2019 ABM Benchmark Survey Report

Research Shows Buying
Committees Engaging And
Rewarding Agility And Relevance
Of Potential Solution Providers

50% of respondents have had their ABM initiatives in place for more than a year, while 25% have been practicing ABM between 6-12 months.

Introduction

As B2B marketers prepare for a new decade, they are increasingly aware that an effective account-based strategy will be critical to meeting their goals around revenue growth, improving customer experience and getting a leg up on the competition.

Therefore, progressive B2B organizations say they are looking for ways to incorporate their ABM learnings into their demand generation initiatives to streamline acquisition and find balance in their go-to-market strategy. They are also looking to better integrate ABM tools and tactics such as web personalization, account-based advertising and use of intent data into their core CRM and marketing automation platforms (MAPs).

While many companies still strive to take their ABM strategies to the next level with deeper intelligence and personalization on accounts, new research shows account-based marketing has moved well beyond the hype cycle and is now a well-entrenched part of overall go-to-market strategy within B2B.

The fourth annual *ABM Benchmark Study*, conducted by *Demand Gen Report* and *ABM in Action*, found that half of the respondents (50%) have had their initiatives in place for more than a year, while 25% have been practicing ABM between six and twelve months. Only 6% of respondents said they are not doing ABM yet.

How would you describe your ABM initiatives?
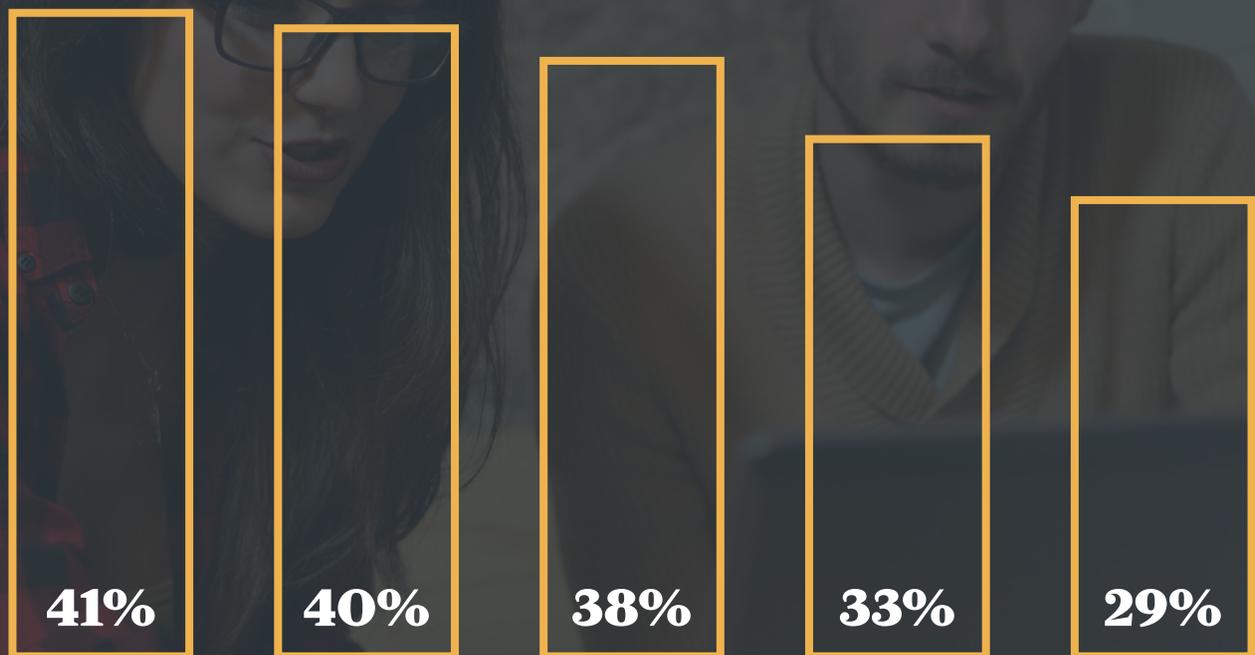
41%
We practice ABM Lite or a Named Account Model (1:Few)

40%
We're using our current tech stack (CRM, MAP, etc.) to target certain accounts

38%
We practice Programmatic ABM (1:Many)

33%
We're in the early stages and testing our ABM program

29%
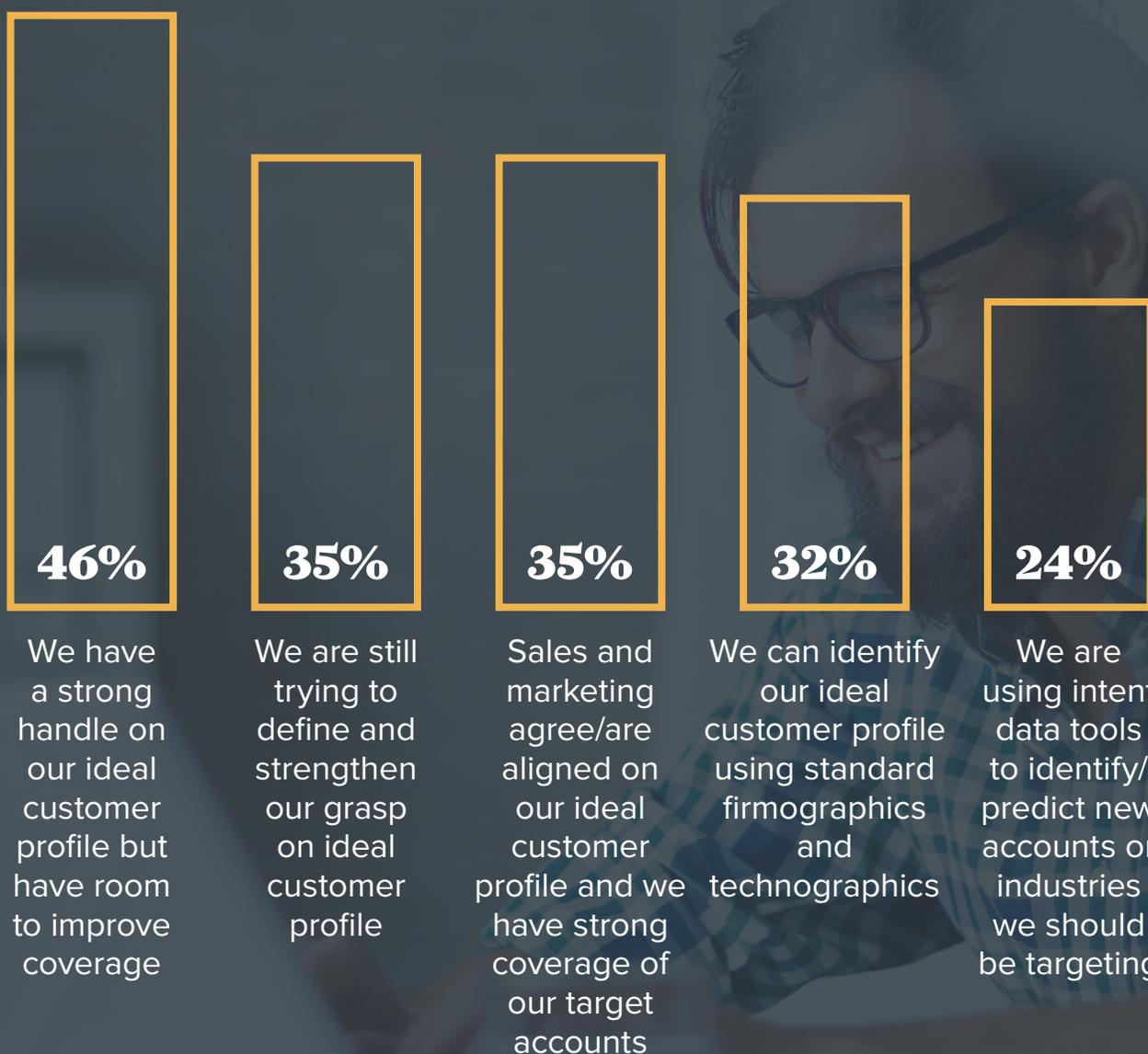We practice Strategic ABM or a Large Account Model (1:1)

In terms of next step priorities for ABM, the research showed that 33% are still in the early stages of their programs and many are looking to overcome ongoing challenges around alignment (46%), ROI measurement (43%) and data enrichment (22%) to improve their practice.

The new research also showed that ABM practitioners are prioritizing becoming smarter about their account-selection process and are striving to obtain as much intelligence on their accounts and buying committees as possible. Almost half of respondents (46%) noted they have a strong handle on their Ideal Customer Profile (ICP) but have room to improve coverage, while those still trying to define and strengthen their grasp on ICP decreased from 38% in 2018 to 35% this year.

The opportunity for a more data-centric approach to accounts was also underscored by an overwhelming majority of organizations still relying on manual selection, with almost all respondents still using sales-team-selected accounts (93%). However, the respondents did show plans to rely more heavily on data for account selection in the coming months, with more than three quarters of respondents currently using or planning to use firmographic data in their initiatives (78%).

When thinking about which accounts to include in your existing or potential ABM program:

46%
We have a strong handle on our ideal customer profile but have room to improve coverage

35%
We are still trying to define and strengthen our grasp on ideal customer profile

35%
Sales and marketing agree/are aligned on our ideal customer profile and we have strong coverage of our target accounts

32%
We can identify our ideal customer profile using standard firmographics and technographics

24%
We are using intent data tools to identify/ predict new accounts or industries we should be targeting
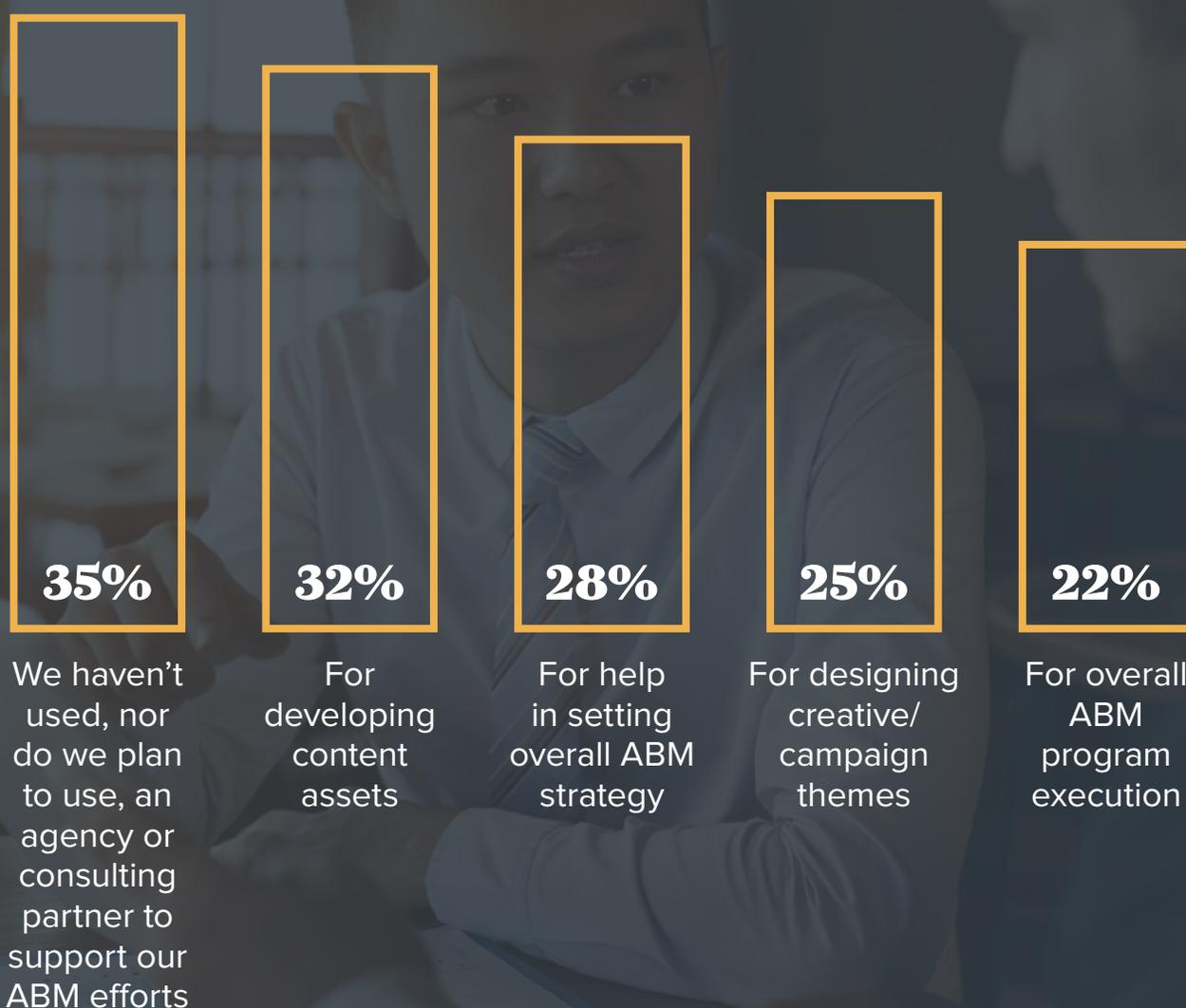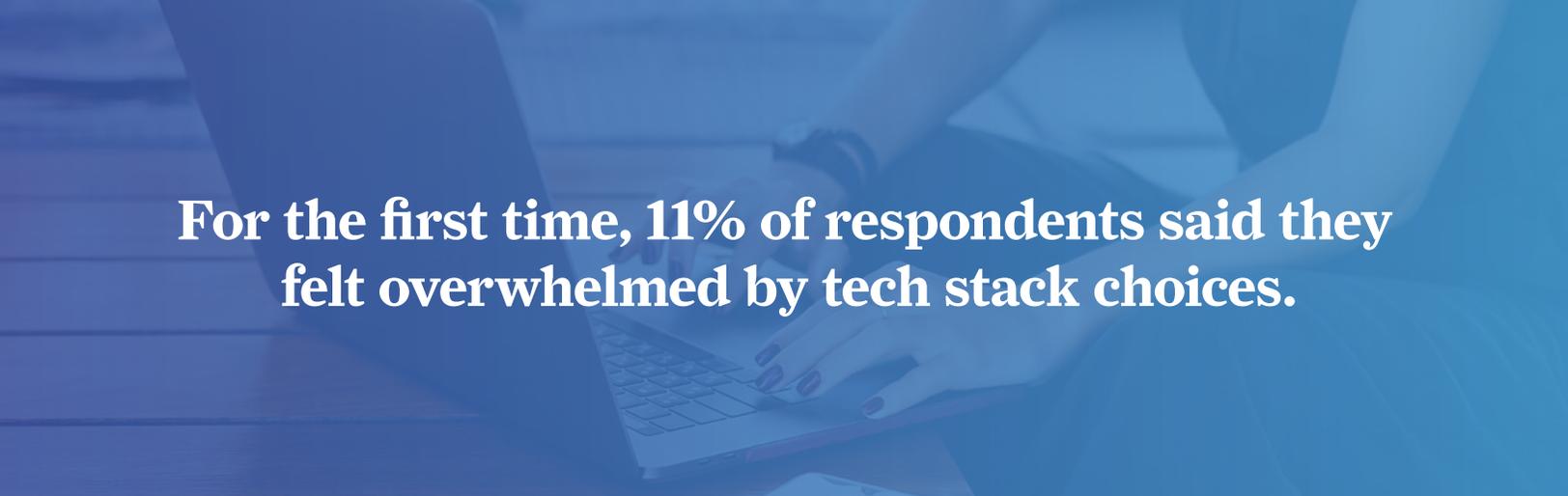
Additional key findings from the survey include:

- **A stronger focus on customized experiences with targeted, tailored content** to specific industries (68%), specific roles (62%) and based on challenges and needs of the account (52%);

- **Increased balance of ABM and acquisition strategies**, with 40% of respondents saying they have integrated their demand gen and ABM processes to streamline marketing efforts;

- **Steady satisfaction rates around ABM initiatives**, with 69% saying their account-based efforts have met or exceeded expectations;

- **Positive impacts** businesses are seeing from ABM strategies, including better sales and marketing alignment, more efficient use of marketing resources, faster sales cycles and a clearer path to ROI; and

- **More involvement from different departments** in the ABM process, with higher incorporation of demand gen (21%) compared to last year (14%), and customer success (44%).

In which ways have you used, or plan to use, an agency or consulting partner to support your ABM efforts?

35%

We haven't used, nor do we plan to use, an agency or consulting partner to support our ABM efforts

32%

For developing content assets

28%

For help in setting overall ABM strategy

25%

For designing creative/ campaign themes

22%

For overall ABM program execution

For the first time, 11% of respondents said they felt overwhelmed by tech stack choices.

Top Priorities & ABM Challenges For 2020 And Beyond

Looking ahead to the next phase of their ABM programs, respondents focused on continuing to tighten sales and marketing alignment, improve their ability to prove ROI/attribution of their programs, personalize at scale and identify/predict accounts that are "in-market."

Interestingly, all of these priorities and current challenges point to B2B brands taking a more data-centric approach to their ABM plays.

The survey showed that challenges around determining how many accounts to target has decreased, as 22% reported these pain points in 2018 and only 15% in 2019.
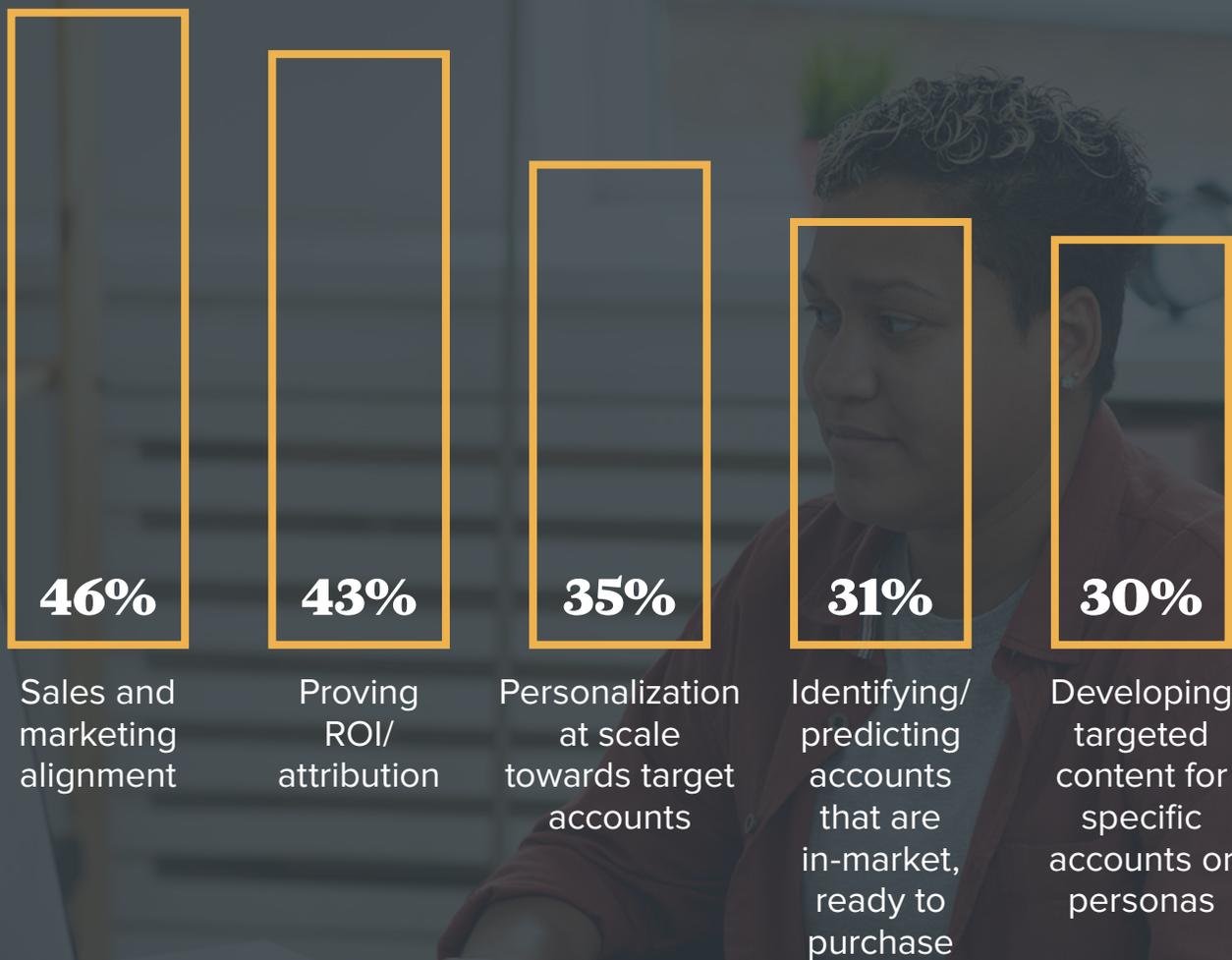
Other key challenges highlighted by respondents include:

- Personalization at scale towards target accounts (35%);

- Identifying/predicting accounts that are in-market, ready to purchase (31%);

- Developing target content for specific accounts and personas (30%);

- Lack of internal resources (28%); and

- Scaling existing ABM efforts (25%).

Another rising ABM challenge facing organizations is a lack of executive support, which rose from 7% in 2018 to 13% in 2019. Without addressing these underlying hurdles, attribution and alignment will continue to be a challenge.

Surprisingly, while new technologies and applications have been some of the key drivers of the ABM boom in recent years, the survey did show B2B teams are now seeing the expansion of solutions as a potential pain point. For the first time, more than one in 10 (11%) of respondents said they felt overwhelmed by tech stack choices.

What are your biggest ABM-related challenges?

46%
Sales and marketing alignment

43%
Proving ROI/attribution

35%
Personalization at scale towards target accounts

31%
Identifying/predicting accounts that are in-market, ready to purchase

30%
Developing targeted content for specific accounts or personas

60% of B2B orgs are employing campaign execution and orchestration tools for ABM.

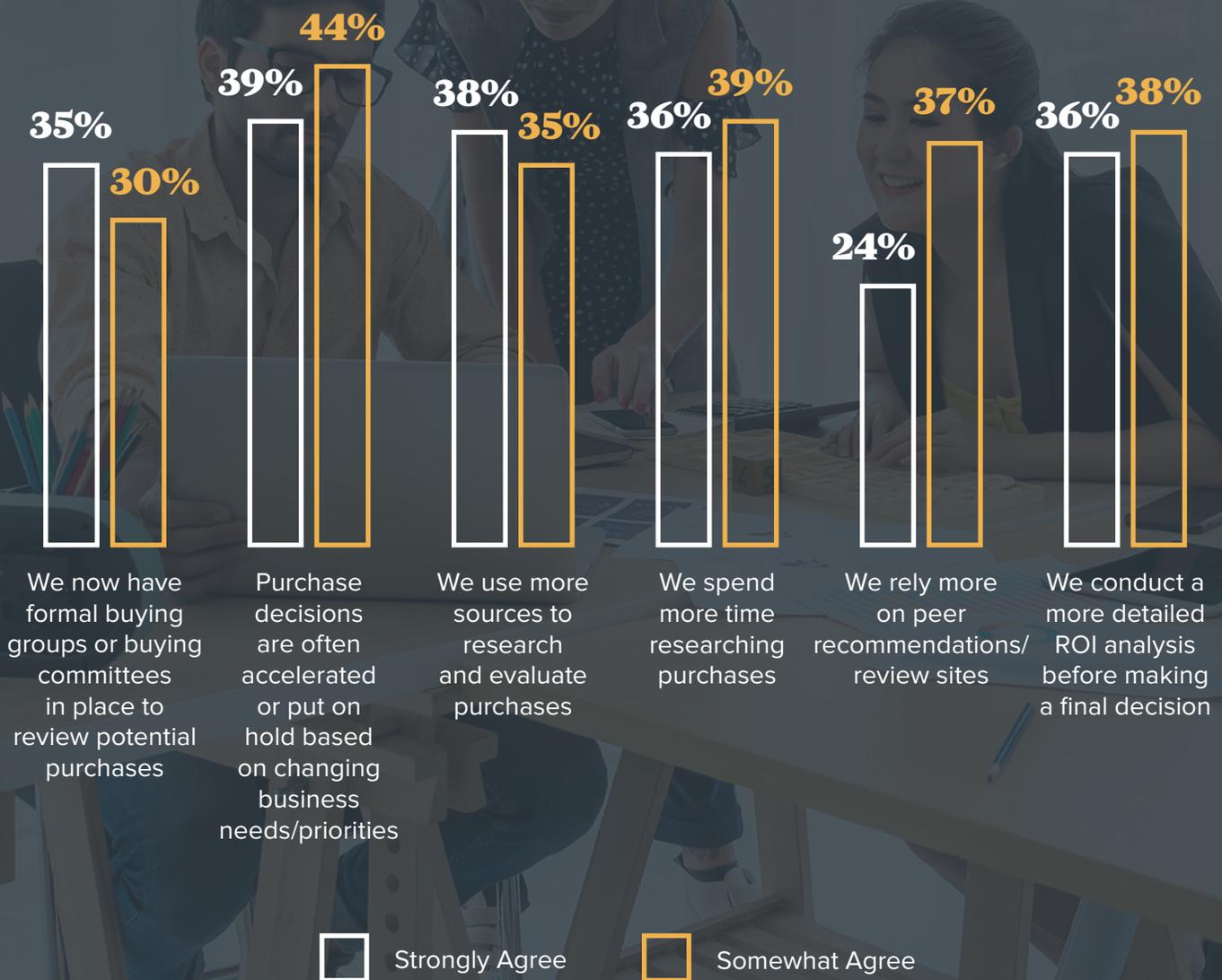## Aligning Data-Rich Solutions To ABM Strategies A New Imperative

When it comes to the tools and technologies companies are currently using or planning to use, the survey revealed that integrating a deeper level of intelligence into both marketing and sales strategies is a top priority.

The list of technologies currently in use to support was dominated by core platforms such as CRM (91%), MAP (83%) and measurement and reporting tools (77%). However, the survey also showed a large segment of B2B organizations are already employing data-centric tools, including campaign execution and orchestration (60%), direct mail platforms (57%), web personalization (50%), intent monitoring, account-based advertising tools and data augmentation tools (all 47%).

Taking a deeper dive into the technologies that topped the list for planned roll-outs, the priorities were:

- Web personalization;

- Insights and intelligence tools;

- Data augmentation;

- Predictive analytics;

- Account-based advertising; and

- Intent monitoring tools.

Please rate how each of the following aspects of your purchase process have changed over the past year:

35% — We now have formal buying groups or buying committees in place to review potential purchases

30% — (Somewhat Agree for above)

39% — Purchase decisions are often accelerated or put on hold based on changing business needs/priorities

44% — (Somewhat Agree for above)

38% — We use more sources to research and evaluate purchases

35% — (Somewhat Agree for above)

36% — We spend more time researching purchases

39% — (Somewhat Agree for above)

24% — We rely more on peer recommendations/ review sites

37% — (Somewhat Agree for above)

36% — We conduct a more detailed ROI analysis before making a final decision

38% — (Somewhat Agree for above)

☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Somewhat Agree

With the survey showing most brands are moving beyond the initial phases of ABM rollouts, it also revealed that they are increasingly looking outside of their company for help and expertise on boosting the effectiveness of their ABM programs.

The top areas where respondents said they plan to use agencies or consultants for account-based programs included:

- 32% for developing content assets;

- 28% for help in setting up an overall ABM strategy;

- 25% for designing creative/campaign themes; and

- 18% for account selection/prioritization.

Other responses included looking for help in selecting the right technologies, supporting martech stack operations and setting up paid campaigns.

80% of marketers still rely heavily on sales-team-selected accounts to target.

Data-Driven Account Selection A Growing Priority

The foundational step of building out an account list and then augmenting that list with relevant contacts from the buying committees of those accounts has proven to be a challenge and area of opportunity for most organizations.

In terms of defining their ABM strategy, the research showed a slight shift towards focusing on a larger number of accounts, with a quarter (25%) of respondents focused on targeting one to 50 accounts, which was higher in 2018 (33%). Another quarter (25%) said they are targeting 100 to 500 accounts, compared to 13% targeting that number of accounts last year.
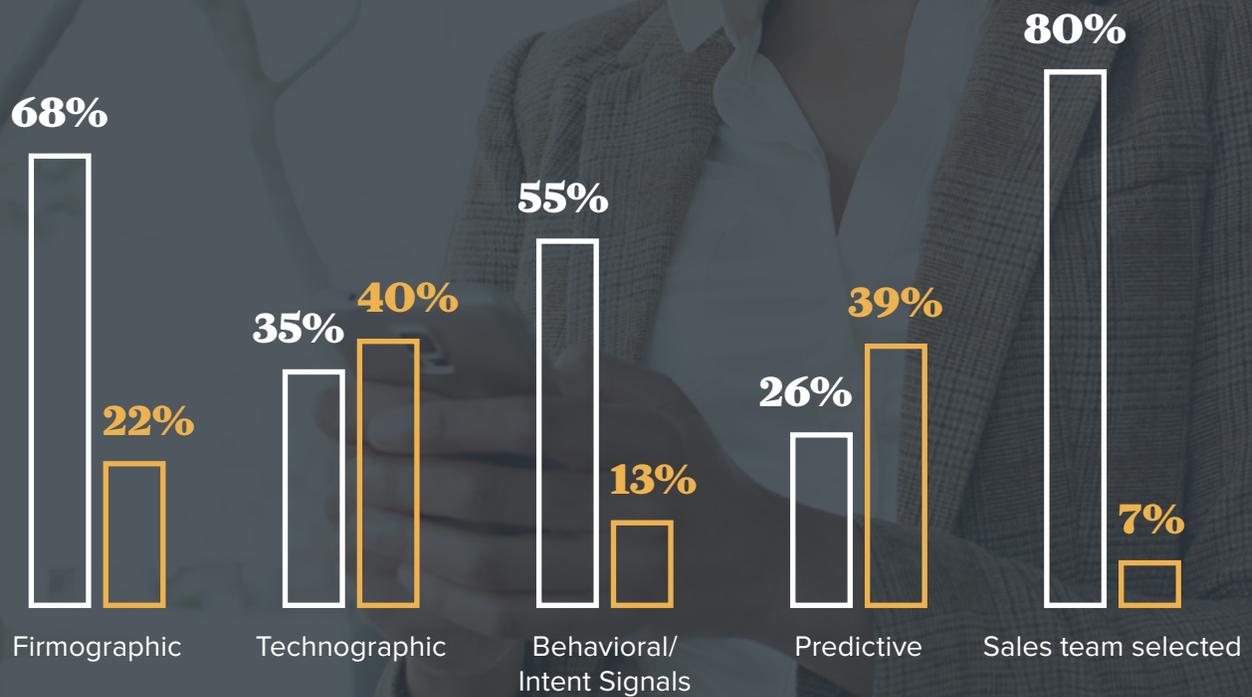
These findings also aligned with how respondents categorized their ABM initiatives, with 41% saying they take an "ABM Lite" approach (1:Few), 38% practicing Programmatic ABM (1:Many) and 29% having a true strategic ABM strategy of 1:1.

When asked what data they plan to use to help build and formulate their targeted account list for ABM, the majority still rely heavily on sales-team-selected accounts to target (80%). However, 91% are either using or planning to use behavioral/intent signals to target their account lists.

Other types of data respondents are using, or planning to use, include:

- Firmographic data (78%);

- Predictive (61%); and

- Technographic (60%).

What data do you use, or plan to use, to help build and formulate your targeted account list for ABM?

68% Firmographic (Currently Using)
22% Firmographic (No Plans To Use)

35% Technographic (Currently Using)
40% Technographic (No Plans To Use)

55% Behavioral/Intent Signals (Currently Using)
13% Behavioral/Intent Signals (No Plans To Use)

26% Predictive (Currently Using)
39% Predictive (No Plans To Use)

80% Sales team selected (Currently Using)
7% Sales team selected (No Plans To Use)

Firmographic   Technographic   Behavioral/ Intent Signals   Predictive   Sales team selected
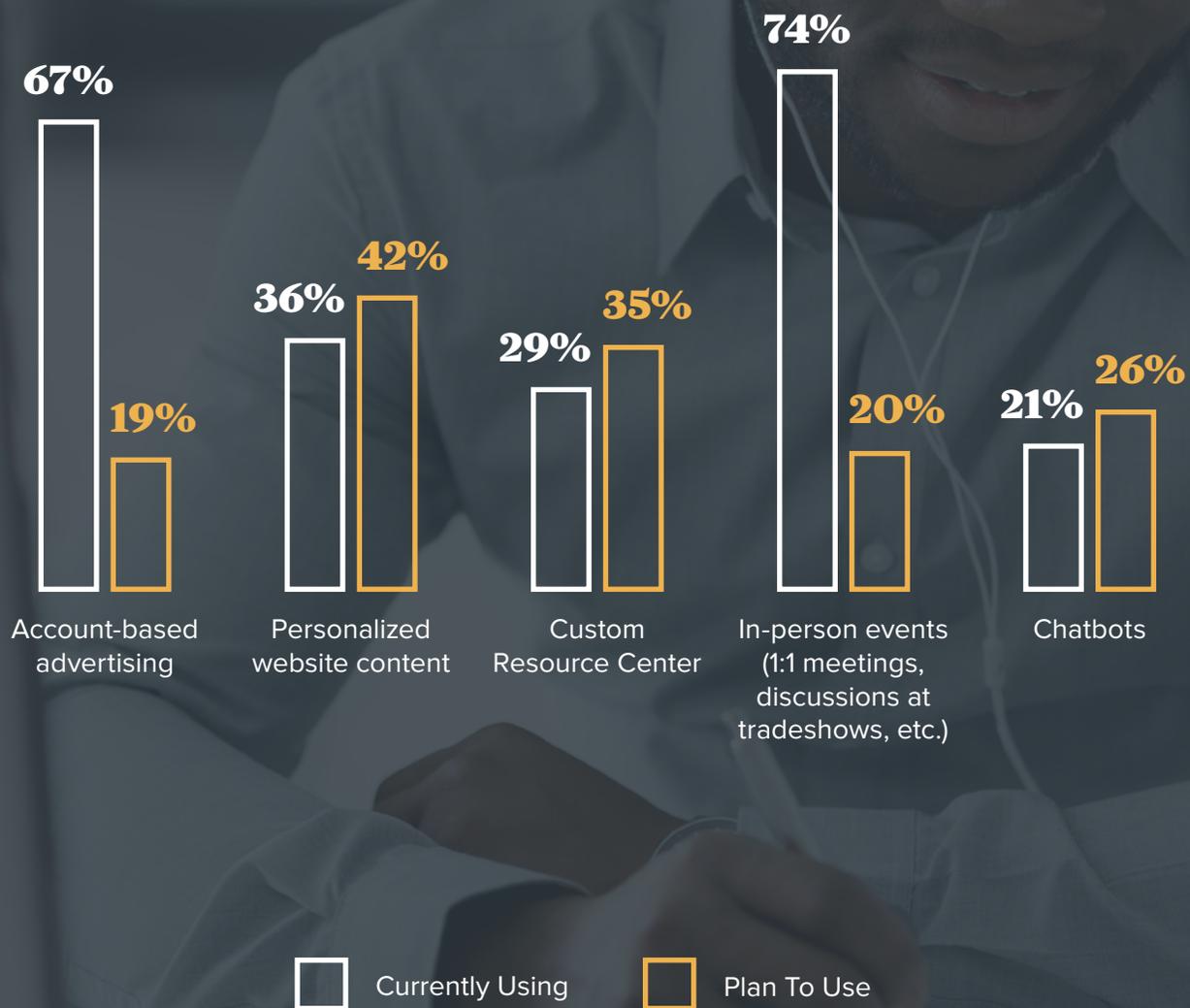
☐ Currently Using   ☐ No Plans To Use

After account lists have been selected and prioritized, marketing teams typically prioritize building out their contacts lists to reach as many members of the buying committee as possible with their ABM campaigns. Unfortunately, the research revealed that a large majority of respondents (78%) are still doing this manually with internal research to augment account profiles. But the research did show a significant shift towards working with data providers to gain deeper intelligence on their target audiences.

More than two-thirds (67%) said they are currently working or planning to work with a data provider to identify target roles and titles within key accounts, 71% are working/planning to work with a provider to add richer fields and information to their existing contacts, 64% are using/planning to use a provider to add intelligence and insights on key contacts and 54% are working with or planning to use a predictive analytics provider to build a list of likely buyers.

Which of the following channels are you using to engage your ABM account list?

67% Account-based advertising (Currently Using)
19% Account-based advertising (Plan To Use)

36% Personalized website content (Currently Using)
42% Personalized website content (Plan To Use)

29% Custom Resource Center (Currently Using)
35% Custom Resource Center (Plan To Use)

74% In-person events (1:1 meetings, discussions at tradeshows, etc.) (Currently Using)
20% In-person events (Plan To Use)

21% Chatbots (Currently Using)
26% Chatbots (Plan To Use)

☐ Currently Using ☐ Plan To Use

68% are creating targeted content tailored to specific industries to drive ABM.

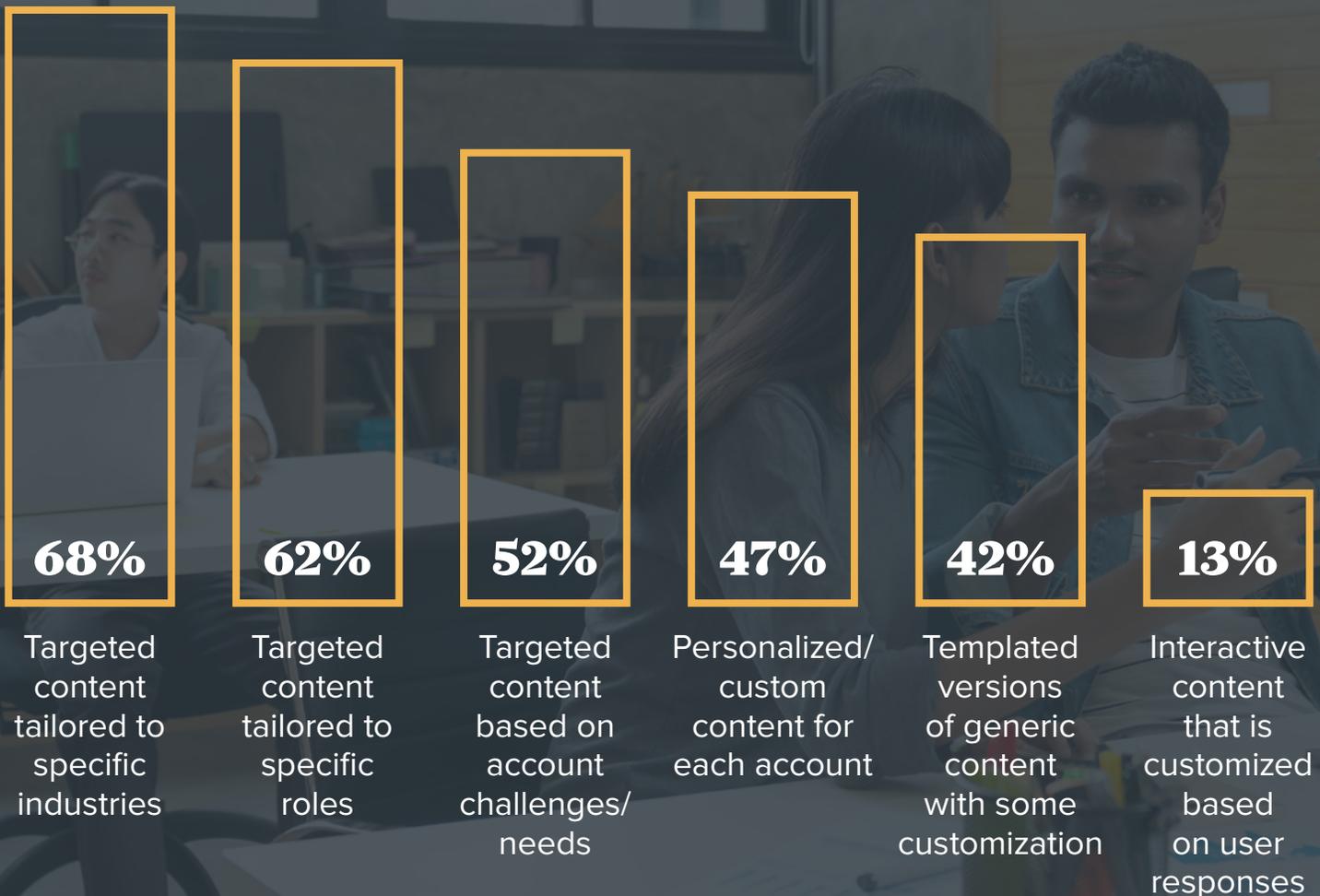## Expanding Engagement With Tailored Content, Interactive Experiences

Given that content and messaging are crucial to initial awareness and consideration phases of ABM programs, the research showed that a growing number of brands are increasing investments in making their campaigns, messaging and offers more customized to specific audiences.

Specifically, the types of content respondents indicated they are utilizing to drive ABM include:

- Targeted content tailored to specific industries (68%);

- Targeted content tailored to specific roles (62%); and

- Targeted content based on account challenges/needs (52%).

In terms of what type of content formats are the most important, the survey revealed that case studies (86%), articles and blogs (79%) and white papers (76%) reign supreme.

What type of messaging or content are you leveraging in your ABM outreach?
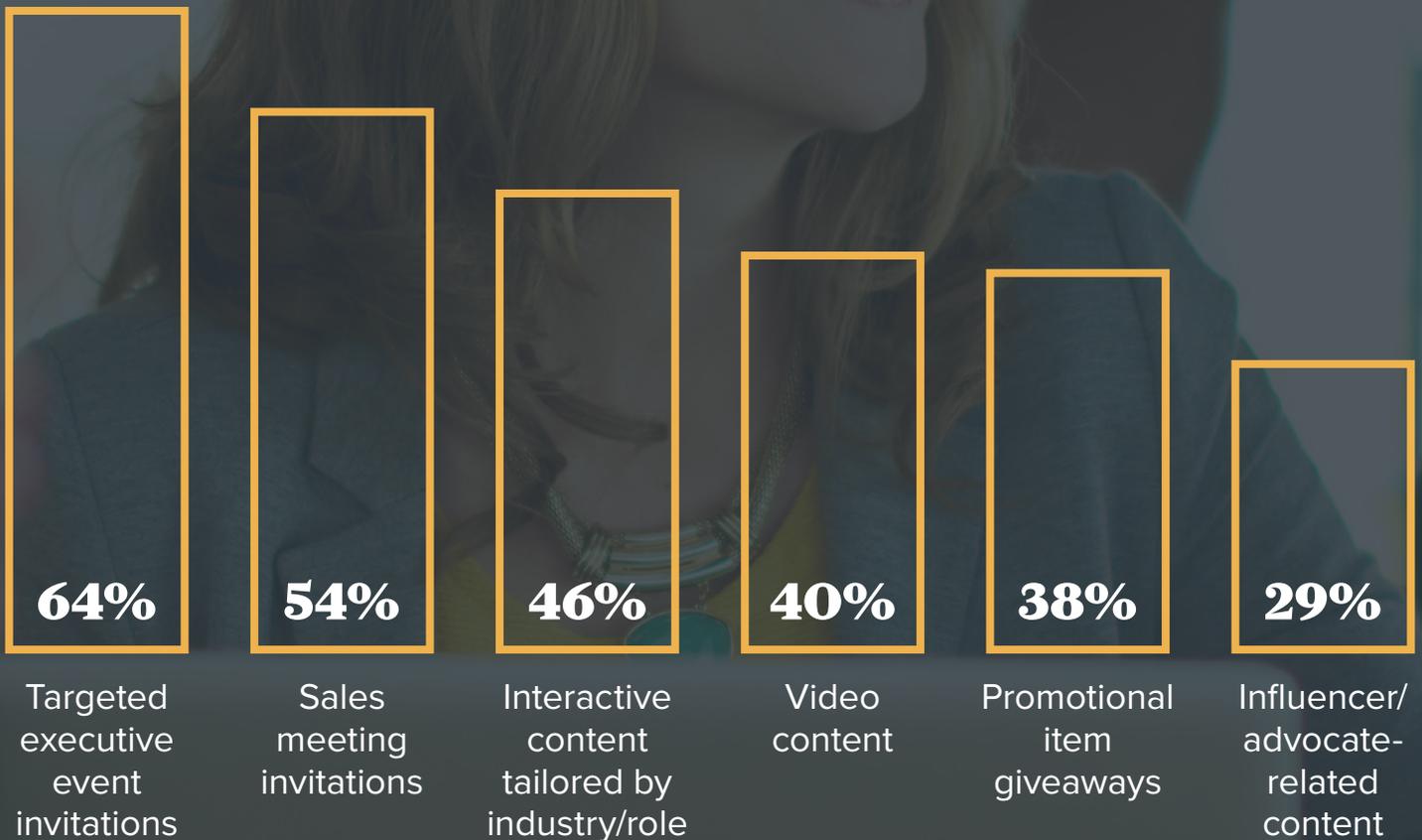
68%
Targeted content tailored to specific industries

62%
Targeted content tailored to specific roles

52%
Targeted content based on account challenges/ needs

47%
Personalized/ custom content for each account

42%
Templated versions of generic content with some customization

13%
Interactive content that is customized based on user responses

To further engage targeted accounts, the survey showed account teams are focused on offering different types of content and experiences, including:

- Targeted executive event invitations (64%);

- Sales meeting invitations (54%);

- Interactive content tailored by industry/role (46%); and

- Video content (40%).

Different channels are also being used to engage these audiences, with more than two-thirds using account-based advertising (67%) and 75% leveraging in-person events. Based on the findings, traditional messaging channels seem to be accommodating for the account-based mindset.

What type of content or experiences are you offering as part of your ABM initiatives?

64% Targeted executive event invitations

54% Sales meeting invitations

46% Interactive content tailored by industry/role

40% Video content

38% Promotional item giveaways

29% Influencer/advocate-related content

78% of respondents noted that Marketing Ops is most actively involved in the ABM process.
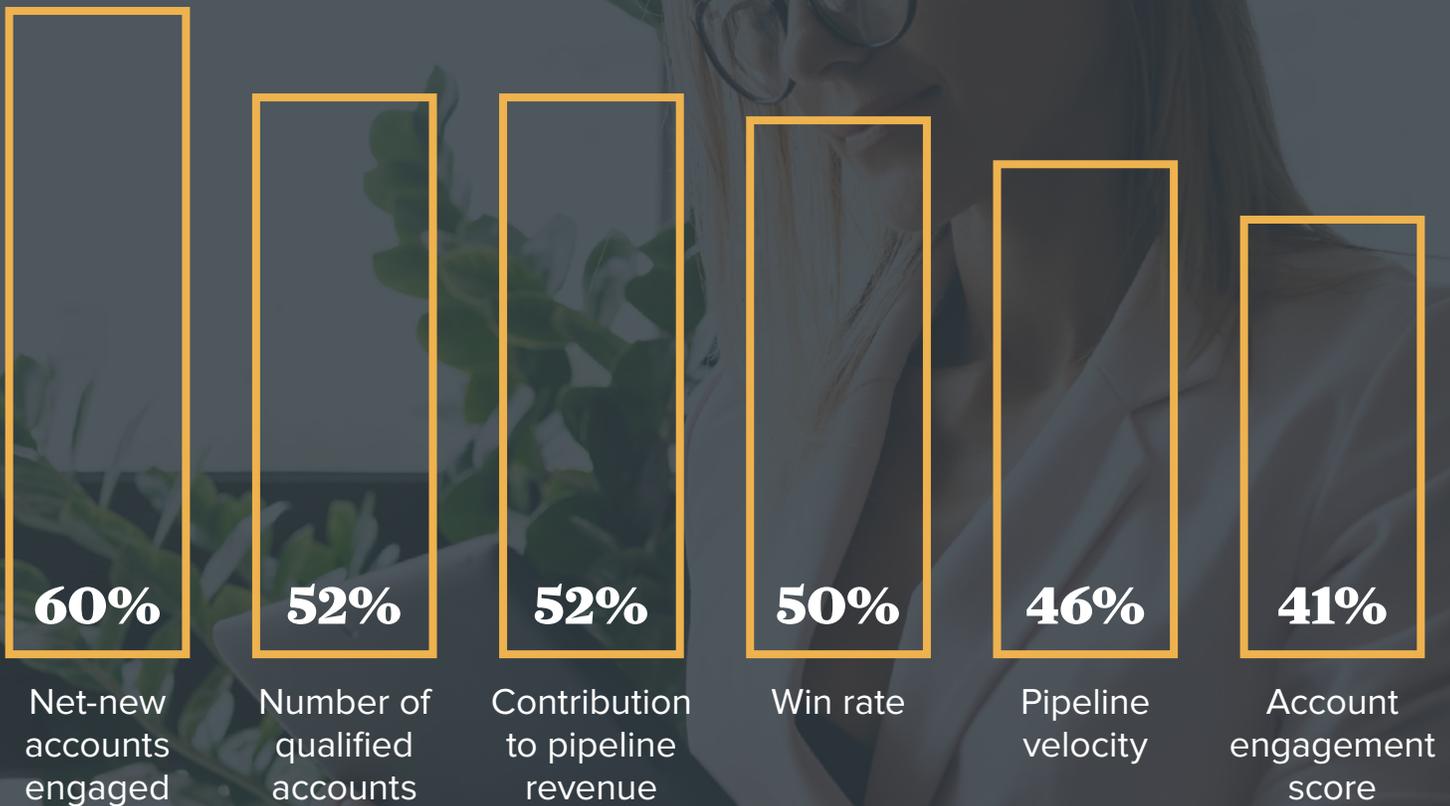
Measurement Efforts Focus On Revenue, Engagement

As ABM's influence on revenue has become more pronounced, it has changed the way most teams track marketing's influence on revenue. The survey showed that marketers are measuring their efforts around more specific revenue account goals such as net-new accounts engaged (60%), the number of qualified leads (52%) and contribution to pipeline revenue (52%).

Additional ABM measurement efforts include:

- Win rates (50%);

- Pipeline velocity (46%);

- Account engagement score (41%);

- Annual recurring revenue (31%);

- Customer lifetime value (25%); and

- Average contract value (23%).

More departments are also involved in the ABM process to maintain alignment across the entire organization. While Marketing Ops remained the most actively involved (78%), respondents noted that Demand Generation (91%), Customer Success (65%) and Sales Development reps (88%) also had key roles in ABM initiatives this year.

How do you measure your ABM efforts?

60%
Net-new accounts engaged

52%
Number of qualified accounts

52%
Contribution to pipeline revenue

50%
Win rate

46%
Pipeline velocity

41%
Account engagement score

ABM has established itself as a mainstay in B2B and practitioners strive to address continued alignment and attribution challenges to help grow their practice further.

Conclusion

At *Demand Gen Report* and *ABM in Action*, we've analyzed and assessed the adoption of ABM in the B2B marketplace since its infancy. We now see that ABM has established itself as a mainstay in B2B and practitioners strive to address continued alignment and attribution challenges to help grow their practice further.

With the majority of B2B brands now having at least some level of experience with ABM, they are looking to match the best of both worlds from their broader demand gen programs with their more targeted account-based plays.

Respondents pointed to several different positive impacts — both short and long-term — from ABM, including:

- Better win rates;

- More meetings and pipeline;

- Higher quality MQLs;

- More interest from target accounts;

- Better awareness in target accounts; and

- More trustworthy relationships.

While more efficient use of marketing resources was also a top response around the payoff of ABM, the fact that many companies are still taking key steps of account selection and building out account profiles manually shows there is still substantial room for further improvement in this area.
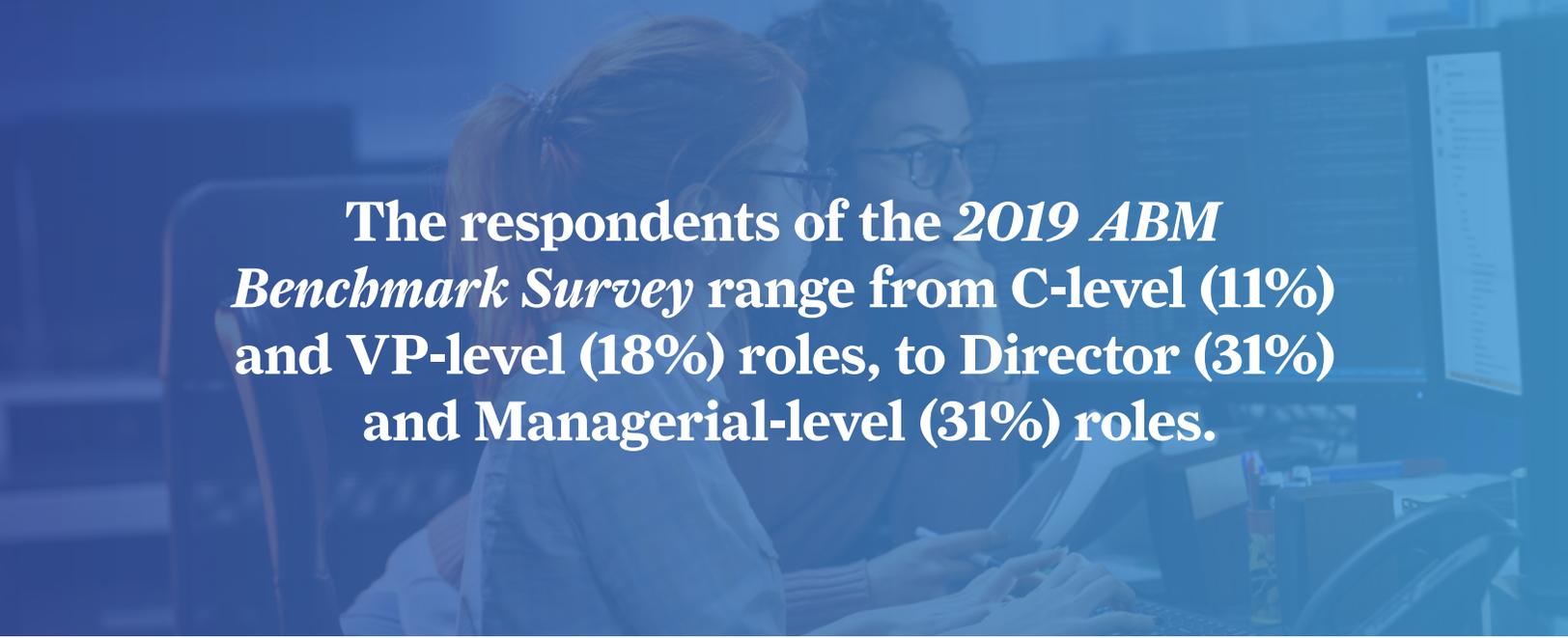
The respondents of the *2019 ABM Benchmark Survey* range from C-level (11%) and VP-level (18%) roles, to Director (31%) and Managerial-level (31%) roles.

About The Survey

Demand Gen Report and *ABM In Action* surveyed more than 100 B2B marketing executives with various roles in a wide variety of industries between September and October of 2019. The respondents of the *2019 ABM Benchmark Survey* range from C-level (11%) and VP-level (18%) roles, to Director (31%) and Managerial-level (31%) roles.

More than half of this year's survey respondents (52%) work in the high-tech industry, with some in financial services (7%), manufacturing (8%), professional services (7%) and business services (8%).

The respondents came from companies generating a fairly even variety of annual revenue. Specifically, 28% generate less than $25 million, 22% generate more than $1 billion, 22% generate $100 to $500 million and 24% generate $25 million to $100 million.

DEMANDBASE

Demandbase is the leader in Account-Based Marketing (ABM). The company offers the only AI-enabled, comprehensive ABM platform that spans Advertising, Marketing, Sales and Analytics. Enterprise leaders and high-growth companies such as Accenture, Adobe, DocuSign, GE, Grainger, Salesforce and others use Demandbase to drive their ABM strategy and maximize their marketing performance. The company was named a Gartner Cool Vendor for Tech GoTo Market in 2016.

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Engagio

Engagio is transforming the way that B2B revenue teams win new business and drive account growth at scale. With today's increasingly non-linear buyer journeys, traditional handoffs from marketing to sales no longer work, and companies need to redefine how marketing and sales work together at every stage of the account journey. Built by the experts that built Marketo, Engagio's B2B Marketing Engagement software helps more than 240 companies to combine the best of lead-based marketing and account-based marketing (ABM) and empower their marketers and sellers to work as a team. To learn more, visit www.engagio.com.

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überflip

Uberflip is a platform for marketers to create, manage and optimize content experiences, so that content can be fully leveraged by all company stakeholders at every stage of the buyer journey.

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vidyard

Vidyard is the new generation video platform for business. Going beyond video hosting and management, Vidyard helps businesses drive greater engagement in their video content, track the viewing activities of each individual viewer, and turn those views into action. Global leaders such as Honeywell, McKesson, Lenovo, LinkedIn, Cision, TD Ameritrade, Citibank, MongoDB and Sharp rely on Vidyard to power their video content strategies and turn viewers into customers.

800.530.3878

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Additional Resources

2019 Demand Generation
Benchmark Survey Report

2018 B2B Buyers
Survey Report

2019 Content Preferences
Survey Report

Demand Gen Report is a targeted online publication that uncovers the strategies and solutions that help companies better align their sales and marketing organizations, and ultimately, drive growth. A key component of the publication's editorial coverage focuses on the sales and marketing automation tools that enable companies to better measure and manage their multi-channel demand generation efforts.

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ANDREW GAFFNEY

is a storyteller and publisher focused on helping brands create content that sparks conversations with their prospects.