

# 2020 State Of Account-Based Marketing:

B2B Brands Blending Traditional Acquisition Strategies With More Targeted Engagement Approaches For Hybrid

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**“Our data shows that upwards of 93% of B2B organizations around the world intend to leverage an account-based approach to support what they’re trying to accomplish.”**

**— BOB PETERSON, SIRIUS DECISIONS/FORRESTER**

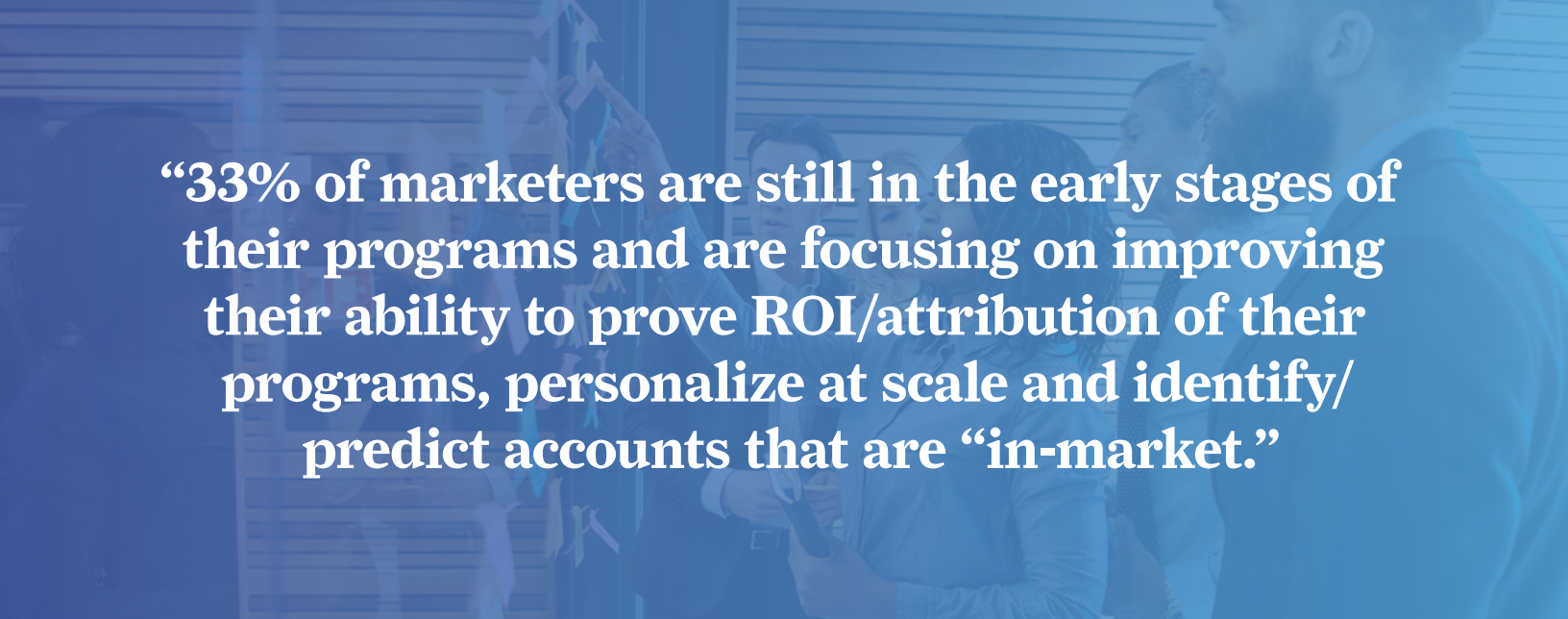
## Introduction

ABM has long been moving past the hype cycle as a well-entrenched part of overall go-to-market strategy. Early adopters have also worked to take their ABM strategies to the next level with deeper intelligence and personalization on accounts.

“With the rise of ABM, we’ve seen so many clients pivot into ABM, which is wonderful,” said Bob Peterson, VP, Principal Analyst, Demand and Account-Based Marketing at **Sirius Decisions/Forrester**. “Our data shows that upwards of 93% of B2B organizations around the world intend to leverage an account-based approach to support what they’re trying to accomplish.”

**Research from Demand Gen Report** found that 50% of survey respondents have had their ABM 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.

As they move forward with their ABM priorities, the research showed that 33% are still in the early stages of their programs and are focusing on improving their ability to prove ROI/attribution of their programs, personalize at scale and identify/predict accounts that are “in-market.” In addition, organizations are focusing on improving sales and marketing alignment, and involving other departments such as customer success.



**“33% of marketers are still in the early stages of their programs and are focusing on improving their ability to prove ROI/attribution of their programs, personalize at scale and identify/predict accounts that are “in-market.”**

However, new realities may be causing marketers to step back and reset on their current ABM initiatives. The global COVID-19 pandemic has shaken marketing organizations, leaving them with tighter budgets and the need to do more with less in new circumstances and environments.

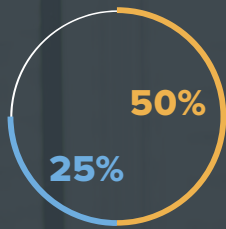
ABM has historically been known as expensive and only impactful for larger organizations with larger budgets. But the practice can be achievable for businesses of all sizes and budgets. **B2B organizations such as Bottomline Technologies, People.ai and OneNeck IT Solutions are relying on a blend of traditional demand generation tactics with ABM strategies to cater to their audiences and appease senior leadership.**

This special report will uncover tips, best practices and use case examples of how an account-based approach is effective for businesses, teams and budgets of all shapes and sizes. Specifically, it will showcase:

- How ABM strategies are now being blended into broader demand gen approaches to build trust with senior leadership and sales;
- How to tackle an account-based approach by leveraging existing tools such as CRM, MAP and email;
- Why new realities are causing organizations to rethink their current initiatives;
- Why more companies are involving both marketing and sales into the execution of account-based programs — as well as demand gen and customer success teams;
- How to leverage video in an ABM approach with a case study from Punch!; and
- Tips and best practices on how practitioners can maximize their ability to execute and measure programs at scale.



## ABM By The Numbers:



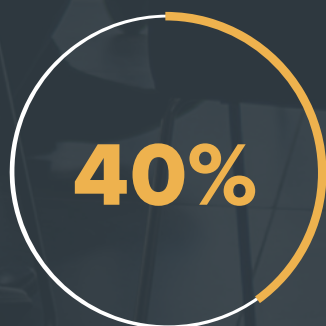
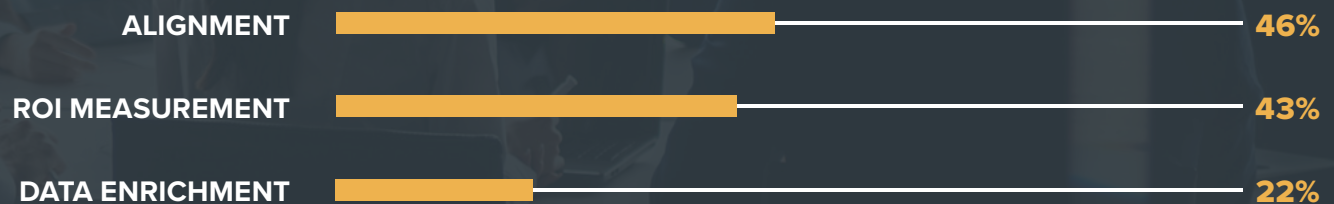
50% OF MARKETERS HAVE HAD ABM INITIATIVES IN PLACE FOR MORE THAN A YEAR, WHILE 25% HAVE BEEN PRACTICING ABM BETWEEN SIX AND 12 MONTHS.



69% SAID THEIR ACCOUNT-BASED EFFORTS HAVE MET OR EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS.



OF ABM PRACTITIONERS ARE STILL IN THE EARLY STAGES OF THEIR PROGRAMS AND ARE LOOKING TO OVERCOME ONGOING CHALLENGES AROUND:



OF MARKETERS SAID THEY HAVE INTEGRATED THEIR DEMAND GEN AND ABM PROCESSES TO STREAMLINE MARKETING EFFORTS.

Source: Demand Gen Report 2019 ABM Benchmark Survey Report

# ABM In Spring Of 2020

RANDI BARSHACK ROLLWORKS



The world is at war against COVID-19 and I'm trying to crank out an article on account-based marketing.

There's an earlier draft of this article filled with all the right buzzwords: *ICP*, *buying-committee*, *prioritization*, *efficiency*. And all of this is still true, and still applies to ABM (arguably the biggest buzzword of them all), but these times feel like they call for a serious stripping away of all the aspirational marketing speak. In regular times (remember them?), I'm a pretty straight-forward person, but the current pandemic has taken the already unfiltered me to a new level of raw.

Should ABM be your top priority right now?

Actually, no.

A quote from Vietnam POW James Stockdale has been floating around my circles these days: "You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end — which you can never afford to lose — with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be."

The Commander's words reminding us that survival requires an unlikely mix of blind faith and brutal realism have come to be known as the Stockdale Paradox.

So, should ABM be your top priority now? No. Your health, your family, your sanity. These should be your top priorities. Your job, your teammates, your customers. These should be your top priorities.



But faith that we will prevail (and we will) means that as marketers, we continue to drive business and create demand for the sales teams we partner with. The ‘brutal reality’ means we’re likely going to need to be doing that with more tightly scrutinized budgets or with more skeptical prospects. As marketers, we need to live with the dichotomy of optimistically planting seeds for the future while balancing the realities of challenging times.

I urge you to reframe “ABM.” At its core, when you strip away the fancy terminology, ABM is a more precise, more targeted approach to demand generation. Find your most promising prospects and market to them directly.

As an industry, we first became giddy about ABM when we latched onto the idea that enterprise buyers are not composed of single individuals but by committees (actually, the thesis dates back to the 1970s) and technology had advanced such that we had marketing attribution at an account level. It was a better way for us to justify activities, report on ROI and align with sales on “named accounts.” For some, ABM became about reporting at an account level and pretending we didn’t care about “leads.” For others, we invited high-priority prospects to watch a local baseball game from the vantage point of a catered suite. And still others would send bottles of wine or pecan pies on March 14th.

In the middle of the last decade, although there was no common understanding of what it meant, running an ABM strategy became a badge of marketing sophistication and maturity. A great slide to present at board meetings.

For decades, we’ve been working from lists of “named” accounts often living in spreadsheets created by sales teams. But the real advancement in ABM has only come in recent years with the ability to use data to drive intensely personalized and relevant messaging at massive scale.



Machine learning allows us to identify target accounts as a compilation of attributes (technographic, demographic, firmographic) that provide parameters by which we can then look for additional accounts with similar attributes. Taking lists of closed accounts creates a core dataset by which these algorithms can recognize patterns for success and recommend to you and your sales teams additional accounts with similar attributes. These high-fit accounts can then be layered with data on accounts demonstrating interest to prioritize activity for SDR's as well as budget allocation for marketing programs. And in spring of 2020, that budget allocation is being scrutinized to the precious penny. Efficiency and prioritization are no longer a luxury, they've become your lifeboat.

But here's the kicker (and where I have personally grown from ABM skeptic to fanatic): With a robust account-based platform, marketers can now run digital ads with a level of precision such that ads appear *\*only\** to relevant buyers at relevant companies. What's more, these ads can be customized to align with where that prospect is in a buying cycle, with a specific product attribute relevant to them or even with something as singular as their company name. This same level of precision can be implemented across other digital channels, customized landing pages, one-to-one email nurture streams, in-person events and direct mail.

In the confines of my spring of 2020 world, I wake up each morning, relish the deep breathing of my loved ones and then pace five giant steps to my "office" where, over a cup of coffee, I devour the overnight results of our ABM efforts. I bask in the dials of "accounts reached" and "accounts engaged" moving the needle. In my role as a marketer, I am confident that I'm doing right by my sales team. I am doing right by my company. As we enter a period in which B2B marketers will likely be called to the test, I wholeheartedly believe that ABM will no longer be viewed as an aspirational level of ornamental sophistication, but the most basic, obvious, efficient method of B2B marketing.





# Taking A Hybrid Approach To ABM With Traditional Demand Gen

Whether they are in the early stages of ABM, revamping existing strategies or working to scale their ABM programs, B2B marketers have not forgotten about their tried-and-true demand generation tactics. In fact, 40% of respondents to *Demand Gen Report's 2019 ABM Benchmark Survey* said they take a blended approach.

“We’re seeing a lot of companies doing a hybrid approach of demand generation and account-based marketing,” said Jon Russo, Founder and CMO of **B2B Fusion**. “A lot of companies are used to the measurement in the comfort of the old Sirius Decisions model, which usually gets measured all the way up to the board level. We’re kind of seeing ABM in the early days, so a lot of companies have demand generation and they’re also doing account-based marketing as a hybrid. But the business processes are still catching up to account-based marketing and the ROI is sometimes a little bit further out than what they’ve been doing with demand gen for several years.”

A number of companies — including **Bottomline Technologies**, People.ai and OneNeck IT Solutions — are experimenting with ABM while maintaining their demand gen initiatives:

- “We have a rich history in demand gen. A good 10 years of really focusing on the MQL has been our life blood for a long time,” said Stacy Gardner, Director of Marketing Programs at Bottomline Technologies. “We’re starting to see, especially as our audience changes, that we have to really focus on personalization. We’re starting to dabble in ABM and I’m tackling the ABM strategies. So, there has been a quite a bit of learnings that we can take from that traditional experience in revenue marketing and apply it.”





- “I would say we’re smack dab in the middle of a hybrid model,” said Corey Livingston, VP Marketing at **OneNeck IT Solutions**. “And a lot of what’s driving us having to take that bifurcated approach is based on segment. So from a demand gen perspective, we’ve been maturing our inbound strategies for a long time and there is a certain part of the market, a certain size of company that comes in through inbound channels and provides us with a very predictable flow of inbound leads from our website, as an example, but it’s not growing. As we start to move into ABM, we’re looking more at quality and really trying to understand what the ideal customer profile is for our key accounts.”

Experts agree that experimenting with ABM strategies while maintaining demand gen strategies keeps all parties happy. The ability to provide senior leadership with the metrics they are looking for and running ABM in parallel to know what’s working and what isn’t.

“We haven’t given up on our regular demand gen strategy,” said Tim White, Director of Marketing at **People.ai**. “We do live up to the MQL and our senior leadership still wants to get into the weeds and wants to see the full funnel metric matrix. But we were showing all these cool metrics off to the side. So, we have to run them in tandem in order to keep the powers that be happy and show them we’re driving pipeline. But we’re actually converting a lot of cool stuff over here with ABM.”

Having this hybrid approach also helps develop a trustworthy bond between sales and marketing, especially when senior leadership is still looking at traditional metrics. Experts noted that you can’t (and shouldn’t) stop inbound. “All the executives and salespeople get really twitchy, which is not fun,” said Livingston. But, working closely with sales to develop tiered accounts allows marketing to build trust and get everyone on board with ABM.

“We’re running both in parallel, and we’re at the stage that we’ve got the tech stack. We’re actually working on integrating that and getting all of our signals ready to move into a CDP platform,” said Livingston. “We’ve actually been doing what we call “growth planning workshops” with all of our sales leaders in different markets. So, we sit down with them and ask them to help us tier their accounts — such as what’s a tier one versus a tier two — getting all of that tribal knowledge, if you will. And then we can layer in some of those signals from our tech stack. But that account prioritization piece, really working with [sales] one-on-one is key to build that trust and earn that trust before we go all in, so to speak, on ABM.”

# Q&A With Chris Rack Of PureB2B: 'ABM Should Touch Every Part Of Your Marketing Strategy'



What does it take to deliver a successful ABM strategy no matter how big your team or budget is? According to Chris Rack, Chief Revenue Officer at **PureB2B**, a provider of lead generation solutions, it's all about collaboration with internal and external teams to deliver an exceptional customer experience.

In this exclusive Q&A with *Demand Gen Report*, Rack shares insights around ABM misconceptions, core metrics to keep track of, why ABM should be part of every marketing strategy and more.

**DGR:** *The idea that ABM has historically been known as expensive and only impactful for larger organizations with larger budgets, how do you see smaller/medium-sized businesses with smaller budgets taking this approach effectively?*

**Rack:** I think this is one of the biggest misconceptions in our space currently. Smaller and medium sized businesses with limited budgets can absolutely launch an impactful ABM program. We see a lot of success with our clients who dissect their ABM strategy into smaller tactical segments, adding tactics into the strategy slowly as ROI is proven. Remember, ABM is a strategy — it's how you approach your total addressable market (TAM), it's not a software, solution or a vendor!

**DGR:** *Are you seeing more organizations taking a blended approach of ABM and traditional demand gen initiatives? If so, how? ABM is a traditional demand gen activity.*



**Rack:** I think ABM has now become a traditional demand generation activity. What we are seeing in our space is marketers approach their TAM in two different segments: their target accounts and greenfield opportunities, by leveraging a combination of sales feedback, intent signals and market intelligence to prioritize how they attack their market. ABM should touch every part of your marketing strategy.

***DGR: Do you believe it is important to involve more internal teams in ABM strategies? Specifically, marketing/sales as well as demand gen and customer success teams? Why?***

**Rack:** I think it's important that the entire sales and marketing organization align on all things sales and marketing and customer experience (CX), on every step of the buyers' journey for your prospects and clients. The days of sales/marketing/CX silos are long gone and misalignment causes issues with ROI and growth. In a market where our prospects have almost unlimited information at their fingertips, and in some cases dozens of vendors to choose from, companies that have process and technology alignment from the very first touch to the very last touch will be win in the long run.

***DGR: What are some tips and best practices you can share around how orgs can maximize their ability to execute and measure their ABM programs at scale?***

**Rack:** Marketing teams that want to launch a successful ABM program or optimize current running programs at scale need to have a strategy that focuses on maximizing the relationships between sales and marketing. Work with sales to identify viable target accounts: Marketing should know the details of company targets and identify the target personas within to develop an appropriate strategy for moving them into the marketing funnel.

The key here is to identify high-opportunity online touchpoints and current existing connections your company may have with the target to home your delivery. If you are looking at getting a foot in the door, so to speak, or scale the program, other avenues of ABM lead generation may need to be deployed to meet the demand and generate a positive return on investment.



To truly measure the effectiveness of an ABM program at scale, I recommend looking to four core metrics to determine the historical performance of your pipeline:

- **Number of deals in the pipeline;**
- **Average size of opportunities;**
- **Average percentage of closed deals; and**
- **Average time for closing deals.**

When you have built a benchmark based on these metrics, it becomes easier to provide an apples-to-apples comparison between standard lead and demand generation initiatives and your ABM program.

***DGR: Are there any other tips and best practices you can share that will work for ABM teams of all sizes and budgets?***

**Rack:** Collaborate! There is no reason why the marketing team launching an ABM program and the sales team that will be closing the leads should not be in lockstep throughout the creation and deployment of the program. Messaging to the prospects must be cohesive from the first digital touch to the last conversation with a sales individual. Insuring brand story cohesion across the buyers' journey is key to properly informing and convincing these high-value prospects that you are the perfect vendor to meet their need.

Don't be afraid to scale. We see many teams that work themselves to the brink trying to launch and maintain large-scale ABM programs. Lead and demand generation ABM campaigns at scale can be overwhelming. Looking to partners for assistance to scale your program usually results in freeing up internal resources and ultimately decreasing the overhead of the campaign, resulting in a higher ROI.

Listen to the sales calls. There is a wealth of information to glean from taking the time to analyze these calls. You can quickly identify the effectiveness of the full marketing and sales journey. Was the prospect as informed as possible at every step of the journey? Is there a content gap that should be addressed? Was messaging codified or did the prospect express any confusion? Tracking and addressing the information available in the sales discussions is key to shoring up any ABM lead generation program.





# Bringing ABM Back To Basics Amid New Reality: Start With Email, Data Management

Marketing strategies during and after the COVID-19 pandemic may or may not change in the new reality: Budgets may shrink, time and resources could be lacking, practices may shift due to people having to work from home or business may go back to usual. However, the assumption that ABM only works for enterprise businesses with money to spare is inaccurate, experts agree.

Ogne emphasized that basic technology, such as a CRM or marketing automation system and even email, are extremely valuable for ABM practitioners, no matter the size of their organization or budget.

“Email is highly impactful in early stage deals late-stage opportunities,” said Mark Ogne, Founder and CEO of the **ABM Consortium**. “And the irony of all the conversation around ABM is that people are told they’re supposed to ignore the most valuable channel that they already have. And to me, that makes absolutely no sense whatsoever. Nothing precludes a marketer from starting on a CRM and automation system. Flag the accounts and identify the flagged contacts in automation. And regardless of what you do in the future, you should be doing that.”

Ogne emphasized the importance of having data in order to accomplish ABM successfully. Adding new technology increases the complexity of the data because it’s disconnected from everything else, he noted.

“Solving this is a really key starting point and it doesn’t involve expense. It doesn’t involve media; it doesn’t involve new platforms. It evolves time and data management. To this point, people mistakenly aligned ABM with a platform — and it’s specifically a platform that incurs a lot of media costs. But it’s completely untrue.

“Really large organizations are sending tens of millions of emails. They have no idea what kind of [nurture] flows they’re in. Personally, I would start with the platforms that I have and make them start to look more account centric.”

# How Punch! Increased Monthly Client SQOs By 4X With ABM Video

**JAMES SNIDER** SALES & MARKETING DIRECTOR AT PUNCH!, A VIDYARD CUSTOMER



At **Punch!**, we have built an account-based marketing (ABM) agency in the UK that provides a lead generation service to clients in order to ensure they are practicing the latest and greatest in B2B techniques. Traditionally, this approach had consisted of a mix of phone, email and social selling across a wide range of prospects to open new sales qualified opportunities (SQOs) for our clients.

Of course, this all changed when we used video prospecting for the first time. This is the story of how our business model has fundamentally shifted to one driven by video selling as a result of the tremendous success we are delivering for clients.

## Challenge

For Punch!, the challenges we face are two-fold. Our biggest priority is ensuring we deliver the most cutting-edge ABM service to our clients in order to maintain long-term relationships with each of them. This means that if our results start to drop off, or even dip slightly, we must find a way to innovate the sales cycle we deliver for them

The second challenge here is that B2B buyers are hard to reach by nature and the traditional methods of selling simply do not perform the way they used to. Inboxes are constantly being flooded by “experts” around the world looking to discuss why their XYZ solution is a “must have” this fiscal year. Let’s face it — if you’re going to be generic in your outreach, your results aren’t going to outperform the competition.



## Solution

But of course, like every new technology, you must adopt it with purpose or else the results simply will not follow. After reading a Vidyard blog post, I was determined to prove that video prospecting could make a meaningful difference for our clients. In order to show the value of video selling, I began to actively reach out to cold leads with video over a six-week period. This resulted in three new clients — each signing up on the premise that video would be a component of the ABM service being delivered.

Our prospects are even sharing our team's videos on LinkedIn. Cold prospects are thrilled to be being contacted — that's unheard of with traditional outbound activities!

You'll notice that at the end of my outbound videos I use an integration with HubSpot so a prospect can easily book a meeting with me to cut out the typical back and forth required to find a time that works.

The screenshot shows a video call interface. On the left, there is a circular profile picture of a man and the text "Find a time to meet James". Below this is a calendar for January. On the right, there is a section titled "How long do you need?" with a slider between 15 min, 30 min, and 60 min. Below that is a section titled "What time works best?" with two time slots: 6:30 am and 6:45 am. At the top right, there is a "Skip" button and the text "UTC -08:00 Pacific Time". At the bottom, the "PUNCH!" logo is visible.



In order to capitalize on the opportunity ahead, Punch! decided to take out additional office space and invest heavily to build five recording rooms specifically to record lead generation videos. The rooms have interchangeable backdrops, allowing us to record videos on behalf of clients while representing their brand the entire time.

## Results

By building these recording rooms, our business development reps can now record videos for their clients with ease. In order to build this step into our standard ABM service, it was time to identify the most effective moments for video.

Although our team was able to quickly prove the value of one-to-one personal video for our own business development efforts, it was time to show our clients, particularly those in the high tech vertical, the power of video. The first step in doing so was to create a few pricing packages where this new technology would be used. As of now, our team will charge on a per video basis, sell in monthly video buckets, or bring on a client for a complete ABM service which is closer to a retainer contract. The latter is billed on a monthly basis and includes qualification of new opportunities, recording personal videos, handwritten letters, social touches, and enrolling prospects in various nurture streams.

Beyond the revenue these service offerings have generated for our business, they are helping our clients achieve success beyond their expectations. **Since joining the Vidyard Partner Program and integrating video selling into our practice, we are creating 4X as many SQOs per month for our clients.** That's right—sales qualified OPPORTUNITIES! Not a lead, but actual revenue potential that our clients can then close.

If you or your organization are considering getting started with video selling, my recommendation is just that—start! It took our team a few months before we optimized the video creation process, but now we are in a position to record one-to-one personal videos at scale. In fact, on any given day, our team creates up to 100 client videos. Our success can be attributed to finding the technology that worked for us, changing our typical approach, experimenting like crazy, and refining our messaging.





# Getting Your ABM Foundation In Place

ABM continues to be a valuable strategy for a majority of B2B practitioners. However, there is still room for traditional demand gen tactics and a majority of brands are using their time to match the best of both worlds to deliver more targeted account-based plays.

The critical need to maintain alignment between sales and marketing is still relevant. Eventually, other departments such as customer success should be involved to help scale processes.

“In a maturity curve of alignment, you really want to get marketing and sales aligned to start with,” said Russo. “If you’re able to get those functions aligned and aligned well, then I would bolt on customer success. I think implicit in the marketing and sales alignment is the demand generation alignment. So, I don’t necessarily see that as a separate function. You get that in phase one. But phase two for ABM, you really should be bolting on customer success as part of that process. It’s very difficult to get the first parties to agree (both sales and marketing), so that’s what I suggest kind of doing a crawl, walk, run and breaking it into pieces to eventually get customer success.”

As marketers face a new reality during and post COVID-19, rethinking past strategies and going back to basics if budgets were to decrease will be important. The lack of face-to-face meetings and events during the pandemic has shown that digital marketing is more important than ever.

“Now in this unique environment where the pendulum is swinging post-COVID, marketing and digital marketing becomes more important than a direct sales organization or a field sales organization that has the inability to reach out to prospects at their corporate locations,” said Russo. “They’ve got the inability to meet face-to-face, so now there’s going to be a premium on digital marketing.

“My tips would be to get your house in order now from a salesforce perspective, from a data perspective and from a marketing automation perspective. Hire agencies that specialize in that and can help you go faster to get that foundation in place. So, when we emerge from this post-COVID situation, companies will be a lot stronger.”

## Additional Resources



RollWorks offers ambitious B2B companies an account-based platform to align marketing and sales teams and confidently grow revenue. Powered by proprietary data and machine learning, we can help do it all — from identifying your targets to engaging them across channels and measuring revenue impact.

[INFO@ROLLWORKS.COM](mailto:INFO@ROLLWORKS.COM)



**PureB2B** provides B2B technology companies with intent-driven, full-funnel demand generation solutions to help them achieve revenue goals and increase sales and marketing ROI. Leveraging innovative tactics crafted through years of research and testing, PureB2B works across its exclusive network of more than 125 million in-market technology buyers to provide demand generation solutions at every step of the marketing and sales process.

[312.872.8093](tel:312.872.8093)

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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.

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*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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