2022 STATE OF SALES ACCELERATION:

Orgs Focused On Engaging Prospects On Their Own Terms & Embracing The Changing Buyer's Journey

DemandGen Report

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INTRODUCTION

B2B buyers have officially moved into the driver's seat when orchestrating purchases and researching vendors/solutions. With modern preferences for forming large buying committees, self-service journeys and content overload, sales teams are tasked with blending automation, content, analytics and resources in their strategies to deliver meaningful, personalized buyer engagements that increase deal velocity.

As **55% of buyers** indicated that their buying journey has increased either somewhat or significantly, to the tune of six to nine months, the race for buyers' attention is a marathon that requires marketing and sales teams to engage prospects quickly and maintain contact with them throughout the buying cycle.

"Buyers are accelerating sales cycles by taking more of the research phase into their own hands, and social media means that word of mouth has more of an impact on sales than ever before," said Andrea Eaton, CMO of **DadeSystems**, an accounts receivable automation platform. "Meanwhile, marketing and sales technology providers have delivered an incredible arsenal of solutions that add intelligence and scalability to marketing and sales strategies."

With an understanding of the tools needed and the best strategies of utilizing them, B2B sales reps and marketers are rising to the occasion by gaining a deeper understanding of their customers and how they want to buy. Throughout this report, we'll examine the current state of sales acceleration by highlighting the key priorities for organizations in the new era of selling. Specific topics of discussion will include:

- Key strategies for leveraging automation and behavioral signals to identify and target prospects most likely to convert, with a focus on the tools needed to streamline the process;
- How to make the most out of marketing content for sales, with a focus on the top content formats that resonant best in each step of the buyer's journey;
- How to identify the needs of buying committees and supply relevant information that appeals to all members and encourages further action;
- Actionable tips for building a strong sales and marketing partnership and provide relevant messaging at optimal times, as well as the importance of communication to identify and target in-market accounts; and
- How sales teams can sharpen their focus on customer success and retention by adopting a buyer-centric sales approach.

EMBRACING THE MODERN BUYER THROUGH VIDEO ENGAGEMENT & SENSE-MAKING

With B2B buyers only spending **17% of their overall purchase process** in talks with potential vendors, the biggest challenge for sales teams is identifying how to engage the modern buyer. But given the content overload in marketing — it's estimated that buyers see more than **5,000 marketing messages** per day — the key to sales acceleration has shifted from generating engaging content to educating sales reps about buyers' specific preferences.

"The amount of high-quality information available for customers to use when making a B2B buying decision has become overwhelming, leading to indecision and a sharply reduced likelihood of making a substantive purchase," said **Gartner** Analysts **Alice Walmesley and Tom Cosgrove**. "Rather than adding to the noise, the best sellers often help buyers simply make sense of the information they've already encountered."

This approach is what Gartner refers to as **"Sense Making,"** which, when applied through the lens of context and situational awareness, works to increase knowledge of individual buyer behaviors and accommodate those differences. According to the analysts, this tactic helps strengthen confidence with customers, partners and prospects across various purchase types, geographies, industries or whatever differentiates a particular buyer's circumstances.

"We all have access to more information than ever before and more channels to discover it," said Darragh Fitzpatrick, CRO of ABM platform RollWorks. "So, by the time a buyer enters the sales process, it's likely that prospect is more informed than you may suspect or has already been influenced in some way. This can be both a good thing and bad thing when it comes to accelerating sales."

"Sense making" further highlights the need to meet customers where they are as they opt for self-service buying journeys. To engage these customers and help them understand the information they have consumed, sales reps need to engage with buyers and share their insights in an easy to digest, consumable way. To that end, **almost half (46%) of buyers** rely on interactive content and video throughout their buyer's journey, and this easily digestible content asset is living across all channels.

"Video is a critical way to be able to engage with your prospects and customers in an authentic way," said Rebecca Drew, EMEA Sales Leader for online video platform Vidyard. "It is much more efficient and effective to educate and validate through the power of video. Being able to articulate value at all stages of the sales process from prospecting to proposal and post-sale is so important to differentiate your business from the competition."

HOW HUBSPOT INCREASED MEETING BOOKINGS BY 4X

HubSpot's Sales Rep Adam Rataj was the first person in the organization to discover the power of video for sales back in 2017. At the time, he was charged with reaching out to users who'd signed up for HubSpot's free product to educate them, which resulted in him spending his time writing long, text-heavy emails and trying to schedule meetings with prospects. After being prospected by a Vidyard sales rep, he decided to give Vidyard's video platform a try and began recording short videos to illustrate a HubSpot platform feature or demonstrate a task.

Through his video outreach, Rataj:

- Increased his bookings by 4X;
- Achieved a 94% retention rate; and
- Saw a 77% click-through rate.

For deeper insights, check out the case study below.

PROVIDING BUYERS & COMMITTEES WITH THEIR CONTENT PREFERENCES

It's an overused saying, but it's true: Content is king. With **80% of buyers** indicating that a vendor's content had a positive, significant impact on their buying decisions and **58% of marketers** planning to increase their investment in content initiatives throughout 2022, organizations are tasked with creating compelling assets that cut through all the digital noise. However, given the content overload in the marketplace, practitioners are now meeting buying committees' preferences for easily digestible assets.

"Our focus with content has been less on what is the right format and more on how we become as easy as possible to find, consume and understand," said Eaton. "We aim to deliver a clean website experience with everything from best practices to research to product demos to case studies to pricing info already available."

Part of that ease of accessibility relates back to content mapping. Given the various content formats available and their noted success across different stages of the buyer's journey (i.e., interactive content is most popular in the mid-stages, while case studies are more sought after in the later stages), marketers should re-think how they map their content in a way sales teams can understand and utilize.

"To support sales outreach, think in terms of steps salespeople are going to take and the content they need at each step," explained Pam Didner of Relentless Pursuit in her **#B2BMX session**. "Thinking in terms of sales stages, as salespeople do, can support sales enablement by mapping content in a way sales teams understand. Tech tools, such as content management libraries, are essential, but the human touch of marketers to classify assets is equally vital to helping sales find the content they need."

An account-based approach is particularly useful here, as it helps sales reps identify the prospects that are in-market so they can allocate their time to the accounts that are more likely to convert. ABM strategies strengthen communication between departments to help identify high-value accounts that are seeking information or clarification and streamline buyer identification efficiency.

ABM'S ROLE IN ACCELERATING SALES

with Danilo Nikolich, RollWorks' Sr. Director of SDRs

ABM is no longer just an industry buzzword; it's cemented itself as a key strategy in marketers' arsenals to create experiential interactions for accounts and, predictably, accelerate sales in the process. But although ABM is well known, organizations still aren't leveraging this strategy to its full potential across all areas of the business. To glean more insights into ABM's role in accelerating sales, the Demand Gen Report team sat down with Danilo Nikolich, RollWorks' Sr. Director of SDRs, to understand the bigger picture ABM plays in sales acceleration.

***Demand Gen Report:* What are the benefits of an ABM strategy for sales acceleration?**

Danilo Nikolich: There are many fundamental benefits to using an ABM strategy. One of the more painfully obvious examples is to ease marketing and sales misalignment; another is to align on shared goals. For example, the marketing team may be focused on leads to create demand, whereas the sales team is focused on closing business. Instead, it's critical that both organizations are looking at the same data and are measured similarly so each team, in their own way, and working in tandem toward the same goal: Revenue.

At the end of the day, ABM is key to sales acceleration with its ability to automate faster sales cycles, go more upstream and really focus on the types of businesses — from SMBs through to the enterprise — that are going to ultimately drive the most revenue growth.

***DGR:* How does ABM help sellers day-to-day and long-term goals?**

Nikolich: Think about ABM in terms of how your short- and long-term goals are solving these issues. For example, in the near-term, ABM can help if you're struggling with identifying accounts that are showing engagement and intent related to an offering that you sell. It can also help inform day-to-day insights into account prioritization, answering the common question: Which account do I reach out to now versus later?

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Start with identifying your ideal customer profile (ICP) and then applying it to your total addressable market (TAM) to generate a target account list (TAL). Once you have a set of accounts, it becomes a matter of scoring to understand which account you should prioritize first. From there, you can gain day-to-day insights into prioritization based on which accounts are engaging the most, answering the common question: Which account do I reach out to now versus later?

As far as long-term impact of working the right accounts rather than just any lead, you'll see better fit opportunities from marketing, higher engagement, shorter deal cycles, higher value contracts and, ultimately, happy quota hitters that bring recurring revenue to the business.

***DGR:* Why is it so important for sales and marketing to be aligned around ABM programs? What benefits does it have for the accounts?**

Nikolich: ABM is about the overlap, not the handoff.

Think about this way: A successful ABM approach enables your marketing team to provide air cover and targeted programs as you, the sales team, are going outbound to target accounts.

I'll give you more perspective: When most organizations think about ABM, they think about it in terms of accounts exhibiting intent in their solution or showing engagement with their brand. The reality is that those accounts represent, on average, no more than 15% or 20% of the available market being chased. What happens when you go outside of those? How do you prioritize your SDRs efforts to make sure that they're reaching out to the accounts that have a higher propensity of replying to your messages, that will in turn lead to a higher number of appointments for your sales org? One option is to score target accounts so that the SDR team can reach out to the highest fit accounts first. Those accounts are still cold, hence the air cover I mentioned earlier.

***DGR:* Why is it important to have full visibility into the outcomes of ABM programs? How can revenue teams use these insights to inform future campaigns?**

Nikolich: First, like any program, you need to know what works and what doesn't so that you can take the next best action and prove the overall ROI of your strategy. This is especially true with multi-touch ABM since it takes such tight-knit collaboration with both marketing and sales. If marketing puts out a killer campaign but sellers can't see which accounts are reacting to it, they lose the chance for perfectly timed follow-up.

Take digital campaigns, for example. With tools like ad personalization and the A/B testing perspective, we learn which messages are resonating with which prospects. This type of account-level insight then has a trickle-down effect across all marketing and outbound sales messaging. If we haven't reached part of our audience with a key message, we optimize the message and give ourselves a second chance to engage with our audience. There's a "rinse-and-repeat" approach.

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***DGR:* Does artificial intelligence and machine learning play a role in sales acceleration? Why and how?**

Nikolich: Artificial intelligence and machine learning are key components of any ABM solution, simply because of the ability automation affords us to prioritize our outreach related to our TAL and provide us with timely intel.

Within the RollWorks platform, as an example, our **Account Spikes** feature tells us how an account is engaging with us and when that engagement is meaningful by surfacing significant changes in behavior. Simply put, if someone is on our website each day checking out two pages each day, that's normal behavior. If that normal behavior changes — let's say now there are two people checking out two pages each day — our SDR team will automatically be notified to follow up.

"ABM is about the overlap, not the handoff."

DANILO NIKOLICH, ROLLWORKS

IMPLEMENTING TECHNOLOGY & SOLUTIONS TO MEET MODERN NEEDS

Given the information overload in the market, a comprehensive, communicative sales tech stack is essential to capturing and analyzing all flickers of buyer interest and intent, such as the specific content consumed by accounts and prospects across all channels. But given the abundance of assets and data entry points, simply adopting the technology that sifts through buyer insights isn't enough; sales teams need to understand how each component works together to curate a complementary stack that makes sense of the incoming information.

"What's most important is having the right technology in the right places and that it integrates seamlessly with your other tools," said Vidyard's Drew. "This is what really separates the market, and therefore native integrations and partnerships are so vital. Companies want to drive simplicity and efficiency, and this comes down to how it fits with your overall process. If it is not easy to use or integrated, there will be challenges with adoption."

With **39% of sales and marketing teams** investing in marketing automation, Drew and DadeSystems' Eaton explained the key components of a sales tech stack include:

- An intent tool that's fully integrated with an organization's CRM and MAPs;
- A sales engagement platform;
- A sales enablement platform
- A video marketing tool;
- An account engagement platform;
- SDR enablement platforms; and
- A conversational marketing tool.

"It's a really exciting time in the space," added Drew. "As salespeople, we now have more tools available to us. This allows us to use data and insights to know who to speak with and when to increase efficiencies in closing deals faster."

ALIGNING INTERNAL DEPARTMENTS AROUND TECHNOLOGY & CONTENT

For efficient sales machines that speed up deal lifecycles, interdepartmental alignment is key. As **a quarter of marketers** are focused on improving sales and marketing alignment, organizations must work to create a single source of truth that all teams can access.

“Establishing a streamlined and clear lead-to-cash process and CRM data hygiene are both critical to understanding and benchmarking your sales velocity and gaining a clear picture of your ideal buyers,” said Eaton. “Marketing and sales should align on lead response time and have clearly defined roles and responsibilities for lead follow-up and next steps.”

Eaton noted that “focus is mission critical,” and organizations should work to develop a “playbook” of sorts that features highly repeatable marketing and sales strategies. She continued that DadeSystems’ sales acceleration strategy is centered around capitalizing on these plays at higher volumes and with greater speed and consistency.

“Our sales acceleration strategy centers on doing more of what we know works in better and faster ways so we can continue to grow as aggressively as possible while delighting customers with a proven solution that has worked for others just like them,” said Eaton. “Communication is key. The sales and marketing teams meet regularly to discuss our market observations.”

CONCLUSION

To accelerate sales, organizations must prioritize buyers' preferences and meet them where they are to close deals quickly. Interdepartmental alignment is key, as organizations need to communicate to identify high-value buyers and serve them relevant information.

"Focus and prioritization is critical to sales acceleration," said Eaton. "This means quick disqualification of buyers who aren't a fit and doubling down on marketing and sales strategies that yield the fastest sales cycles and happiest customers. Productivity is key. If there are tools you can provide or process adjustments you can make to help team members work smarter and provide a better buying experience, they're worth investing in."

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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Vidyard is the video platform that helps businesses drive revenue through the strategic use of online video. Going beyond video hosting and management, we help businesses connect with more viewers through interactive and personalized video experiences, learn powerful insights on their viewing audience, turn insights into action with enterprise integrations, and prove the impact of their video programs.

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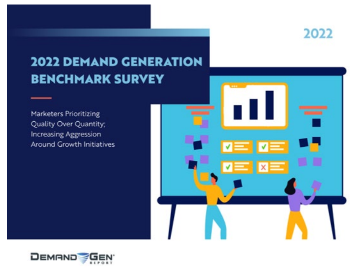
2021 ABM Benchmark Survey



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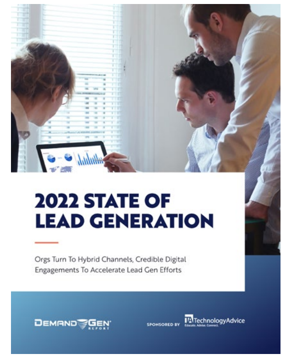

2022 State of Lead Generation

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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