



# WHAT'S WORKING IN ACCOUNT-BASED MARKETING

B2B's Evolution To ABX

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# INTRODUCTION

Is ABX the new ABM? Account-based experience (ABX) is poised as the next evolution of account-based marketing (ABM), taking the entire customer journey into consideration. A major component of that is account insights, which enable marketers to take all customer/prospect insights and activate them across every stage of the buyer's journey. Marketers are using this combination of intent, first- and third-party data to engage accounts more effectively and close deals faster while providing more personalized and targeted outreach.

"I believe if everyone held their hand up and was honest about where they are in terms of their journey – we are just scratching the surface as an industry of what's possible when it comes to ABX," said [Chris Burke](#), Associate Director, Account-Based Marketing Solutions at [The Marketing Practice](#), a B2B marketing agency. "It is an evolution, not a revolution."

Research from *Demand Gen Report's "2022 State Of ABM Benchmark Survey"* found that the content or experiences practitioners are offering as part of their ABM initiatives include **interactive content** (45%), up from 37%; **influencer/advocate-related content** climbed to 35%, compared to 24%; **video content** landed at 49%, as opposed to 39% last year; and **promotional item giveaways** grew to 35%, whereas only 26% utilized it last year.

ABM focuses on identifying and engaging valuable accounts, while ABX uses data and insights to identify when and how to engage with accounts and what to say to them. It's important to note that ABX isn't replacing ABM — the same research found that 61% of marketers utilize an ABM strategy — but ABX is repurposing ABM's best practices and blending them with customer experience to deliver the content buyers want and need. Throughout this report, we'll discuss:

- The role ABM plays in curating ABX strategies;
- How to blend ABM and ABX strategies to see the most success for your business; and
- How to further align marketing, sales and customer teams to create omnichannel experiences for target accounts.





## PERFECTING ABM BEFORE JUMPING INTO ABX

It goes without saying that to excel in ABX, marketers need to first excel in ABM. It's highly unlikely to jump straight to ABX before understanding ABM, since it lays down the very foundation of these concepts. According to ITSMA, almost **50% of all ABM** programs are in the "expanding" or "embedded" stage — marketing teams are still learning how to ease growing pains.

"Companies should start with ABM and then evolve into ABX," said **Mason Cosby**, Director of Growth at B2B marketing agency, **Gravity Global**. "The reason I don't think ABM should go away is there are still many companies that haven't even adopted an inbound model or even adopted basic digital marketing tactics. You can't eliminate ABM when most people haven't even implemented ABM or even started on their digital transformation for their marketing programs. I believe ABX and ABM are just steps along a marketing maturity path that companies need to undergo in the B2B space."

As many marketers haven't grasped the full potential of ABM yet, it seems highly unlikely that ABX would replace ABM. Marketers have seen success in utilizing ABM, but there is still much to learn about the practice.

According to DGR's "[2022 ABM Benchmark Survey](#)," there's a definite correlation between mature ABM programs and more success. Specifically, experienced practitioners outpaced novices in three key categories:

- **Aligned sales and marketing teams** (70% versus 44%);
- **Faster sales cycles** (31% versus 24%); and
- Stronger, more **trustworthy relationships with accounts** (48% versus 39%).

Since ABM has seen so much success, it is fair to assume that ABX has the potential to outdo its predecessor. However, sometimes it's better not to fix something that isn't broken, and a lot of marketers aren't giving up on ABM just yet.

"ABX is the evolution of ABM," added [Jennifer Leaver](#), Director of ABM and Integrated Marketing at [FullStory](#), a digital intelligence platform. "It's not about replacing or erasing account-based marketing, because you're still going to have that marketing motion. It's just maturing it from it solely living on the marketing team to now incorporating sales, customer success and even your product marketing teams, as well."

## **Case In Point:**

**O2 Business** needed more awareness of other IT propositions and teamed up with The Marketing Practice to solve this pain point. The company's **marketing and sales** team needed to identify accounts with the highest propensity to buy and land the message with relevant, compelling communications.

High-potential sectors and accounts were identified using sales team insights and propensity modeling, then tiered into three segments: **ABM Vertical**, for priority sectors; **ABM 100**, for the key accounts within those sectors; and **ABM Lighthouse**, for the eight most strategically important accounts. Sales and marketing collaborated on a program that used a mixture of bespoke and templated content, depending on the segment, to acquire, retain and grow high-priority accounts and increase market share.

The program was highly successful and cost-effective, returning £60 for every £1 invested. Opportunities worth £260M were generated for O2's IT propositions, converting into £39M of revenue. It was crowned 'Most Commercially Successful' at the [B2B Marketing Awards](#).



# HOW B2B MARKETERS CAN MASTER THE NEXT ERA OF ABX

With Mitchell Hanson, Sr. Director, Demand Generation

When the search for ROI starts to feel a little ruthless, exceeding your targets is only half the battle. To really stand apart, marketers need to also prove that they're key strategic players for the business.

Increasingly, the answer to that problem is an account-based experience (ABX). An account-based approach can help knock down the biggest, best deals faster, winning customers who spend more and churn less. But without a foundation of strong data, seamless orchestration and buy-in from the sales team, even the best thought-out playbook will fall short.

## How Data Makes Account-Based Programs Possible

Strong data is the backbone of any successful marketing strategy. Here are four ways to use data to build your core ABX program:

### 1. Create your list of target accounts

Account selection is the first, most critical step of an effective strategy — and it starts with creating an ideal customer profile (ICP). Your ICP should be driven by data points that illustrate the key characteristics of your most valuable customers, such as firmographic and behavioral data. Analyze your database to better understand what makes up your ICP, including:

- Industry
- Revenue
- Average contract value
- Company size
- Location
- Tech stack

Once you've developed your ICP, you can broaden your reach by targeting accounts with similar parameters. But if the data driving your ICP isn't robust, accurate and up-to-date, your targeting will be off the mark.



## 2. Identify who's in-market

Timing is just as important as fit. If it's not the right time — maybe they just bought a competitor's solution, or they're in financial trouble — they won't buy your product, even if it fits their needs perfectly.

Intent data helps determine which prospects are actively looking for a product like yours. With intent data, marketers can prioritize the accounts ready to buy and reach out proactively or influence low-intent prospects before the competition.

## 3. Ensure optimal coverage

You can't sell to people who don't have buying authority. If your target account data lacks basic information about key decision-makers, it may be time to reevaluate your strategy or launch a new engagement channel.

Gather two types of firmographic and demographic data:

- **Business structure data**, such as organizational charts, helps you identify the key people associated with an account and visualize how decisions are made; and
- **Contact data**, including direct-dial phone numbers, allows your team to get past gatekeepers and connect directly with people who make things happen. You're more than twice as likely to reach a prospect at the VP level when you use their direct phone number.

## 4. Use intent data (again) to inform your offer strategy

Once you know which accounts and titles to target, use intent data to determine the offers that will resonate. For instance, if a prospect lacks purchasing intent, shift the goal by offering educational content about the problem they're facing and how your product or service can help.

If they strongly intend to purchase, deliver solution-focused content and direct-response offers like "get a demo" or "start your free trial." The more relevant and personalized your message, the more likely they are to convert.

## Beyond The Data:

### How To Use Target Accounts As A Strategic GTM Focus

ABX places emphasis on the experience. There's a **value exchange**: Your ABX program offers a prospect something that's worth their time — and eventually, their money.

How do you get this exchange right? **The quality of the offer matters** and the scope of the offer should reflect the value of the account. When done right, ABX delivers far more than well-qualified leads. It can become a pillar of your company's strategic focus, driving down costs and increasing alignment between sales and marketing.

ABX is a **hyper-targeted strategy** meant for buyers who are ready to enter the pipeline. While it's more expensive in the short term, ABX yields better, longer-tail ROI than less targeted methods. That's why it's more important than ever to have a **zero-waste approach** — instead of targeting an entire account with ads, focus on the right people within those accounts.

ABX is also a **cross-functional strategy** where sales and marketing work together to identify, target, engage and grow accounts. Your sales counterparts **need to be excited** about your program, from account selection to messaging to program execution, or it won't succeed.

The right data sets your ABX program up for success, but data alone is not enough. Without high-value offers, automated orchestration and internal buy-in, even the most accurate, dynamic data can't deliver its full potential.

When all of these elements are working together, not much can stop you from beating the competition.





## PRIORITIZING SALES & MARKETING ALIGNMENT

Dividing sales and marketing teams into separate divisions is a thing of the past. Marketing and sales need to be aligned to create omnichannel experiences for target accounts. Leaver explained this idea of making alignment the **North Star** or the **central source of truth** to make sure every team is targeting the same accounts.

Research shows that **56% of aligned** companies meet their revenue goals and an additional 19% manage to beat their targets. Businesses with aligned sales and marketing teams experience **36% higher** customer retention and are up to **67% more** efficient at closing deals.

"A mistake that a lot of organizations have made in the past is splitting up those teams," said The Marketing Practice's Burke. "Looking through the same lens is going to help with that alignment piece and the process of collaborative teamwork. *There's an art and a science to this kind of alignment.* Marketing, sales and customer success teams need to think like an ongoing, evolving team, in which all members have different responsibilities and different roles to play, but also recognize that their role and their success depend on collaborating and being able to bring that all under a single function."



Unfortunately, many companies still struggle to align the two departments. *DGR's "ABM Benchmark Survey"* found that sales and marketing alignment was respondents' second-biggest ABM-related challenge. Fast forward two years, **Forrester** said that 35% of B2B marketing leaders "will prioritize improving marketing alignment and collaboration with other departments over the next two years."

Sales and marketing alignment can take a company to the very next level and will go a long way in enhancing their ABM/ABX programs. It may sound like an overwhelming task, but there are simple ways to begin making this crucial change. Marketing and sales teams must find a way to work together to bring forth a greater outcome.

"One of the very first and easiest steps is starting to think more as a joined-up revenue unit, versus those siloed departments," added Burke. "Regardless of where you sit, your focus is on the customer and unifying as a revenue group, versus being four or five separate departments."

## **Case In Point:**

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**Endeavour Group** reaches customers through many **different touchpoints** including websites, mobile sites, storefronts, hotels, casinos, deliveries and more. It's important for Endeavour to be able to measure and understand the **omnichannel customer experience**.

Endeavour wanted to find a way to look deeper into the digital customer journey and worked with FullStory to go back to basics and ensure site speed was functioning correctly. Endeavour **integrated FullStory** with Medallia, Jira and Slack to fit into their workflows instead of remaining isolated, giving all teams the ability to prioritize customers with clean data and actionable insights.



# THE MARKETING PRACTICE'S GUIDE TO ABM/ABX SUCCESS

With Chris Burke of The Marketing Practice

The *Demand Gen Report* team sat down with Chris Burke, Associate Director, Account-Based Marketing Solutions at The Marketing Practice, for an exclusive interview regarding what exactly is working in account-based marketing and experience. Burke shares major insights and revelations, including key ingredients to ABX, as well as how to scale ABM without losing its effectiveness.

***Demand Gen Report: Can you elaborate on the multi-disciplinary ABM approach The Marketing Practice has taken for technology leaders?***

**Chris Burke:** We build tightly integrated teams with all the skills our clients need to create and execute account-based programs in one place. And the way we apply that to the partnership with our clients is as a scrum team that augments itself depending on where we are in the process. We act as an overlay across marketing, sales and all other front-office functions who contribute to an account-based GTM, supporting and augmenting the existing team and working hand in hand with shared responsibility for outcomes, not just outputs. The end result is that it doesn't matter where you sit functionally, we're helping our clients' key departments come together as part of a customer-centric team in a way that has a greater impact on customers and commercial growth.



***DGR: How does The Marketing Practice scale ABM without losing its effectiveness?***

**Burke:** Most of the ability to scale comes from how you set up the ABM function within your organization. The core principle is that we don't become over-reliant on technology. In my experience, initiatives that only drive scale through tech see themselves becoming targeted demand gen programs and losing some of what makes ABM so effective. The best approach is to agree on and document the operating guidelines for ABM within a particular organization, democratizing the ability to deliver account-based experiences.

While you might have a central ABM team responsible for your top global accounts, you enable country and/or field marketing to adopt the approach and principles, allowing them to positively impact their accounts without having to wait in line or compete for the same resources.

***DGR: Why does your company believe we haven't seen ABX in action at scale and how urgently should marketers try and adopt it?***

**Burke:** We have seen it implemented at a small scale, such as utilizing a customer champion and customer success team to create an internal business case for expansion. The issue is that building up a customer champion and co-creating with them is a resource-intensive process and not one that can be scaled too easily.

ABX isn't just about technology and scale, but about creating immersive, multichannel experiences that help buyers buy and make it easier no matter where they are in their purchasing journey. In terms of urgency, you don't need to worry if you're only dipping your toe in ABM still. It's an evolution, not a revolution, and as an industry we're still trying to figure out exactly what ABX means materially for us and the end customer.



## **DGR: What are the five key ingredients of a great account-based experience?**

### **Burke:**

**1. Deep account understanding:** Having a solid account data foundation helps you capture account insights that enrich prospect/customer conversations;

**2. Focus on more than just personalized content:** Content is great, but it isn't the main deciding factor for a buyer. It's more important to help them make the right decision by connecting them to experts and removing complexity;

**3. Engaging with the full customer journey:** Good account-based experiences shouldn't end at the point of sale. They should continue as you nurture and build relationships with customers through the post-sale journey;

**4. Create continuity:** Each interaction should feel like it's progressing the conversation or picking it up where it was left off, there shouldn't be contextual gaps; and

**5. Be responsive:** Respond quickly when needed, particularly to an incident or when things aren't going as well as expected, drawing on other engagements with similar customers to highlight outcomes or trends.

## **DGR: Can you explain how marketers can embed an ABX mindset in their go-to-market strategy?**

**Burke:** The easiest way is to use accounts as the organizing factor. Doing that will ensure that every decision you make as it relates to your GTM is customer centric. To start, make sure you can capture the right information about your accounts — not only engagement, but things like intent, sales interactions and conversation notes (often the best source of insight!). You'll also need to have a clear, comprehensive picture of your customers' journeys, mapping them across multiple channels, interactions and functions.

Most likely, you'll need to re-evaluate how your marketing team currently operates and engages with other functions outside of sales, as it's likely they're siloed with poor handoffs and a lack of visibility that creates poor experiences rather than as an aligned revenue group in service of the customer.







## BLENDING ABM & ABX FOR MAXIMUM RESULTS

When practitioners listed their top challenges, personalization at scale plummeted from **46% to 34%** — confirming marketers are getting a better grip on customizing strategies. ABX was made to improve the areas that ABM lacked in – customization, intent and data management.

“Blending the two is where you will get the biggest bang for your buck,” explained FullStory’s Leaver. “If you’re only running an account-based strategy on the marketing team and sales hasn’t bought in and they’re not involved, and CX hasn’t bought in and they’re also not involved, your efforts will only go so far because you’re not looking at the same thing across teams as your central source of truth.”

Combining the best parts of both practices can make for a strong and rewarding ABM/ABX program. The “2022 ABM Benchmark Survey” found that ABM practitioners have made strides over the past year to keep up with buyers’ self-service demands, as:

- **Custom resource centers rose** to 41% from 30%;
- **Chatbots grew in adoption**, with 39% leveraging them compared to 23% in 2021;
- **Text messaging surged** in use, growing from 10% in 2021 to 33%; and
- **Messenger platforms sharply increased**, rising from 17% to 35%.

When asked, “Does blending ABM and ABX strategies create the most success for brands?” Burke did not even hesitate with an assertive, “Absolutely.

“Any of our clients who are starting to combine both of those things are seeing much better commercial throughout,” he continued. “One of the reasons being there’s just greater **precision**. When you’re taking more of an ABX approach, as opposed to a traditional ABM style approach, you’re starting to focus your spend on where you know you can and should be winning. ABM always did that to a degree, but the way we’re able to do that when we start to think about it through an ABX lens, it’s just a little bit more precise and a little bit more **dynamic**.”

## **Case In Point:**

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Before using **ZoomInfo**, Integrate found it impossible to **manually identify** and preserve purposeful duplicates as part of a corporate hierarchy, at scale. This led to allocated leads, leads being routed to the wrong rep and increased gaps in follow-up times. Integrate leveraged ZoomInfo’s data management platform to transform its data hygiene, and sellers have since seen significantly improved speed to lead, reducing confusion among reps and customers.

Integrate can now expect up to a conversion rate of nearly 25% higher between the inquiry and the MQL stage simply by having clean and accurate data. Overall, Integrate’s database marketability has increased from **45% to 66%** and has saved up to 550 hours and up to \$32,000 per rep due to clean data and automated deduplication efforts.



## CONCLUSION

Businesses are maturing their ABM strategies to become more targeted, personalized and accurate. ABM and ABX have the same goal in encouraging marketing teams and sales organizations to work together to identify and move accounts through the pipeline.

"If you've got an ABM program and it's delivering business results, you probably don't need to get too deep in with ABX now," concluded Burke. "At the end of the day, regardless of where your program ends up, all the good principles and theories and practicalities behind good ABM still live on in ABX."



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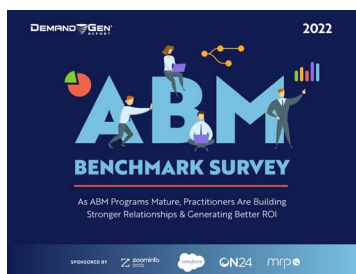
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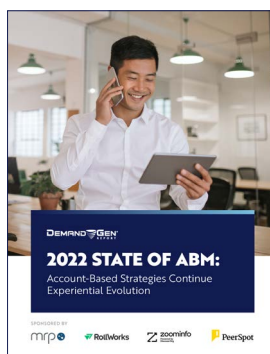
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2022 ABM  
Benchmark Survey



2022 State  
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2022 What's Working in  
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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 multichannel demand generation efforts.

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