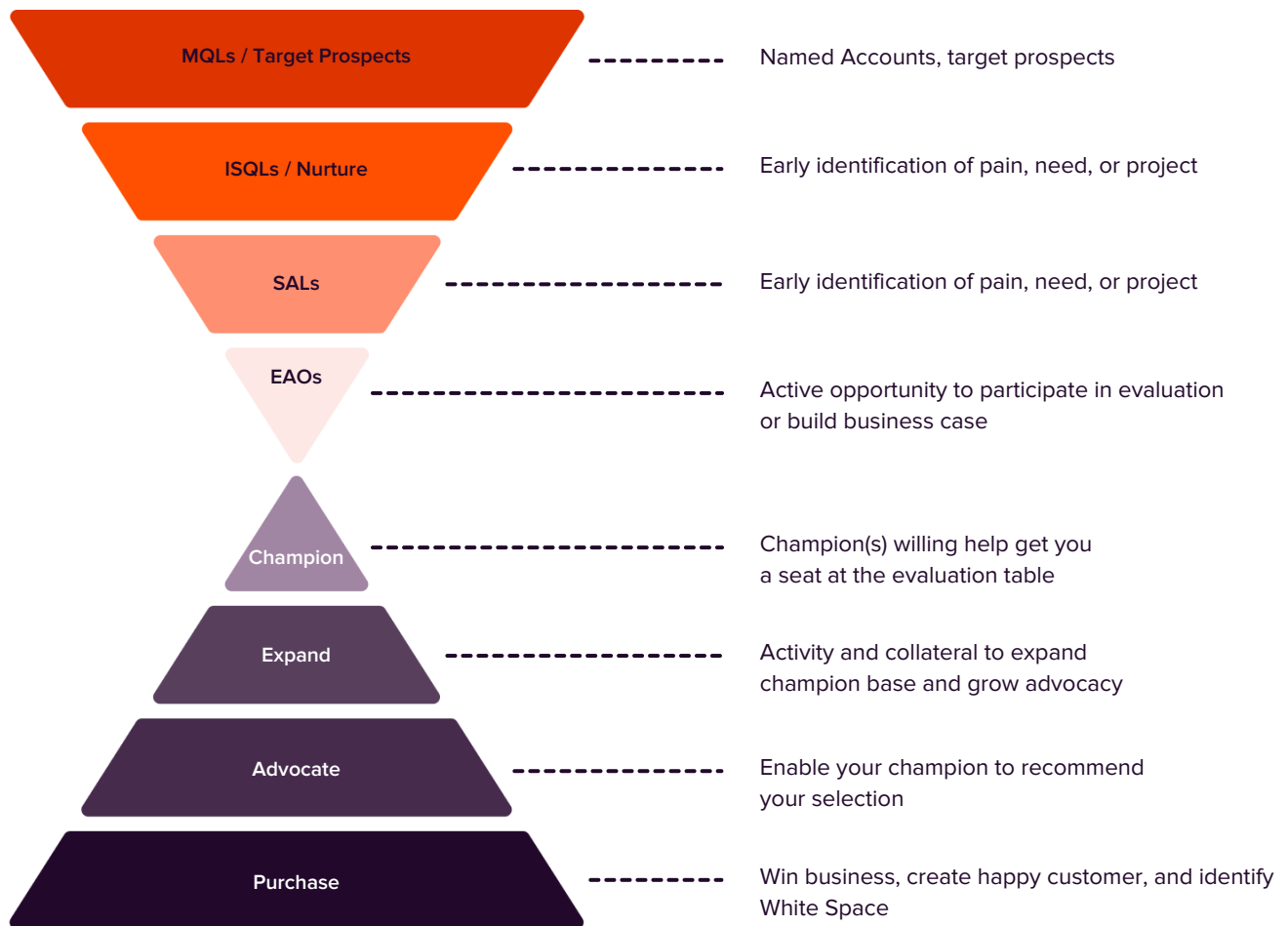
The concept of focusing intently on one target in the hopes of closing a deal isn't foreign to the vast majority of sellers. Research, outreach, and utilizing marketing content are all part of the standard sales playbook. But those tactics are generally being deployed on leads and prospects that are the result of Marketing generated leads or Inside Sales work. Account Based Marketing finds Sales – much like Marketing – deploying tactics and techniques that are familiar to them, but configured in a different way.

In-Depth Prospecting

Prospecting is clearly a necessity in the sales world. It's impossible to sell without having someone to sell to. However, in a traditional sales environment prospecting can very quickly become a time sink – without the guarantee of anything in return. [The B2B Lead](#) found “as much as 50% of [Sales'] time is spent on unproductive prospecting.”



ABM Fixes the Traditional Sales Funnel



Account Based Marketing eases the burden on Sales by utilizing Marketing to provide in-depth account research that includes a detailed map of key stakeholders and decision-makers. Instead of wasting time scouring the internet for clues and insights about an organization, a full picture of the targeted account is available based on Marketing's research. Armed with this information up-front at the beginning of the process Sales is able to hit the ground running.

Getting off on the right foot is the key to any sales encounter, but even more so when it comes to ABM. When embarking on a prolonged and intense pursuit of a specific account it's imperative to enter conversations with proper knowledge about the hierarchy and makeup of the organization. With a clear understanding of the organization within the account Sales can begin planning the best strategies to engage with decision-makers.



Tailored Account Penetration with Custom Content

contacted, when they'll be engaged, and through what channel requires close collaboration – not only among the Sales team but also with Marketing. Leads are no longer handed off like a baton in a relay race, ABM is a team effort from beginning to end.

When Sales is attempting to engage the identified key players at an account Marketing provides support that maximizes time and interactions. By providing hyper-personalized content that speaks directly to the needs of prospects, Marketing gives Sales a leg-up in creating genuine connections.

Content like emails, case studies, presentations, and eBooks that have been personalized are much more likely to resonate with a prospect – and signal that you take their wants and needs seriously. [Marketo reports](#) that “67% of prospects value content created for their specific job functions.”

As both teams work an account there will be a free-flow of information that goes both ways. Insights gleaned from interactions and engagements will provide opportunities to further refine and improve strategies.

Statistics about content is one area where Sales has generally not paid much attention. What pieces of content someone reads, how long they read, or what sections they paid attention to, are not traditionally taken advantage of in a lead gen setting. (They can be tough to get a hold of, even if Sales wanted to – [Aberdeen reports](#) that only 27% of B2B marketers track content utilization statistics.) Perhaps besides a cursory mention about a piece of content a prospect read in an outreach email, these insights generally go unutilized.

By tracking which pieces of content, and what sections within that content, prospects engage with, Sales is able to gain a clearer understanding of who they're targeting and what specifically piques their interest. Tracking these insights allows for tailored follow-up that specifically addresses the concepts and ideas the prospect most engaged with. Content usage statistics also provide an opportunity to prioritize efforts based on prospect engagement; no more blindly choosing who to engage. With all of this information available, it's about how the insights are utilized to find heightened success.

Account Expansion Opportunities

Successfully executing an ABM strategy provides Sales with the intelligence necessary for embarking on account expansion and upsell opportunities. The early stages of the ABM process – account identification, account mapping, outreach with custom content – provide the opportunity to form deep connections that can be used to expand within the account. In fact, according to the [Alterra Group](#), “84% of marketers said that ABM had significant benefits to retaining and expanding existing client relationships.”

When Sales is successful at winning a targeted account it is because they have done the hard work of knowing the organization inside and out. So, instead of treating an account expansion target like a completely new opportunity as may be the case in non-ABM situations, Sales can leverage their existing relationships to push for meetings and deeper account penetration.

Because of the intimate knowledge of the account Sales can identify champions – people who are likely to praise the product or solution within their own organization. These champions will be instrumental in providing word-of-mouth support and introducing key decision makers in different divisions or departments. Marketing again supports Sales by providing intelligence on departmental layout and identifying who will be important to engage.

In addition, Sales will be aided with more custom content that will contain even more relevant data. Marketing can use statistics about that very account to create content that clearly states benefits.

Account expansion and Account Based Marketing go hand-in-hand. The first closed deal within a targeted account is only the tip of the iceberg. After that, Sales is able to leverage relationships to create new opportunities and find new avenues for expansion.

ABM positions sellers for increased win rates and hyper-targeted efforts maximizing their time and effectiveness within large target accounts. Account Based Marketing is an incredibly powerful strategy that gives Sales the chance to utilize their skills and assets in new and engaging ways.

Understanding how Account Based Marketing effects both Marketing and Sales provides a strong foundation for moving forward. The next step is to begin the process of actually implementing your strategy.

84%

of marketers said that ABM had **significant benefits** to retaining and expanding existing **client relationships**

Three Pillars of ABM



**Collaboration Between
Marketing & Sales**



**Hyper-Relevant, Hyper-Personalized
Content & Messaging**



**Engaging the Right Prospect
at the Right Time**

03

Implement an Account Based Marketing Framework

Account Based Marketing as a strategy is not something that can be undertaken on a whim. It takes a serious level of commitment and strategizing to produce worthwhile results; there are no half-measures when it comes to ABM. But, this strategy is not restricted to particular types of organizations. Any organization can implement Account Based Marketing, it's just a matter of how the approach is calibrated.

The question you face when executing an ABM plan is: efficiency or effectiveness? Depending on the revenue structure of your organization one tactic will make more sense than the other. An efficiency model will be focused on utilizing resources and producing the best results possible with those resources. Focusing on effectiveness will result in closing as many deals with targeted accounts as possible, potentially at the cost of efficiency. Both have their benefits and downsides, and the decision as to what course to take will be unique to each organization.

No matter the approach taken, Account Based Marketing can provide huge opportunities and unlock a level of Sales and Marketing alignment that might not exist in a traditional setting. DemandBase reports that 70% of companies that use an ABM strategy say their Sales and Marketing teams are either completely or mostly aligned; only 51% of non-ABM organizations say the same.

The benefits are clear from a revenue standpoint, as well. [DemandBase](#) also found that average contract values increase when using an ABM approach: mid-market accounts saw a 40% higher value, and enterprise level saw a 35% increase.

It's evident that Account Based Marketing provides many positives, from improved Sales and Marketing alignment to a demonstrable increase in business. But if ABM were easy, everyone would be doing it. So how do you implement this strategy?

Let's take a look at an Account Based Marketing framework that provides insights into how an ABM strategy should be structured. Below are three non-negotiables for getting Account Based Marketing off the ground for any organization.



Average contract value
increase using ABM:

40%

For mid-market accounts,

35%

at enterprise level



Sales and Marketing Alignment

Before anything else, Sales and Marketing must meet to make sure they are on the same page. Without [Sales and Marketing alignment](#), Account Based Marketing cannot survive. Getting both teams in the same room to lay the groundwork to spearheading ABM. An initial meeting will cover many different topics including:

- Determining the amount of coverage available for dedicating resources to ABM efforts
- Agreeing on responsibilities and roles for every team member involved
- Devising data points and benchmarks that will provide helpful insights into how successful the ABM program is

After this meeting, Sales and Marketing should both have a good understanding of their role – and how they are going to support each other's initiatives. This understanding will create a more open environment in which each department is aware of what the other is doing and comfortable sharing information.

ABM is unique for its ability to bring Sales and Marketing teams together. This is crucial for the next step in the Account Based Marketing Framework.



Customer Profile

Of course, the entire idea behind Account Based Marketing is to focus your efforts on a handful of targets. It stands to reason then, that one of the most important parts of implementing ABM is determining the criteria for selecting these targets. Creating a target list is undoubtedly essential, but it doesn't come without its challenges.

Critical qualifications need to be determined to produce an appropriate and reasonable list of accounts to target. After the initial meeting between Sales and Marketing to determine basics like available resources, each department needs to perform tribal research to discover qualifications that will be important to ensuring their success.

The considerations for what qualifies an account can include:

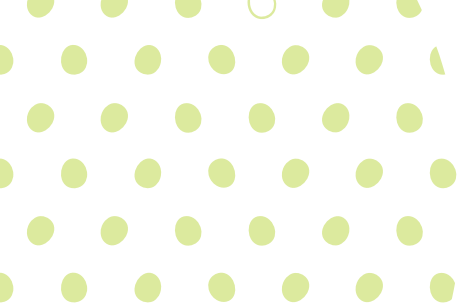
- **Revenue:** depending on the size of your organization, filtering target accounts by revenue is an easy way to determine initial fit.
- **Revenue:** the target account growing in such a way that they will be receptive to your efforts and solutions?
- **Competitor Accounts:** are there specific accounts that currently work with your competitors that could have the potential to be won over?

Also important to take into account are any threads that connect current clients that can be extrapolated into overarching themes. If you can derive trends from won deals, leverage that information to inform the kind of accounts you should be targeting.

This will be an ongoing process. As opportunities are won, lost, or postponed, it will be necessary to replenish the list of targets with qualified accounts. Every data point will be instructive in informing the set of qualifications. As your ABM strategy matures, your target list will become smarter and produce more opportunities.

But before you get there, you need to get ready to launch your Account Based Marketing plan.





Go-to-Market Plan

When Sales and Marketing are aligned and a solid list of target accounts is in place, it's time to think about actually launching your Account Based Marketing efforts.

Initially, there may be some reorganizing of roles and responsibilities as team members focus more (or all) of their efforts on ABM. For seasoned Sales and Marketing professionals this may pose a challenge. While tactics and techniques for ABM aren't dissimilar to traditional lead-gen strategies, the way they are deployed requires a degree of recalibration.

It's important that everyone is on the same page when it comes to their efforts in making ABM a success. One key component that is necessary to convey is that personalization and measurement should be overlaying every single activity that is undertaken. Personalization is critical for establishing relationships with target accounts. Measurement is necessary for analyzing which efforts are successful and which need fine tuning. These are not new concepts, but they are even more critically important for Account Based Marketing.

Regular communication between Sales and Marketing will be key in ensuring the success of your efforts. Scheduling meetings, creating calendars for activities, recording agreed upon strategies, detailing what everyone is responsible for, and establishing spreadsheets to document all of the data that will be generated, are critical in the ramp up to launching Account Based Marketing.

Having the necessary infrastructure in place to launch your Account Based Marketing strategy will provide everyone with a strong chance of succeeding, and allow you to hit the ground running. Successfully implementing ABM requires dedication and planning but when done right, it produces results that make it all worthwhile.

Once everything has been implemented properly, it's necessary to measure your efforts. The categories and activities that are measured are crucial for providing an overview of your Account Based Marketing strategy's performance, and allows you to make important decisions about the program moving forward.

03

Pinpoint success metrics to uncover the effectiveness of your strategy

Account Based Marketing comes with expectations that it will lead to success and drive growth, and rightly so. Teams are reconfigured, resources are allocated in new ways, and traditional strategies are deployed differently. It's a significant undertaking for any organization – and requires plenty of planning.

To start with, you need to gain a full understanding of exactly what ABM means for both Marketing and Sales. Then comes actually implementing the strategy using a framework; carefully following a plan is imperative for ensuring everything is set up for success. Once everything is put in place, and work is being done to land target accounts, it's necessary to have strategies in place to analyze your efforts. Measuring Account Based Marketing efforts is crucial because studying results will inform future decisions and actionable improvements.

As with most aspects of ABM, there is no catchall that will work for every organization. Account Based Marketing is both an art and a science – there will be aspects that are seen across all successful ABM efforts, and then there will be factors unique to each case that are the result of diligence, tinkering, and intuition.

With that said, there are broad categories that every Account Based Marketing strategy should be measuring. Let's take a look at what those categories are, the metrics they contain, and why they matter.





Account Coverage

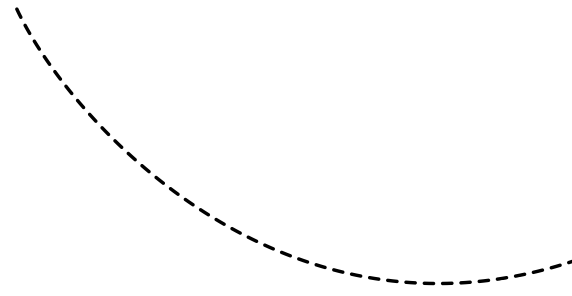
When it comes to Account Based Marketing, knowledge is power. The clearer the picture, and the better understanding you have of your target accounts, the more likely you are to succeed. Developing key intelligence on prospects is one of the first steps of launching ABM at your organization. This research serves as the jumping off point for penetrating an account.

As relationships are developed and decision makers are engaged account maps will take different shapes. These are fluid situations that will be changing from day to day. As such, it's crucial to record and measure an account's coverage.

The data for measuring your coverage should come from Marketing and Sales sharing intelligence freely. Any and all insights are important for building a complete profile of an account. ABM program wide metrics on coverage are also a good way of tracking overall success. Track the following to determine the level of coverage an account has:

- The contacts within an account that have been identified, and their level of influence
- Number of contacts within the account that have been engaged
- The amount of accounts that have been properly researched
- The number of accounts that have been engaged, and to what level

Analyzing this information on account coverage will reveal gaps within the accounts. This whitespace represents places where you can focus attention and fill in blanks to create a better foundation for engaging with accounts.





Account Engagement

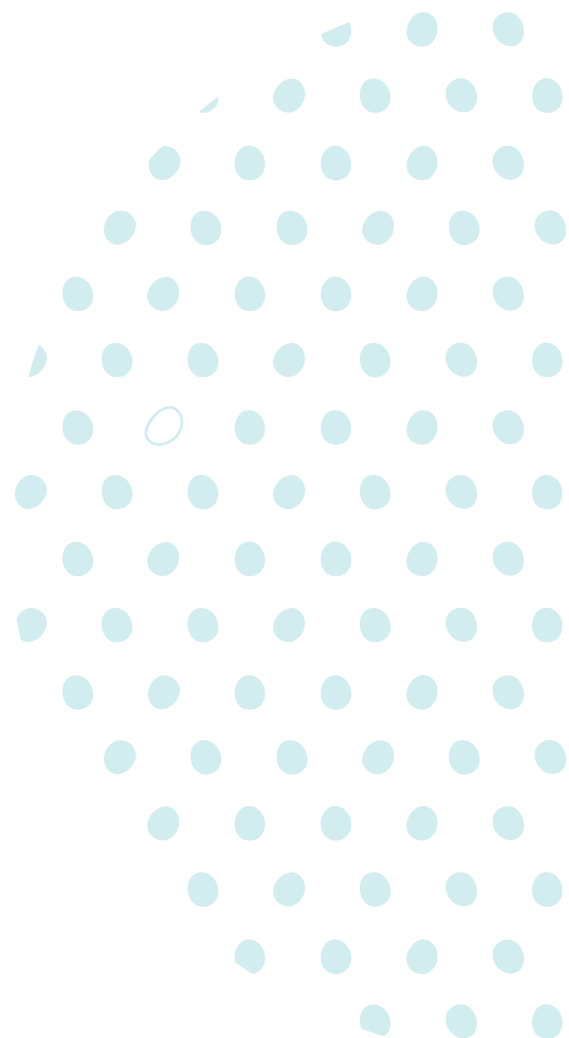
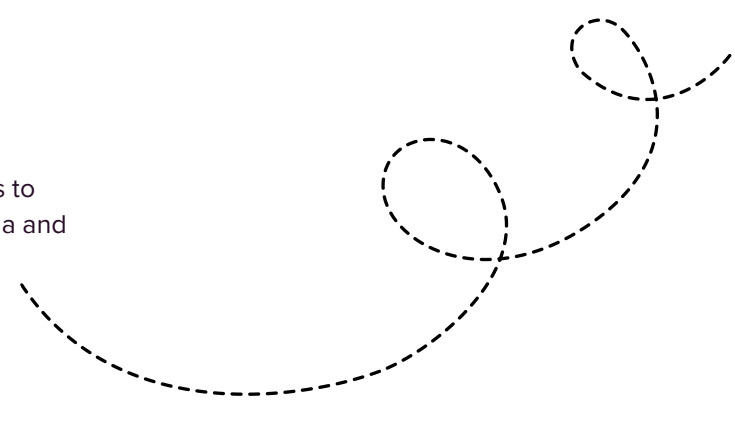
The most complex measurements will be grouped under the category of account engagement. Engagement is the bread and butter of Account Based Marketing, and measuring the touches happening with an account is vital for assessing the effectiveness of your strategy. Both Marketing and Sales will be partaking in a variety of activities that all have the end goal of driving engagement. However, not every activity will carry the same weight and so it is important to provide context for what is considered successful engagement. Marketing's activities will be focused on driving account-level demand through digital marketing and personalized content. The metrics that should be measured include but are not limited to:

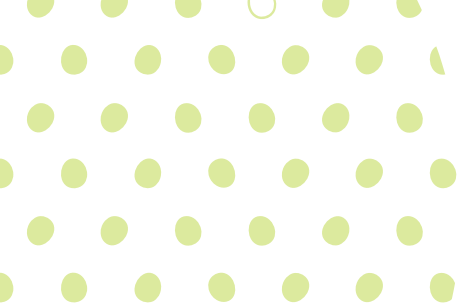
- Responses to personalized web and advertising experiences
- Open and click through rates on targeted email campaigns
- Attendance at events like webinars
- [Content analytics](#) statistics such as which documents were opened, what pages were viewed, and time spent on individual pages
- Where in the buyer's journey people are engaging with particular pieces of content

Sales will leverage the work being done by Marketing to drive their own engagements. Their engagements will be more personal and interactive, as expected. But tracking these metrics is just as important for gaining a clear picture of how every aspect of your Account Based Marketing strategy is performing. Sales metrics will include:

- The number of smaller interactions with key contacts such as phone calls or personal emails back and forth
- The amount of demos or in-depth conversations about a product or service, depending on your organizations offerings
- In-person meetings and presentations to key stakeholders

The weight and importance that is placed on these metrics for both teams – or if they're even tracked at all – will be unique to every organization. Depending on your organization's goal when it comes to Account Based Marketing you will need to develop a unique formula and blend that places these metrics into the proper context.





Conversion Metrics

In the end, what ABM comes down to is: Are we selling better than we were before? When it comes to answering that question, the metrics will look very similar to standard sales metrics. But this data will be the end result of many new and different processes that have been put in place. Account Based Marketing is a holistic approach where every step of the process is as important as the next. Conversion metrics will reveal if all of your work has been worth the effort. The metrics to track here are:

- **Velocity:** how quickly are prospects being identified and how quickly are prospects becoming opportunities?
- **Sales cycle lengths:** these will typically be longer than normal due to the size and effort required to close ABM deals, but it's important to get a baseline for the average time you'll be spending to close deals.
- **Conversion rates:** how many actual opportunities are being converted into closed deals?
- **Deal sizes:** average deal sizes should increase using Account Based Marketing ([DemandBase](#) found that contract values for mid-market accounts are 40% larger, and enterprise saw 35% larger deals.)

Ultimately, all of these metrics serve to provide insights that will be helpful in determining what accounts to target in the future, what strategies to use to engage those accounts, and the expectations for success with any particular account.

ABM Success Checklist

Use the below checklist to determine if your organization has taken all the necessary steps to ensure success with your Account Based Marketing strategy.

☐ **Sales and Marketing Buy-In**

The sales and marketing teams need to be debriefed on their individual placement within the larger picture of Account Based Marketing. Resources will need to be shifted and roles will evolve. Ensuring both teams are fully on board – and aware of what their commitment will be – is a crucial first step.

☐ **Initial Sales and Marketing Meeting**

Once both teams are onboard, they need to get together to plot out a cohesive strategy for ensuring lines of communication will remain open and information will flow freely between both teams. Sales and Marketing should become closely aligned, another benefit of ABM. A major take away from this meeting will be an agreement on target account parameters.

☐ **Identify Target Accounts**

Using agreed upon characteristics, identify your initial list of target accounts. These accounts will need to possess qualities such as company size, revenue, and industry that make sense for your organization's business model.

☐ **Account Mapping**

In-depth prospecting of each account will reveal how buyers are connected within an organization, determine likely decision-makers, and who will be a champion for your efforts. These account maps will provide a clear picture of the accounts you are targeting and let you better tailor your efforts.

☐ **Marketing Initiatives Begin**

In-depth prospecting of each account will reveal how buyers are connected within an organization, determine likely decision-makers, and who will be a champion for your efforts. These account maps will provide a clear picture of the accounts you are targeting and let you better tailor your efforts.

☐ **Sales Outreach Starts**

Sales begins with their touches. These include personalized one-on-one emails and phone calls, custom content delivery, and custom presentations tailored to individual needs. Content usage analytics will be key to determining what content resonates best.

☐ **Measurements In Place**

Finally, all Account Based Marketing activities should be measured for analysis purposes. Record the level of account coverage, how engaged (and in what ways) each account is, and conversion metrics that reveal the success of your Account Based Marketing strategy.

Customer Profile

Account Based Marketing is an incredibly powerful strategy that combines a whole host of tools and concepts to drive higher levels of engagement and increase deal sizes.

Today's landscape of Sales and Marketing has shifted towards placing more importance on personal connections and custom content. Now, more than ever, it is crucial to have a keen understanding of your buyers – their pain points, needs, and journeys. Account Based Marketing has evolved as a way to take advantage of traditional sales and marketing activities in this personalization environment.

Through ABM, Sales and Marketing reach a stronger alignment. Each department's activities are as important as the others, and to succeed there needs to be a free flow of information back and forth. This naturally reduces the barrier between the two, leading to stronger collaboration and better results.

In the end, Account Based Marketing is practically a self-fulfilling prophecy. It requires intense research, carefully crafted content, unique outreaches, and detailed analysis. If all of those are done at a high level with dedication and collaboration, the results are sure to follow.

Create Better Content

Guide: Creating Buyer-Focused Content That Helps Sales Win

[Learn More](#)



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