**DEMAND GEN REPORT**

2020

# ABM Benchmark Survey Report

**DOUBLING DOWN ON ABM:**
RESEARCH SHOWS MORE
B2B BRANDS STEPPING
UP THEIR INVESTMENTS &
APPROACHES TO ACCOUNT
SELECTION, SEGMENTATION
& CHANNEL STRATEGIES

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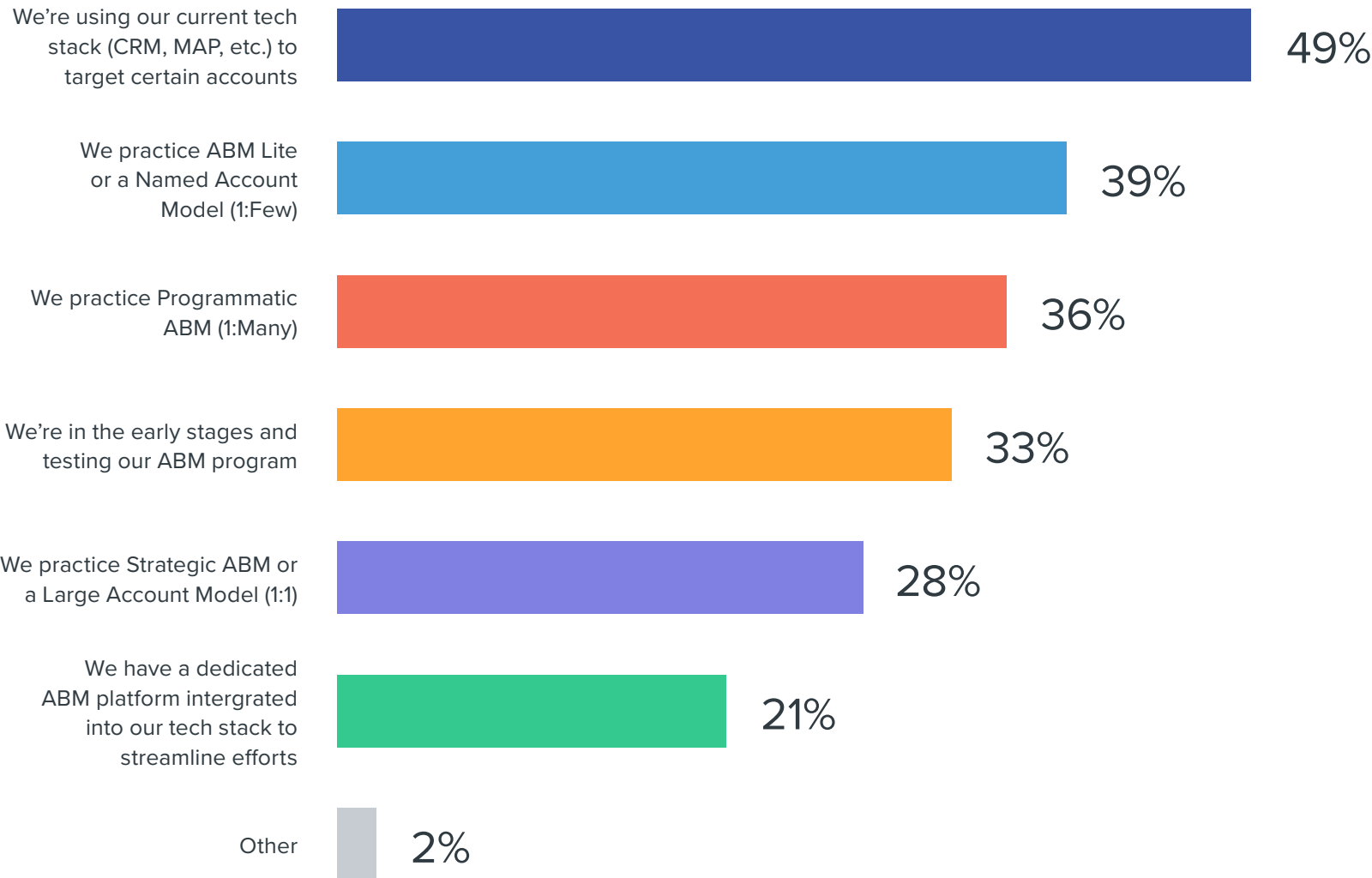
# Introduction

As B2B continues to grow digitally, maintaining contact with key buyers and accounts has taken the utmost priority. With this shift, most companies have reinvented or started to reinvent their strategies to include more account-based programs in their marketing strategies.

The recent pandemic has also affected the way marketers carry out their marketing strategies, forcing them to get closer to their target accounts. B2B orgs are aligning their internal strategies with ABM to not only keep in contact with their target accounts, but also gain industry insights through consistent interactions with accounts of various industries and sizes.

As a result of these trends, companies in 2020 are doubling down on ABM as a means of reaching and engaging their current and new target accounts. According to *Demand Gen Report's 2020 ABM Benchmark Survey*, 98% of respondents are currently using or plan to use ABM strategies. Fifty-seven percent of respondents are currently using a combination of demand generation tactics and ABM processes to streamline their marketing efforts.

Although marketers have been employing ABM for some time, more companies are looking at their peers for inspiration on the best tactics, tips and processes to improve their own account-based efforts. According to the survey, 51% of respondents said they have been doing ABM for 1-6 months to a year, while 49% have been employing ABM programs for two years or more. This is a major increase from the **2019 ABM Benchmark Survey's** 25% for 1 – 6 months, showing that more companies are attempting ABM plays/programs than ever before.

# How would you describe your ABM initiatives?

| | |
|---|---|
| We're using our current tech stack (CRM, MAP, etc.) to target certain accounts | **49%** |
| We practice ABM Lite or a Named Account Model (1:Few) | **39%** |
| We practice Programmatic ABM (1:Many) | **36%** |
| We're in the early stages and testing our ABM program | **33%** |
| We practice Strategic ABM or a Large Account Model (1:1) | **28%** |
| We have a dedicated ABM platform intergrated into our tech stack to streamline efforts | **21%** |
| Other | **2%** |

# Which best describes your current marketing operations?

**58%** We have integrated our demand gen and ABM processes to streamline our marketing efforts

**21%** We prioritize traditional demand generation over our ABM efforts

**20%** We prioritize our ABM efforts over our traditional demand generation efforts

**1%** Other

# The majority of marketers doing ABM have seen positive trends and results when using or reinventing their ABM strategies, with 73% of respondents saying it has greatly exceeded their organization's expectations.

The increased usage of account-based efforts when forming marketing strategies or streamlining marketing efforts highlights how ABM has become a bigger priority for marketers looking to drive revenue, pipeline, engagement scores and more. This also highlights how companies are looking to advance their strategies to the next stage, with 74% of respondents who haven't been using ABM saying they plan to add an ABM strategy to their marketing mix within the next six months to a year.
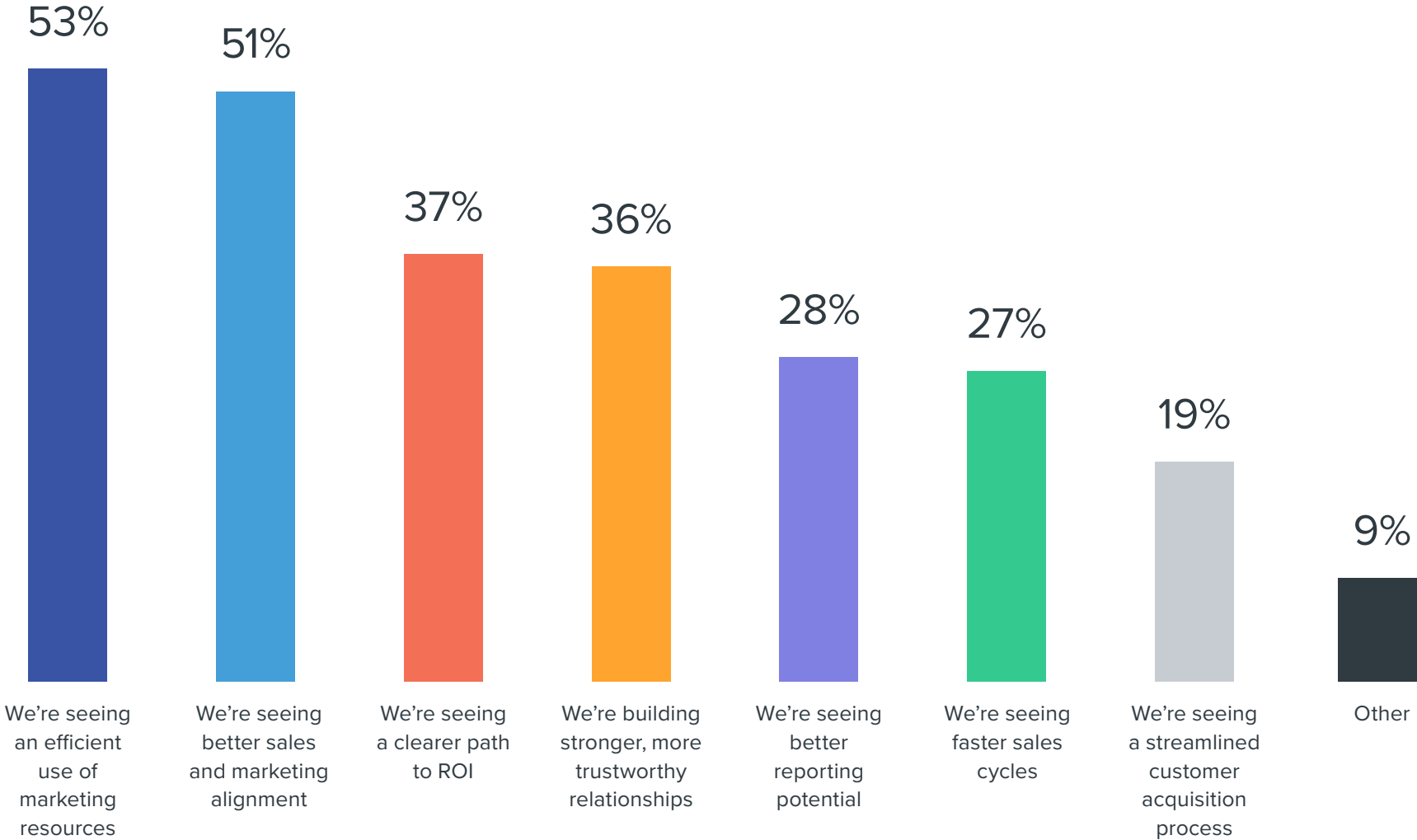
The majority of marketers doing ABM have seen positive trends and results when using or reinventing their ABM strategies, with 73% of respondents saying it has greatly exceeded their organization's expectations. Some of the payoffs include:

- Efficient use of marketing resources (53%);
- Better marketing and sales alignment (51%);
- Clearer path to ROI (37%);
- More trustworthy relationships (36%); and
- Faster sales cycles (27%).

The *2020 ABM Benchmark Survey Report* will explore this year's growing trends in ABM strategy-building, including:

- The application of data when selecting and segmenting target accounts;
- How marketers are using multiple new channels to expand their ABM strategies;
- How customized content is improving the effectiveness of ABM plays; and
- Why marketers are using ABM-specific KPIs to measure their success.

# How are your ABM initiatives positively impacting your business?

**53%** — We're seeing an efficient use of marketing resources

**51%** — We're seeing better sales and marketing alignment

**37%** — We're seeing a clearer path to ROI

**36%** — We're building stronger, more trustworthy relationships

**28%** — We're seeing better reporting potential

**27%** — We're seeing faster sales cycles

**19%** — We're seeing a streamlined customer acquisition process

**9%** — Other

# Applying Data To Account Selection & Segmentation

When aligning a current strategy with account-based efforts, account selection and targeting are the first and most important steps. Marketers need to decide who they are targeting, whether or not their data is accurate, if they have contacts within the target account, how to reach deeper into buying teams and more.

According to the survey, the number of accounts managed by a company varies by the growth phase of the company and who it is targeting, but roughly 36% manage 50-500 accounts in their strategies. Companies that have a healthy selection of accounts are more equipped for better ABM strategies, and marketers aligning for ABM in 2020 have reflected this reality.

The number of accounts a company manages or engages is important to an ABM strategy, but what matters most is how companies are choosing those accounts. Eighty percent of respondents are currently sticking to the traditional method of having their sales team select accounts for marketers to engage, which has led to positive growth of revenue and pipeline.
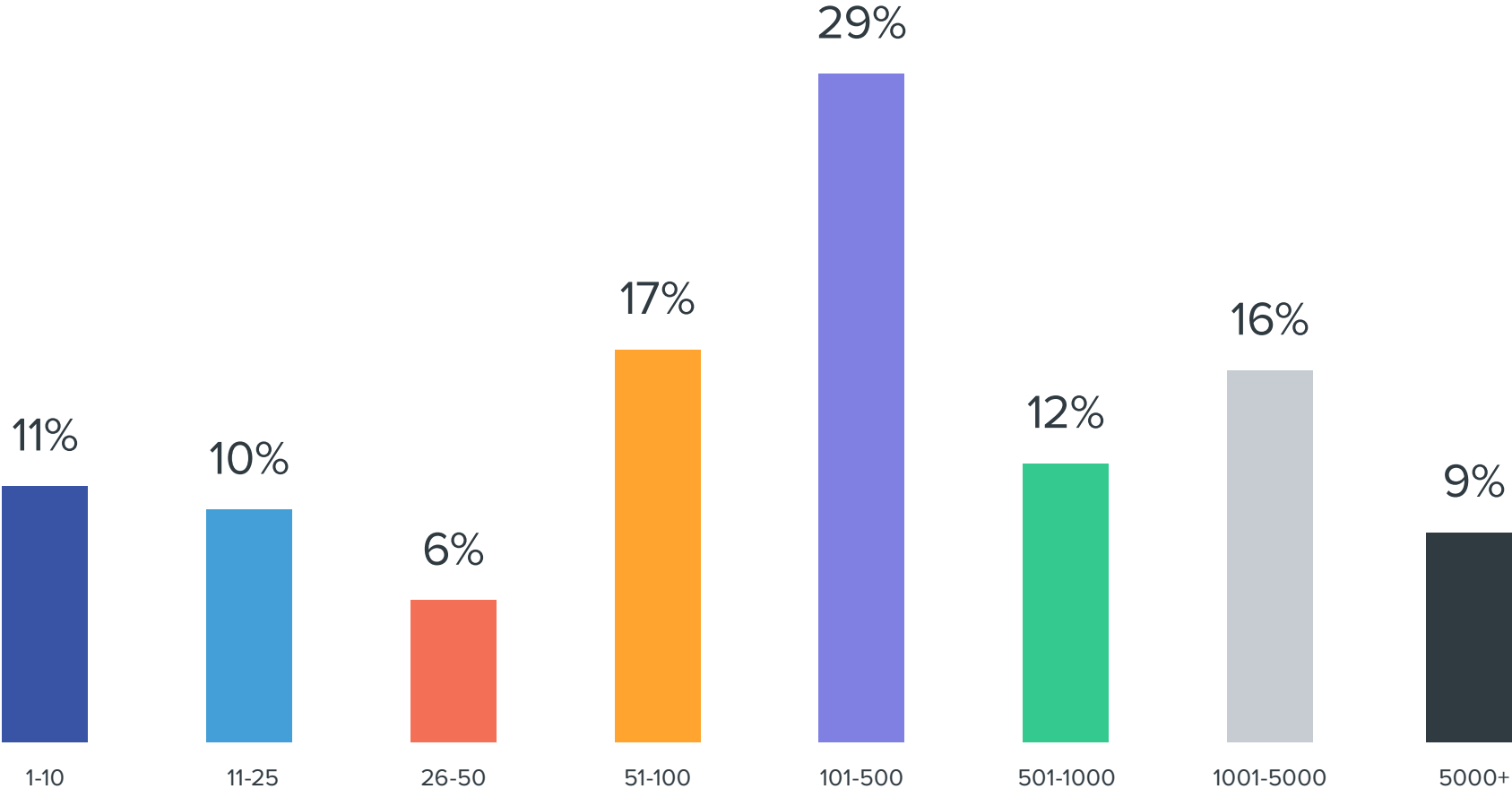
Conventional approaches are still popular in the realm of ABM, but there are also new trends emerging. In the quest to double down on ABM, some companies have began to use new methods to determine their optimal account targeting strategy.

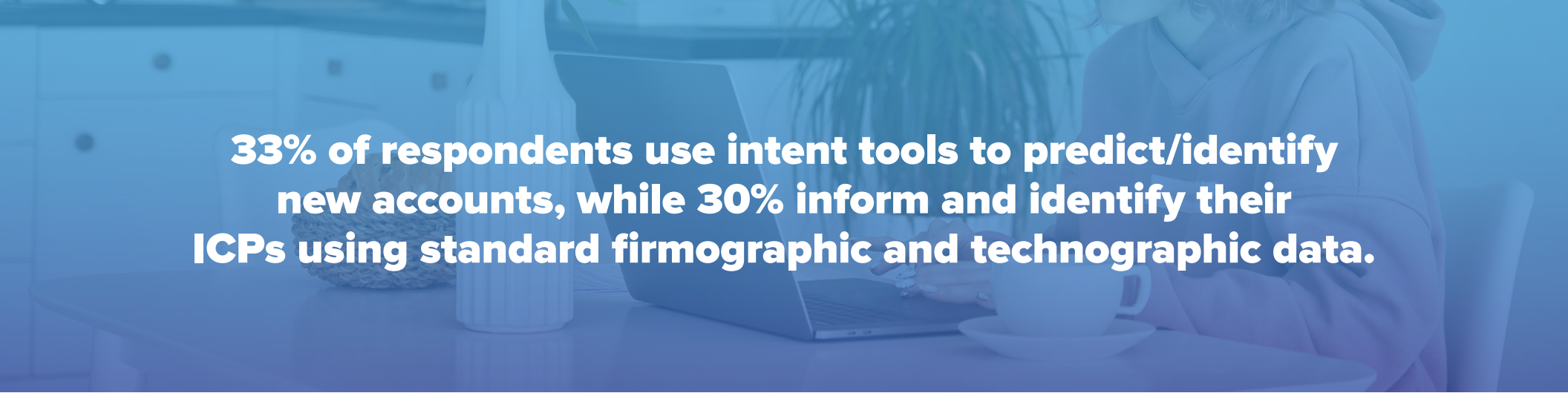Some of the newer tactics employed by companies include:

- Firmographic data (63%);
- Behavioral data and intent signals (63%);
- Technographic data (47%); and
- Predictive analytics (34%).

In addition, behavioral and intent signals have increased from 2019's 55%, showing marketers are placing a greater emphasis on intent data as a means to inform their ABM strategies.

# How many accounts does your marketing team currently target with an ABM strategy?



| 1-10 | 11-25 | 26-50 | 51-100 | 101-500 | 501-1000 | 1001-5000 | 5000+ |
|------|-------|-------|--------|---------|----------|-----------|-------|
| 11%  | 10%   | 6%    | 17%    | 29%     | 12%      | 16%       | 9%    |

# 33% of respondents use intent tools to predict/identify new accounts, while 30% inform and identify their ICPs using standard firmographic and technographic data.

With the rise of these newer account-selection methods, ABM strategies are becoming more data-centric. The survey cites 46% of respondents are planning to use more predictive data to determine accounts, 28% plan to use behavioral data and intent signals, and 25% plan to use more technographic data to inform their ABM strategies and campaigns.
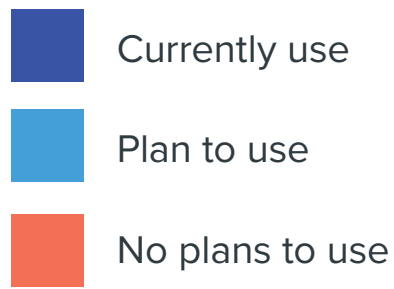
Traditionally, companies using ABM strategies have done manual research to uncover target accounts. Although 73% of respondents are still using manual searches and plays to inform their account lists, the number of marketers using data-centric strategies has increased and shows marketers are taking more advanced approaches to ABM.

With the rise of these digital methods, marketers are starting to take advantage of the new opportunities. The survey cites 63% of respondents use data providers to enrich accounts and identify target roles and titles, 37% use solution provider insights, and 26% use predictive analytics. Marketers are using these new opportunities to inform their strategies, showing a reliance on third-party data in modern ABM strategy implementation and account list building.
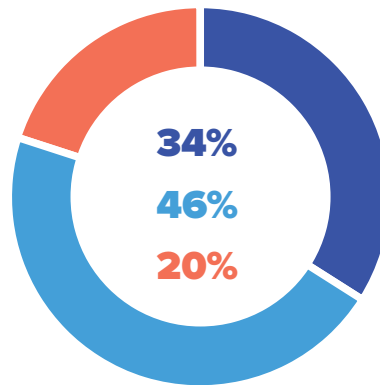
Marketers are also making sure their ABM plays and campaigns are aligned with their ICPs, with 41% saying they have sales and marketing agreeing on which accounts align with their ICP when deciding which to target. In addition, 33% are using intent tools to predict/identify new accounts, while 30% inform and identify their ICPs using standard firmographic and technographic data. Only 43% say they have a strong handle on their ideal customers, but have no qualms improving their content.

These new methods show that the greater commitment to ABM is a heavy reliance on data, and marketers are solidifying their ABM strategies and programs with both traditional and newer tactics to improve their internal alignment and use of that data.
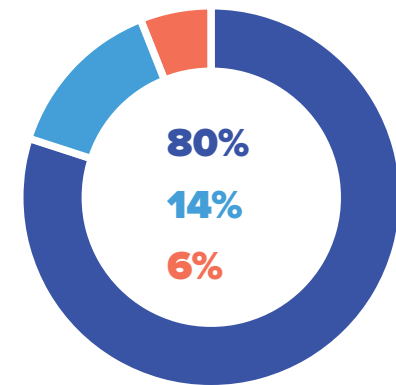
# What data do you use, or plan to use, to help build and formulate your targeted account list for ABM?
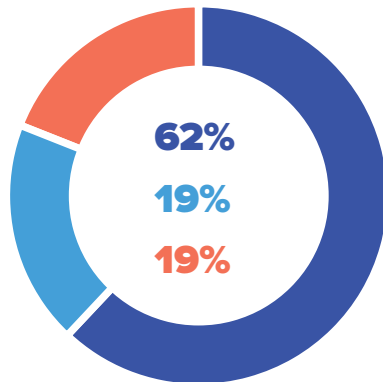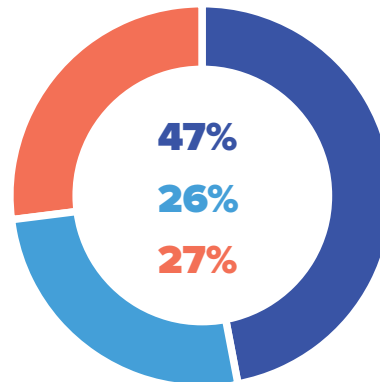
**Legend:**
- Currently use (dark blue)
- Plan to use (light blue)
- No plans to use (orange/red)

### Predictive
- 34%
- 46%
- 20%

### Sales team-selected
- 80%
- 14%
- 6%

### Firmographic
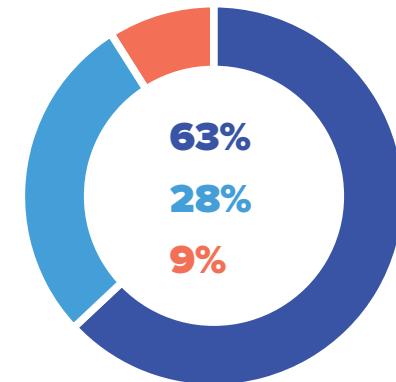- 62%
- 19%
- 19%

### Technographic
- 47%
- 26%
- 27%

### Behavioral/Intent Signals
- 63%
- 28%
- 9%

# Expanding The Toolkit & Entering New Channels

With more companies' ABM strategies becoming data-centric, marketers are beginning to explore new technologies and channels to make use of that data.

Marketers have begun employing new technologies in the first phase of their ABM strategies. According to the survey, the highest percentage use core platforms to orchestrate, organize and enrich their account data, sticking to the traditional tactics of CRM usage (81%) and marketing automation tools (72%). Marketers use these martech solutions to ensure the best target accounts are engaged based on their own data before expanding outward.

The second phase focuses on gaining better insights into prospects through external data, branching out through personalized interactions with accounts to expand their ABM programs, campaigns and plays' reach.

Marketers have added new tools to their ABM toolkits to achieve these goals, including:

- Measurement & reporting tools (50%);
- Intent monitoring tools (44%);
- Direct mail (41%);
- Content syndication (40%); and
- Campaign execution & orchestration tools (35%).

# The most common channels used in 2020 include email (94%) & account-based advertising (69%).

ABM campaigns and plays live or die by the channels companies decide to use in their ABM strategies, with many companies traditionally using in-person events and interviews to engage their target accounts. With COVID-19 taking in-person events off the table, marketers have had to get more creative when engaging their channels and deciding which channels are most effective.

The most common channels used in 2020 include:

- Email (94%);

- Account-based advertising (69%);

- Outbound tele-prospecting (65%);

- Direct mail (53%);

- Chatbots (39%); and

- Personalized website content (39%);

Email has been the most impactful ABM channel, as marketers are able to engage their target accounts at scale while tailoring each email for their specific needs, challenges, etc. Since email is the most common form of communication during the pandemic, companies are keeping in touch with their target accounts while using the channel to engage their new prospects.
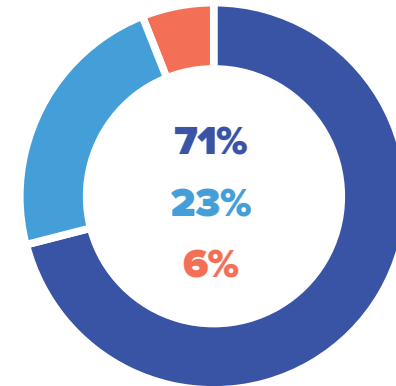
# Which of the following channels are you using to engage your ABM account list?

**Legend:**
- Currently use
- Plan to use
- No plans to use
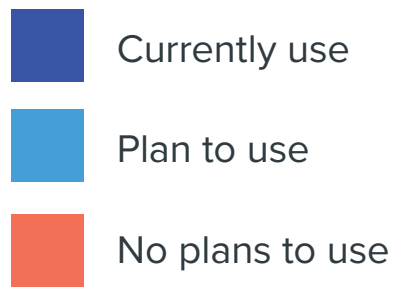
**Email**
- 94%
- 6%
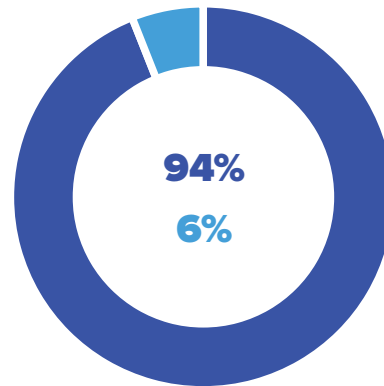
**In Person Events**
(1:1 meetings, discussions at tradeshows, etc.)
- 71%
- 23%
- 6%

**Account-based advertising**
- 69%
- 21%
- 10%
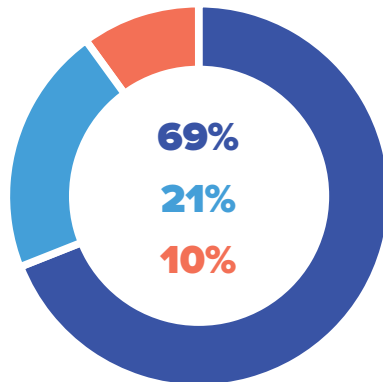
**Outbound teleprospecting**
- 65%
- 19%
- 16%
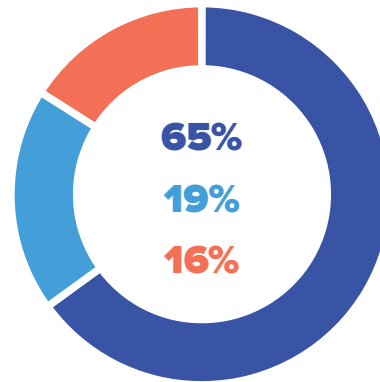
**Direct Mail**
- 54%
- 24%
- 23%
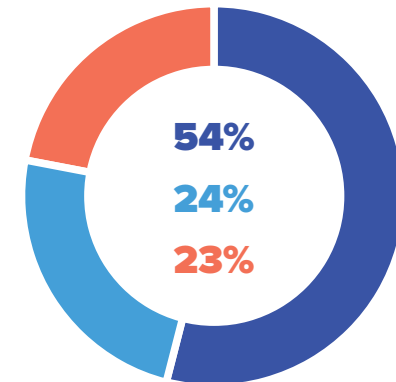
# 71% of respondents relied on in-person events to engage accounts pre-COVID.

Interestingly, in-person events (71%) were still being used despite the recent pandemic. This shows that even as the digitalization of B2B continues, there still exists a market for engaging accounts in-person pre-COVID in 2020.

Chatbot usage has increased since 2019 (21%), allowing more marketers to increase their program automations while keeping their accounts engaged. The increase is most likely due to the increased digital activity from the pandemic, forcing companies to optimize their ABM engagement for more accounts or prospects than ever before.

Personalized website content also increased since 2019 (36%), showing a growing trend of marketers engaging their accounts in a more intimate way. Other channels, such as account-based advertising and tele-prospecting, have seen massive upticks in usage, showing marketers have made a deliberate effort to remain in contact with their accounts on a personal level despite the confinement to virtual interaction.

The survey also cites that despite some respondents not taking advantage of certain channels in their current ABM strategies, many are planning to use:

- Personalized website content (40%);
- Chatbots (31%); and
- Account-based advertising (21%).

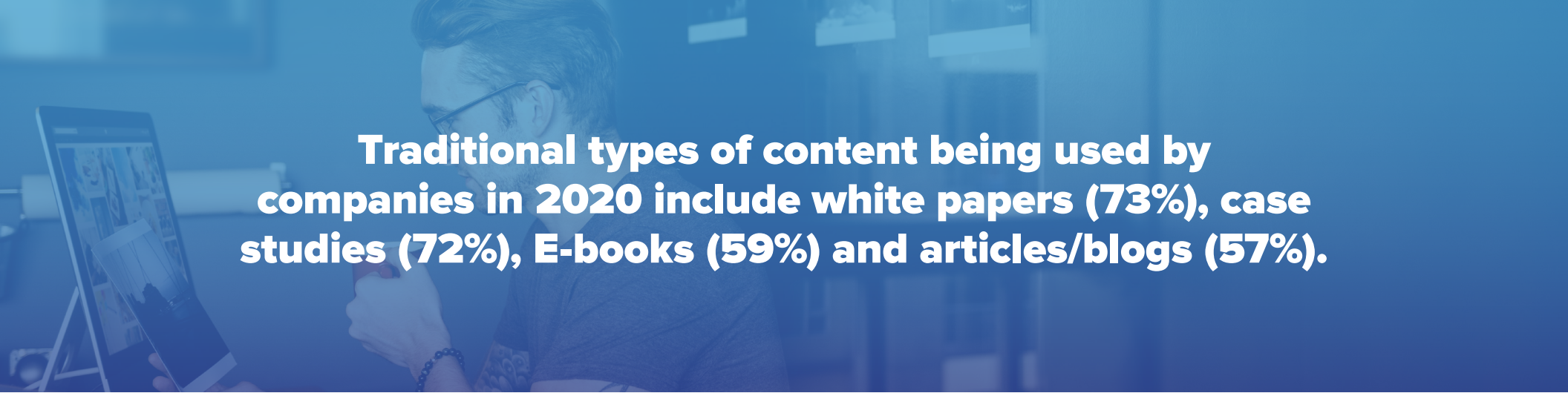# Customizing Content To Increase ABM Effectiveness

Optimal ABM messaging involves personalizing content for specific accounts. According to the survey, 42% of respondents are personalizing their content to increase account engagement and build long-term relationships.

Another emerging trend is the rise of specified content, in which marketers tailor content for specific industries, roles and titles to personalize their account interactions. The survey cites 61% of respondents tailor content to specific industries, while 55% tailor their content to engage accounts in specific roles. Fifty-six percent tailor content to address the specific challenges and needs. By tailoring content for specific accounts, marketers are increasing the effectiveness of their ABM strategies by expanding their educational and collaborative efforts for the account.

Marketers are also taking advantage of video and research-based content to reinvent their ABM strategies. These newer ABM content formats include:

- Video content (45%);
- Research (46%);
- Infographics (39%);
- Analyst reports (33%); and
- Direct mail (32%).

Video content usage has seen an increase since 2019 (40%), most likely lending to the pandemic's acceleration of digitalization. Some marketers are beginning to use more videos in their account engagement, using personalized video messaging and content to increase the effectiveness of outreach or account communication.

# Traditional types of content being used by companies in 2020 include white papers (73%), case studies (72%), E-books (59%) and articles/blogs (57%).

The use of industry influencers and expert knowledge (research, analyst reports, etc.) has been great for informing ABM strategies, allowing marketers to better determine account preferences and how to more effectively engage them. Marketers are also implementing this research and content into their account outreach, using this knowledge to build trust.

Interestingly, 49% are still using generic content for their ABM plays. Traditional types of content being used by companies in 2020 include white papers (73%), case studies (72%), E-books (59%) and articles/blogs (57%).

However, even the respondents using generic content have been making minor customizations to that content, implying there is an ongoing trend of more companies continuing to personalize their ABM plays and strategies.

Additional types of content experiences include:

- Sales meetings invitations (59%);
- Targeted executive event invitations (58%);
- Interactive content (44%); and
- Promotional gifts/giveaways (40%).

Despite COVID, sales meeting invitations and targeted executive event invitations are the most popular forms of content experiences. Video conference calls, digital executive conversations and virtual sales meetings can all be done easily, and companies are implementing these strategies to keep their accounts engaged.

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

| | |
|---|---|
| Sales meeting invitations | 59% |
| Targeted executive event invitations | 59% |
| Video content | 51% |
| Interactive content tailored by industry/role | 44% |
| Promotional item giveaways | 40% |
| Influencer/ advocate-related content | 26% |
| Other | 4% |
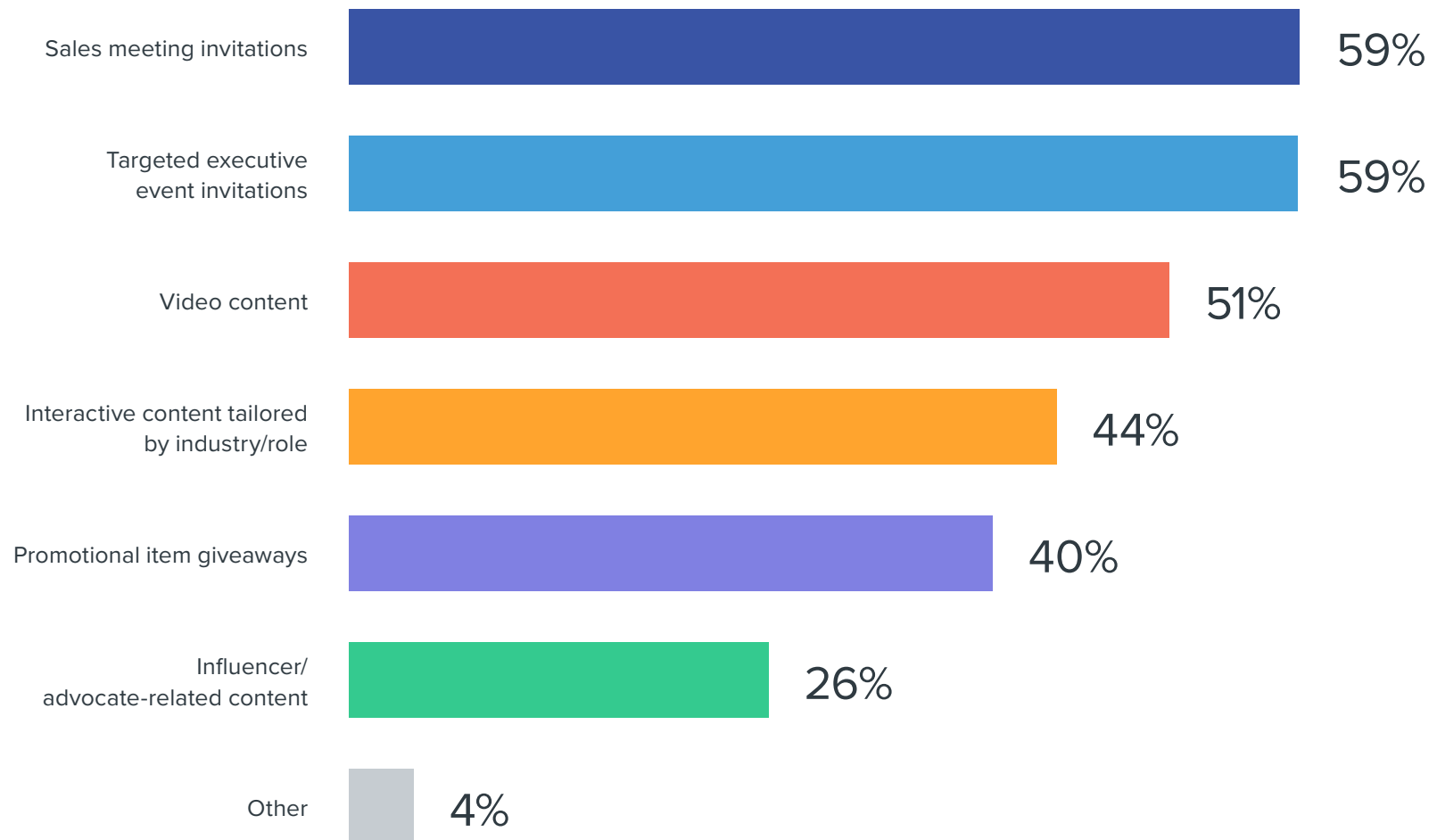
# Measuring ABM Impact With Revenue-Specific KPIs

Marketers are looking at their generated revenue and the number of accounts retained and gained to measure the effectiveness of their ABM strategies. According to the survey, 67% of respondents are using the number of qualified leads to measure the impact of their programs, while 63% are measuring the number of net-new accounts they are currently engaging to determine how effective their overall ABM outreach strategy is. These revenue-specific metrics allow marketers to better gauge how effective their ABM outreach is and identify how many of their accounts are converting.
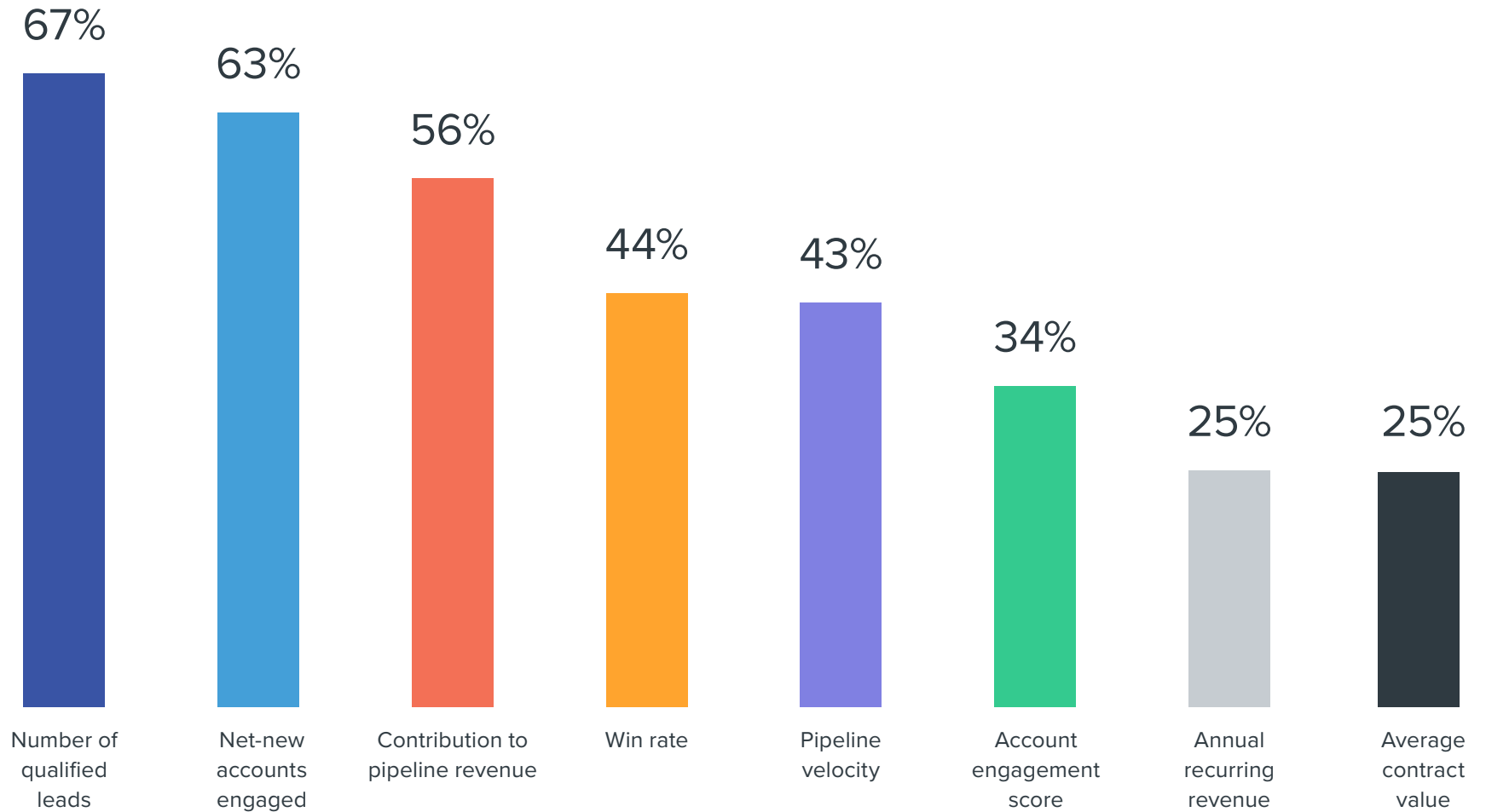
Marketers also use the following KPIs to measure the revenue their ABM strategies and programs generate:

- Contribution to pipeline (57%);
- Win-rate (44%);
- Pipeline velocity (43%); and
- Account engagement score (34%).

Based on these factors, marketers are creating strategies that are more ABM-specific as opposed to general revenue and pipeline efforts. By focusing on the number of leads and new accounts alongside revenue and pipeline, marketers are building their ABM strategies to be more multi-faceted and highly adaptable.

There is a positive trend of frequency of outreach/contact with accounts, with 32% of companies keeping quarterly contact with their accounts at the bare minimum. More interestingly, the survey showed 25% are performing account outreach monthly, while 19% are engaging their accounts weekly. This shows a clear move toward more intimate communication and to build a more personal relationship with accounts.

# How do you measure your ABM efforts?



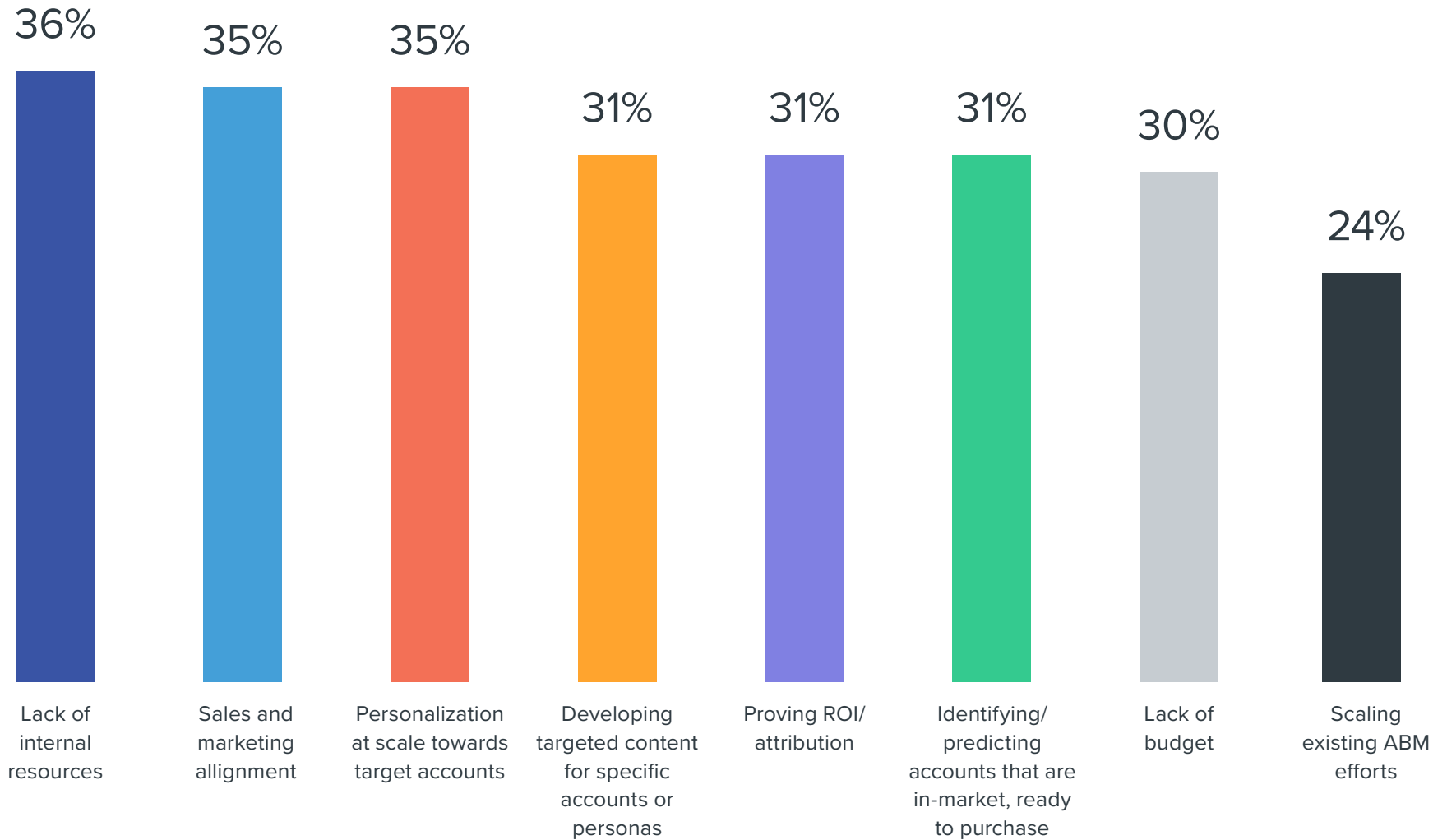| Measure | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Number of qualified leads | 67% |
| Net-new accounts engaged | 63% |
| Contribution to pipeline revenue | 56% |
| Win rate | 44% |
| Pipeline velocity | 43% |
| Account engagement score | 34% |
| Annual recurring revenue | 25% |
| Average contract value | 25% |

# Common ABM challenges include lack of internal resources (36%) and sales & marketing alignment (35%).

Despite the advancements in ABM strategy formation and implementation, many companies are still hindered by common marketing challenges. These challenges include:

- Lack of internal resources (36%);

- Sales and marketing alignment (35%);

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

- Developing target account personas (32%);

- Predicting which accounts will purchase (31%); and

- Proving ROI/attribution (31%).

ABM practitioners need more allocated budget and support internally in order to succeed and adopt more ABM-specific KPIs based on their revenue to measure success. The ideal ABM strategy is to personalize ABM programs in a way that reaches a determined ICP, and the emphasis on these challenges shows that marketers are still considering ABM as a company-wide goal.

# What are your biggest ABM-related challenges?



| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **36%** | **35%** | **35%** | **31%** | **31%** | **31%** | **30%** | **24%** |
| Lack of internal resources | Sales and marketing allignment | Personalization at scale towards target accounts | Developing targeted content for specific accounts or personas | Proving ROI/ attribution | Identifying/ predicting accounts that are in-market, ready to purchase | Lack of budget | Scaling existing ABM efforts |

# Conclusion

*Demand Gen Report* and *ABM In Action* continue to follow the development of ABM as a mainstay practice in B2B, and 2020 has seen the most growth and evolution of the practice yet. ABM has become more than a growing trend in 2020, developing into an optimal, even necessary, marketing strategy to help companies engage their buyers, identify new target audiences and generate greater pipeline and revenue.

The advent of COVID-19 and an increased desire for personalized engagement has placed ABM as a central strategy in the B2B space. It's clear marketers are taking extra care to implement new innovations, segments, data, channels and content to create or reinvent their ABM strategies and programs.

Although some marketers are still facing challenges surrounding ABM, many are making a concerted effort to adopt ABM into their marketing mixes to generate pipeline and revenue from accounts to build stronger strategies.

# About The Survey

*Demand Gen Report* surveyed 191 B2B marketing executives and professionals of various roles and within various industries in September of 2020. The respondents of the *2020 ABM Benchmark Survey* range from director (35%), manager (28%), Vice President (20%), C-level (12%) roles.

Forty-two percent of this year's respondents work in the high-tech industry, with others working in professional services (12%), business services (7%) and financial services (6%).

The respondents came from companies that generated a variety of annual revenue, with 32% working for companies generating less than $25 million. Other respondents came from companies that generate more than $1 billion (19%), $100 to $500 million (17%) and $25 to $50 million (16%).

# 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 highgrowth 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.

**info@demandbase.com**

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## PureB2B

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.

**http://pureb2b.com/contact**

## RollWorks

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.

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# DEMAND GEN® 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.
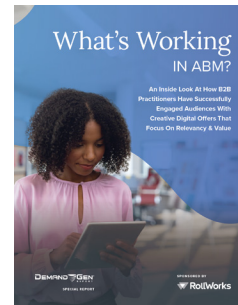
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## Resources
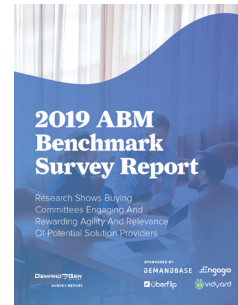
### 2019 ABM BENCHMARK SURVEY REPORT

### 2020 WHAT'S WORKING IN ABM?

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## Michael Rodriguez [in] [twitter]

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