

WHAT'S WORKING IN ACCOUNT-BASED MARKETING?

ORGANIZATIONS FOCUS ON EXPERIENTIAL CAMPAIGNS
& INTERNAL ALIGNMENT FOR ABM SUCCESS

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Introduction

The popularity and successes of account-based marketing (ABM) are unmatched. **Demand Gen Report research** revealed that 98% of marketers are currently using or plan to use ABM strategies, with 73% of respondents who use ABM indicating it greatly exceeded their organization's expectations. Given the strength of this powerhouse strategy, it's important to reflect on what's working — and what's not.

The industry's shift to digital enabled a flurry of innovations that helped fill many gaps in marketers' ABM playbooks. This included opening better lines of communication between internal teams, creating more experiential campaigns and pushing content marketers out of the box. Those experience-based programs go beyond just marketing and take the shape of account-based experiences (ABX), which experts say is the next level of ABM.

"What's working in ABM is creating a whole experience — ABX — and leveraging it to stand out from the competition," said Amanda Dyson, Sr. Marketing Manager, Demand Generation at digital supply chain provider **Blue Yonder**. "With ABX supplementing the loss of events and trade shows, it encouraged marketers to conceive fresh ideas."

With ABM's transition to experience-based strategies in mind, this report will guide readers through the ins and outs of the ABM/ABX marriage, with specific topics of discussion covering:

- The use of ABM to supplement in-person interactions;
- Leveraging data to understand customers' wants and needs in advance and digging into those insights to identify what they're really looking for;
- How demand generation is evolving into a more fit-focused strategy;
- The role of personalization and data in ABM campaigns;
- Why organizations must remain internally and technologically aligned; and
- The creation of ABM campaigns that stand out from the competition.

Modern Account-Based Strategies Pave The Way For ABX

By Jodi Cerretani, RollWorks



I'm a marketer through and through, but as a matter of practice, I make it a point to work alongside my sales team from time to time and cold call. And, if I'm being completely honest, I hate it.

You might wonder, why do something you hate? The truth is, the experience reminds me about the fundamentals of my job, which is to give sales a “why you; why you now” overview of accounts and drive measurable, actionable product awareness and interest from accounts showing high intent.

After all, cold calling isn't so bad (or difficult) if it isn't, well, cold.

Refining Volume-Based Approaches For Leads

The critique of the modern demand gen marketer is that many of us (still) focus on top of the funnel (ToFu) quantity over quality. And this trend of driving high ToFu volume is really no surprise. Current B2B marketing channels and technologies make it easy, and often inexpensive, to drive a high volume of measurable actions from leads.

But there's a limitation with a basic volume-based approach that can show up in funnel health analysis (conversion rates, velocity and deal size) and seller feedback alike: Marketers often drive the right people from the wrong accounts to respond.

When ABM hit the market and suggested we switch to targeting a mutually agreed upon finite target account list (TAL) to solve the quality vs. quantity problem, many of us jumped on it. After all, if you co-define and co-target a specific list of priority accounts with sales, you'll surely solve the right-person-wrong-account issue at minimum.



But the reality is that the adoption of 100% ABM has been sluggish and incomplete. In fact, if you inject truth serum into the arms of B2B marketers, I'd guess the reality of demand gen practices at most B2B organizations are (still) hybrid.

Fully Embracing ABM As A Strategy

I'm here to say the lack of full-fledged adoption of ABM is not a flaw, but actually a reasonable market reaction to an overcorrected demand gen approach. Unless your ideal customer is a tiny number of potential accounts, there's nothing wrong with a demand gen methodology that generates a combo of on and off TAL engagement. After all, volume and quality are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

What is true (and solved) by a more ABM-centric motion is that account fit matters. When it comes to prioritization, investment levels and other strategic decisions, it is ideal to agree to a best-of-the-best list of highest fit accounts to go after. This ensures that you're leveraging your financial and human resources in the most efficient way.

The key of a TAL is to utilize a fit-based focus to drive measurable, actionable product awareness and interest from the right people in the right accounts who are most likely to buy (and become your next best customer).

I'd argue the job of the modern marketer, therefore, is not to rip and replace the current demand gen approach. I do not believe the "lead is dead" and replaced with something entirely new; rather, it's evolved into a more fit-focused — and dare I say realistic — practice.

That's ultimately why marketers gravitated toward adopting ABM. Naturally, a new lens on an account-first strategy has evolved —account-based experiences (ABX) — focusing on the ability to determine cohorts of accounts that are most likely to act. We're talking a heavy focus on intent and engagement signals, blending the best of all worlds and possibly giving us the answer we need for an evolved demand gen practice. One that drives quality and volume simultaneously, while delivering key, actionable insights (the why you; why now) that sellers need to succeed.

There will always be a new acronym in B2B marketing, but at the core, the trend is account-first for a reason and marketers need to focus on what strategies do rather than simply the names they go by. At the end of day, we're all looking for a way to melt those ice-cold calls.

P.S. If you've never picked up the phone and called on an account, take this byline as your formal challenge. You'll thank me later.



Making All ABM Campaigns ABX

Although ABM has a common definition, each organization has their own interpretation of its extension — ABX. There are two main ideologies: Some companies consider it the next level of ABM, while others make the argument that ABX has always been a natural component of the strategy. Dyson explained that when her team prepares to launch a new ABM play, they consider it experiential by default.

“We never want to launch a single-touch campaign; we want everything to be a journey, which encompasses an experience,” she explained. “Some of our ABM programs might include scheduled demos and strategy sessions, followed by a happy hour-type event. When we get a request from sales to do an ABM program or campaign, we naturally build them around an experience.”

However, there are others treating ABX as a strategy on its own. No matter how companies slice it, it culminates with a common goal: Building relationships with prospects.

“Obtaining and retaining respect and trust from our prospects and customers are the key factors fueling ABM’s evolution to ABX,” said Carmen Goldstein, Head of Global Strategy and Campaigns, Growth Marketing for real-time program development platform **Unity**. “You must provide relevant content to target accounts and be mindful of when they need it and how it should be delivered. This requires further investment in predictive account-level insights that fuel stronger account engagement at every stage of the buyer’s journey.”

Generating those insights are customer relationship management systems (CRM), which house all the data needed to create ABX campaigns. To properly act on it, companies must bring all that data together into a single view and source of truth.

“You need to understand the first-party data that comes out of your CRM and any third-party data you leverage,” said Hillary Carpio, Director of Account Based Marketing at Snowflake. “Once generated, you should pull all that intent data together to weave a narrative about an account, such as the best time to target them and how to report on them.”

The Key Role Of Data In Effective ABM Campaigns



Data can make or break ABM campaigns — which is why it's imperative that marketing and sales are looking at the most up-to-date information. However, it gets murky with the recently enacted data privacy laws that force marketers to reexamine where their data is sourced.

To dive deeper into the role high-quality first- and third-party data play in targeting accounts, *Demand Gen Report* sat down with **Triblio's** Chief Customer Officer, Andrew Mahr, to examine the current state of intent data.

Demand Gen Report: How can marketing teams combine first- and third-party intent data to generate a fuller picture of clients and prospects? Are the impending data privacy laws going to change this process?

Andrew Mahr: Combining signals from both first- and third-party intent gives the marketing team powerful ways to automatically prioritize and segment their most important accounts.

Prioritization is accomplished by using intent data to model which accounts are in market and whether those are early-, mid- or late-stage in their decision process. With this view of accounts, marketers can easily assign some accounts to top-of-funnel nurture campaigns while accounts closer to the decision stage are sent directly to SDRs to prospect and engage.

Intent data also automates segmentation. Not all early-stage accounts have the same needs, and intent allows marketers to identify and deliver the best messaging or content for each type of intent signal (Product A vs Product B, for instance).



Data privacy laws are changing the intent landscape significantly. Specifically, data sources that do not gather consent have been decommissioned in global markets and are likely to disappear in the U.S., as well. Vendors with a lead in proprietary, opted-in data will provide the most value.

DGR: What's the most effective way for organizations to harness data to create an ideal customer profile?

Mahr: For organizations selling into an already-established market, first-party data in your CRM provides the foundation of an ideal customer profile (ICP), while third-party data (applied as described above) allows you to establish the number and segmentation of your target accounts in an effectively real-time manner. Your ABM solution should handle the heavy lifting there.

When entering a new market, however, vendors' first-party data in CRM is thin at best because of limited sales history. In that scenario, marketers would rely more heavily on third-party intent data to identify accounts that are showing interest in related solutions or competitors and then A/B test campaigns against those segments. The resulting campaign performance data helps you establish which segments are best for marketing targeting while you're in the process of accumulating your initial set of customers.

DGR: What is predictive orchestration in ABM? How does it help take ABM campaigns to the next level?

Mahr: Predictive orchestration is the process of using data to feed warm accounts into campaigns, and then automatically facilitate multi-stage buyers' journeys across any number of channels.

This is vital to ABM for two reasons. First, target account selection is far too important to rely on slow and error-prone manual processes — being predictive means using data to make better decisions in real time. Second, ABM campaigns target large buying groups that access data on a variety of channels — those channels have to be delivering consistent messaging to the whole account and that is what orchestration solves.



DGR: How can organizations rely on data insights to optimize existing ABM campaigns?

Mahr: Your ABM platform should provide a wealth of data that helps to optimize campaigns.

Messaging can be optimized by comparing performance of different ad creatives against the roles or account segments you're targeting. This tells marketers which messages are working and where further development or testing are needed.

Budget can be optimized by looking at the total pipeline influence being influenced by ABM campaigns month over month or within any given segment of accounts.

DGR: What role does data play in personalizing web channels for known and unknown visitors?

Mahr: Data is critical for identification and segmentation of web personalization campaigns.

An ABM platform needs to ingest and prioritize many data points to correctly identify a visitor from a target account. For example, if the user's IP address says they are visiting from a hotel chain but their Marketo cookie says they work at Adobe, how should the platform resolve their identity?

Once a visitor has been identified, data also plays a role in serving them the right content — what solutions is the account interested in and what creative has the most probability to convert them into an opportunity. Data automates that decision process and needs to do so in less than five milliseconds before the page loads.

“An ABM platform needs to ingest and prioritize many data points to correctly identify a visitor from a target account.”

ANDREW MAHR, TRIBLIO



Maintaining Alignment For ABX Success

If data's the gasoline of ABM/ABX campaigns, internal alignment is the accelerator. Internal communication creates a feedback loop — sales should analyze intent data to determine when an account is in market to give ABM teams the green light to create a campaign. Once a program is created, marketers must frequently check in with sales to track the initiative's success.

“Sales should choose the targets and ABM teams should choose the tactics,” explained Carey Straetz, Head of Demand Generation for data science platform **Mode**. “We meet regularly with account managers and everyone who knows anybody in our target account. And we'll marry the BDR and demand generation strategies and sort of feed that to our salespeople. We have regular cadence meetings where sales and BDRs sit in on my demand gen meeting, and my demand gen team will sit in on the BDR meeting.”

Breaking teams out of siloes is one thing; ensuring they're operating efficiently is another. As the digital world intertwines itself into all aspects of B2B marketing, the skills need to successfully leverage this strategy are evolving. According to Unity's Goldstein, the modern skills organizations need for successful ABM campaigns include the ability to:

- Utilize automation to engage leads and AI to predict the risk or upside of an open opportunity;
- Solve customer problems first by building trust and credibility around your solutions and showing empathy to your prospect first, before showing the various capabilities of your products and services;
- Embrace B2C selling strategies; and
- Leverage social impact in selling.

In-person meetings and touchpoints are beneficial for a company, but another major problem companies face is sharing data, ensuring it remains up to date and that marketing teams are working with the latest data to create compelling content — which falls on the shoulders of marketers.

Aligning Internal Teams For Increased ABM Success



Internal teams are like a box of chocolates — you never know what you're going to get. While some members prioritize working with their colleagues, others opt to focus on their own to-do list to hit their numbers. However, internal alignment is an integral part of success with ABM campaigns and requires constant communication between teams.

To learn more about the trouble with disconnected teams and how organizations can work to increase and maintain internal alignment, *Demand Gen Report* sat down with Nigel Williams, Chief Strategy Officer of marketing and advertising agency **Kingpin**, to discuss the best tips and tricks to keep sales and marketing teams unified.

Demand Gen Report: How does internal alignment (or lack thereof) impact ABM? Why do you think teams are struggling to align?

Nigel Williams: When ABM is implemented effectively, it can be transformational — but it does challenge the traditional siloes of working practice that are in place at most organizations.

Ironically, many of the reasons sales and marketing teams struggle to align can be addressed by ABM. For example, sales often see marketing as too opportunistic, as leads delivered do not match their target accounts. There has also been a disconnect in that sales seek opportunities consisting of groups of contacts, whereas marketing has traditionally delivered single contact leads.

The reason most organizations are still struggling to align is that they have not scoped a change management or adoption-based plan to drive alignment as part of the program, backed by high levels of executive support. It takes far more to change established behavior than is commonly believed.



DGR: To alleviate some of those alignment issues, what are some steps marketing leaders can take?

Williams: One of the most useful steps is to introduce some change management thinking to devise a plan that considers the challenges significant change presents. Another is to ensure alignment at the top of the organization. If the head of sales and marketing are not agreed on their priorities, it is unlikely that the rest of the organization can align effectively. Another tactic is driving an initiative in buyer-centricity as a mechanism to develop a common vocabulary between the two teams.

DGR: Why is it important for organizations to have a clearly mapped buyer's journey, and how can internal teams work together to build it out?

Williams: A clearly mapped out buyer's journey is becoming increasingly important in B2B marketing. The focus on engaging as much of the buying team as possible, rather than a key individual, requires us to interpret multiple buying signals from across a buying team of multiple individuals to gain a better understanding of the buying context. The buyer's journey provides an excellent framework for that task.

Another benefit of a well-mapped out buyer's journey is to identify and eliminate friction points the buying team may encounter on the journey. This is commonly understood in SaaS businesses as 'friction' and is a fundamental part of SaaS thinking, but it is now becoming more important in B2B marketing. The buyer's journey provides a framework for effective buyer content self-service with the identification and elimination of purchasing friction points along the way.

A third reason to adopt the buyer's journey is the continued increase in the complexity and difficulty of purchasing. This was documented in some detail in "**Gartner's Big Book of Buyer Behavior**," published in 2020, which showed that the average complex technology purchase involves between 14 and 23 people and 74% of buyers rated buying efforts as "complex." By identifying the buying tasks the buying team will encounter on their journey, we are able to build content to help the buying team complete those tasks, resulting in faster sales cycles and higher conversions.



DGR: Do you have any recommendations on any practices or team-building exercises marketing teams can conduct to improve strategies going forward?

Williams: Workshops between sales and marketing using examples from previous purchases are a sound way to develop the buyer's journey for your target audience. Before the workshop, it's best to agree upon the stages of the buyer's journey. These have traditionally been described as awareness, consideration and decision, but are now more commonly described as education, solution and selection. Some buyer's journeys have more stages than this, depending on the complexity of the purchasing process. In the workshop, sales and marketing can work together to define the key elements of buyer's journey. At its most basic, this consists of:

- Listing the members of the buying team with their position and buying role accompanied by actionable information, such as their content consumption preferences. It is helpful to record which of the participants are involved at which of the stages and the timing of the stages.
- The information needed by the buying team at each of the stages so that they can move to the next stage.
- Your current content effectiveness, or how well you can meet the buying team's requirements with the content you have today. It's also important to determine what the priorities are to develop new content to address the requirements you can't meet today.

“When ABM is implemented effectively, it can be transformational — but it does challenge the traditional siloes of working practice that are in place at most organizations.”

NIGEL WILLIAMS, KINGPIN

A woman with glasses is sitting at a table in a cafe, working on a laptop. There is a glass of water and a vase with flowers on the table. The background shows other tables and chairs in the cafe.

Stepping Outside The Box To Experiment With Content

Alignment naturally spills over into the content creation process in various ways, whether it's connecting with sales reps to identify if certain content will resonate with specific buyers or making sure their content's language and style is appropriate for the target's industry and expertise. If marketing doesn't have a deep knowledge of the field they're creating a campaign around, they should rely on internal team members to round it out.

"If you're selling a product that's very specific and complex, it's really important to have a subject matter expert within your ideal customer profile (ICP) write your content," said Mode's Straetz. "For example, our ICP is data scientists, so we have our data analysts write the content."

Once the "meat" of the content, so to speak, is tidied up, the fun part comes in. B2B marketing has gained a bad reputation for being stiffer and more serious than its B2C counterpart. However, the line is beginning to blur between the two and opening the door for unique and more complex campaigns.

"If you're selling a product that's very specific and complex, it's really important to have a subject matter expert within your ICP write your content."

CAREY STRAETZ, MODE



“Campaigns are all about getting a prospect’s attention, and it’s getting harder with content oversaturation and digital fatigue,” said Blue Yonder’s Dyson. “We like to theme our campaigns as much as possible. It doesn’t necessarily have to have anything to do with the customer, current event or our product, either. One of my favorite campaigns was for a medical device company that featured little robots on the beach, and it really stood out.”

Before experimenting with more eccentric campaigns, however, marketers should speak with their sales counterpart to ensure the company would be receptive to something a little different than the norm. From there, teams should work to create campaigns that create a “wow!” factor almost immediately. According to Goldstein, the most successful campaigns:

- Provide the highest impact in the first 10 seconds;
- Explore augmented reality (AR) to generate engagement; and
- Bring interaction to personalization.

“The expectations for innovation in content marketing are increasing,” explained Goldstein. “Organizations should start exploring experiential content in their marketing assets to capture the attention of prospects and customers and prolong engagement.”

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CARMEN GOLDSTEIN, UNITY TECHNOLOGIES



How One Door Turned Display Ad Spend Into 70% Of Marketing Influenced Pipeline

One Door is a visual merchandising platform that targets big-box retailers and the fast-moving consumer goods space. One Door is hyper-focused on the supermarket and drug categories within retail, targeting space planners, visual merchandisers and store operations at a corporate level.

Unlike other SaaS products that can gain traction by offering free demos and trials, One Door's solution is more complex and involves a multi-step process. Typical of enterprise software deals, One Door's sales cycle can be between 18 to 24 months, involve many stakeholders across an organization and start at six figures.

The Challenge

One Door did a deep dive on its personas and found that the size of the buying group within its target accounts were approximately 25 to 50 people. While it was getting a high volume of click rates through traditional digital advertising campaigns, these solutions were not helping One Door target key decision makers at these accounts. Because One Door knew who it wanted to target and take an account-based marketing (ABM) approach, it was wasting a lot of money targeting entire accounts.

Another challenge that One Door faced was confidently understanding where it was directly engaging with key decision makers at its target account.

"We're a small company," said Ken Kuperstein, Director of Marketing at One Door. "We don't have a big sales team and they must be accurate with the targets that they're going after. Being able to engage with decision makers passively through advertising and then have visibility of those engagement insights to pass to our sales teams to action on is critical."

With its extended sales cycle and high price point, keeping its brand at the forefront of prospects' minds was also critical in supporting One Door's sales team to keep them engaged through the process.



The Solution

Influ2 helps One Door filter out irrelevant contacts and focus on engaging with the key decision makers and buying groups within its target accounts.

“If you want to engage with a specific individual, there’s only a couple of ways to do this and confirm that you’ve reached them,” explained Kuperstein. “You can send emails through marketing automation; however, there are a lot of false clicks, so you can’t with confidence confirm if the recipient or corporate software opened the email. You can send InMail using LinkedIn, but whether someone has opened the email, there is no reporting to confirm this. Influ2 is one of the most reliable ways to know that an individual has engaged with you and that’s an important part of why we’re using Influ2 to ensure that we put our branding front and center with engaged prospects.”

From its ideal customer profile (ICP) research, One Door established that there were five core personas with five to 10 people in similar roles across its target accounts, each with different roles and pain points. A large part of its first campaigns with Influ2 was to develop ad creative and content (persona-specific guides) so that each target received an ad specific to their defined role in the buying group. Building on this approach, One Door also lightly tested customizing ads with the name of the retailer.

“In the creative, we specifically mentioned Walgreens’ 9,702 stores that required planograms,” said Kuperstein. “When we did this, the average click through rate was 1.10%. Unfortunately, they just weren’t ready to work with us. But that click through rate was like: Wow! That is cool! That’s working. We need to do more of that against accounts that we identify as ready to set resources against a digital transformation project.”

The Results

One of the most powerful and useful tools Kuperstein uses on a daily basis is the Influ2 dashboard, which enables him to enter marketing meetings armed with leads primed for the sales team.

“What I love is when I can see what creative our key contacts engage with and click,” he explained.



“That’s a cool thing to be able to understand which ads resonate with our target audiences and being able to see engagement at an individual level. It also feels great to share the ‘Influ2 clickers’ [target contacts who clicked on our ads] at our Monday market meeting and hand those leads to our sales team.”

Through One Door’s partnership with Influ2:

- Marketing qualified requests increased by 62%, while demos increased by 21% year-over-year;
- Branded searches increased by 66%, when comparing Q2 2021 to the previous year’s;
- Marketing teams were able to influence 70% of total revenue pipeline; and
- The sales team uses Influ2 ad engagement insights to focus on the accounts that have engaged with One Door.

“It’s a cool thing to be able to understand which ads resonate with our target audiences and being able to see engagement at an individual level.”

KEN KUPERSTEIN, ONE DOOR



Conclusion

The industry's shift to digital engagement opened the door for ABM strategies that deliver a complete, multi-touch experience. With organizations leveraging data for personalization, breaking internal siloes and pushing the limits of campaign creativity, marketers are making strides in providing ABM campaigns that balance attention-grabbing themes with informational content.

"As the world becomes more digital and we have more data, we can target people in a more sophisticated way," said Snowflake's Carpio. "ABM brings together sales, marketing, demand gen teams and more to analyze and collaborate on digital experiences to help our campaigns feel more granular."

INFLU²

Influ2 is the first person-based advertising platform—the foundation of high-resolution account-based marketing. The unique person-based ad technology allows full control over digital advertising: show ads to selected decision-makers, track the engagement of each person, and predict who is ready to speak about your product or service.

With Influ2, marketers can open any door and get access to troves of engagement data for each person targeted, making advertising truly work for B2B. Cisco, Sage Intacct, Paddle, and more than 50 customers are already using Influ2 to build relationships with large enterprises.

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Kingpin

We are Kingpin, the B2B technology marketing agency based in London, San Francisco & New York. We connect tech brands to audiences through smart data and big ideas. We engage, acquire and retain customers, by creating communications that move customers along their buying journey. We understand technology buyers: who they are, what they want, and we use these insights to build a strategic approach that forms lasting connections between technology brands and customers.

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ON24 provides a leading cloud-based digital experience platform that makes it easy to create, scale, and personalize engaging experiences to drive measurable business growth. Today, we are helping over 1,900 companies worldwide convert millions of prospects to buyers. Through interactive webinars, virtual events, and always-on multimedia experiences, ON24 provides a system of engagement, powered by AI, which enables businesses to scale engagement, conversions & pipeline to drive revenue growth.

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RollWorks, a division of NextRoll, offers ambitious B2B companies of any size an account-based platform to align their marketing and sales teams and confidently grow revenue. Powered by machine learning and an extensive account data foundation, the RollWorks platform helps you identify your target accounts, engage them with digital ads, web personalization, email signatures and sales automation, and finally, measure the effectiveness of your programs. RollWorks is an indispensable platform for marketing and sales teams large and small who believe that an account-based approach is just good B2B marketing.

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Triblio's Account-Based Marketing (ABM) solution equips marketers with the platform and expertise to scale multi-channel campaign orchestration. Backed by IDG Communications, its AI-powered account-ID engine drives advertising, web personalization, and sales activation for businesses such as Nasdaq, Insperity, and Booz Allen.

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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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