



7 Steps to Building a Winning Account-Based Marketing Strategy

Table of Contents

What is ABM & What Makes It Different?	3
The Benefits of ABM	4
What's in a Name — ABM, ABS & ABX?	5
7 Steps to Building a Winning Account-Based Marketing Strategy	6
Step 1: Conduct a Diagnostic Assessment	7
Step 2: Align the Functions of Your Revenue Team	9
Step 3: Identify Target Accounts	11
Step 4: Create & Curate Content for Target Accounts	12
Step 5: Design ABM Playbooks	13
Step 6: Measure & Analyze	14
Step 7: Continuously Improve	15
Summary	16



What is ABM & What Makes It Different?

Account-based Marketing (ABM), sometimes referred to as key account marketing, is a go-to-market (GTM) growth strategy based on account awareness where an organization identifies and engages with individual customer accounts as markets of one. Very much different than a one-size-fits-all approach to prospective future customers, an ABM strategy targets specific accounts with customized, personalized campaigns.

In non-ABM motions, marketers typically create content for relevant personas associated within their ideal customer profile (ICP). As marketers capture leads, they begin to match them to — and build out — accounts.

With an ABM motion, marketers start by targeting accounts that fit their ICPs rather than attempting to reach out to specific personas.

ABM has been around for ages, but it has picked up a considerable amount of steam post-pandemic. According to HubSpot and its *Not Another State of Marketing Report 2021*, 70 percent of marketers reported using ABM in 2021, up 15 percent from 2020.



The Benefits of ABM

The benefits of ABM are clear. If you're not one of the many who are already completely convinced, consider the following:

- Eighty-seven percent of B2B marketers agreed ABM delivers a higher ROI than other marketing activities (ITSMA)
- Companies deploying ABM generated 200% more revenue for their marketing efforts compared to those that don't (FlipMyFunnel)
- Companies using ABM for at least one year realized a 10 percent increase in revenue, while 19 percent of companies reported revenue growth of over 30 percent (DemandBase)
- Ninety-one percent of marketers who use ABM indicated larger deal sizes, with 25 percent stating their deal size being over 50 percent larger (SiriusDecisions)

There's little doubt that ABM works. Furthermore, there's no doubt that nearly every B2B organization deploys ABM in some format.



What's in a Name — ABM, ABS & ABX?

In a noisy marketplace, there's always a strong desire to create a differentiator. Unfortunately, those various differentiators often create marketplace confusion. For revenue team professionals, that might be the case with ABM, ABS and ABX.

As reviewed earlier, ABM is a strategy based on account awareness where an organization identifies and engages with individual customer accounts as markets of one.

The acronym ABS generally refers to account-based selling, a strategy that works hand-in-hand with ABM. ABS is a process that takes over the targeted accounts warmed up by ABM and develops them further to get to Closed/Won and new revenue.

ABS can also refer to account-based strategy, which is the unified, aligned marketing and sales strategy for working accounts. Account-based strategies are ABM

and account-based selling rolled into one.

ABX is either account-based experience or account-based everything, depending on with whom you speak. ABX takes an account-based approach through the entire revenue team, from marketing and sales through to customer success and support.

Don't let fine — sometimes very fine — lines of the messy account-based alphabet soup trip you up. Going forward with an account-based motion comes down to some very basic, fundamental steps.

Above all, don't let a name fool you. ABM is not a marketing initiative. It's also not a sales initiative. It has been, is, and always will be a **growth initiative!**



7 Steps to Building a Winning Account-Based Marketing Strategy



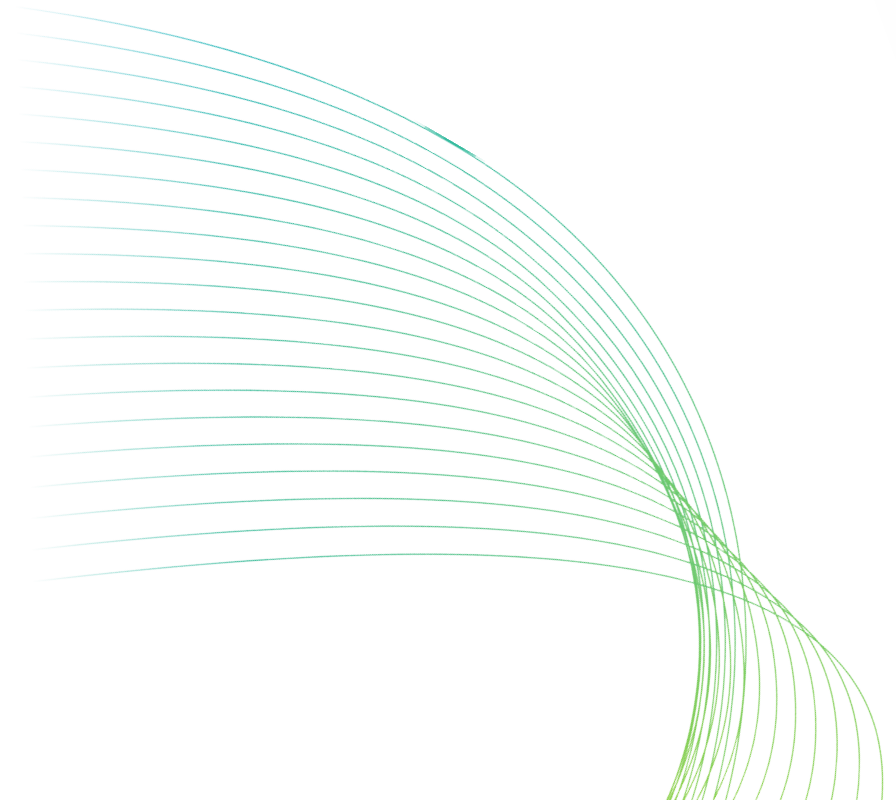
Step 1: Conduct a Diagnostic Assessment

The first step in the designing and deploying of a winning account-based motion is to conduct a diagnostic assessment of the current account-based status quo at your organization, identifying strengths and opportunities for improvement.

Your assessment should lean on quantitative and qualitative data from documentation, reports and stakeholder interviews. The assessment should drive toward a detailed analysis of account-based strategy and programmatic competencies across key ABM success criteria, including:

- Account targeting
- Revenue team design
- Prospecting skills
- Revenue tech stack
- Program orchestration
- Metrics and measurement

Conducting a diagnostic assessment is not only the first step, but is often the most difficult one too. Your assessment should diagnose issues within your organization, and it's important to identify root causes of issues rather than symptoms. Treating symptoms never addresses underlying root causes, and your opportunities to improve will persist.



Step 1: Conduct a Diagnostic Assessment (cont.)

Starting with **team design**, ascertain if the various functional areas of your revenue team — namely marketing, sales and customer success — are capable of determining and meeting customer needs. All functions must be aligned with regular meetings, metrics and reports on your organization's customer segments.

Ensure your revenue team has, or can quickly develop, a **target account list** (see Step 2, below). You can't deploy account-based strategies without accounts.

Assess your team's **play execution**, determining the effectiveness of marketing and sales engagement with buying committee members of accounts. Key considerations include the relevance of engagement tactics and their ability to facilitate customers' buyer journeys, moving them toward buying decisions.

Understand your **revenue tech stack** and its ability to ingest and analyze buyer signals, manage signals and surface high-priority, high value signals when the time is optimal. Your tech stack should automate sales and marketing plays to spur account engagement and facilitate the buyer journey.

Finally, assess your organization's competencies around **measurement** and the development of full-funnel metrics to drive target accounts expeditiously through their buying journeys to revenue.

Step 2: Align the Functions of Your Revenue Team

Alignment between marketing and sales has been such an ongoing imperative in the business world, it's become a cliché of sorts. It's mentioned so often, we tend not to listen to it. We also tend to think our teams are already aligned.

Spoiler alert: in many cases, not so much.

Plus, even in instances where we believe the functions are aligned, they're not aligned to the extent we think. Even in the best of circumstances, alignment is relatively temporary. Markets change and revenue teams have to adjust. Consistent care must be taken to ensure sales and marketing advance together, in lockstep.

Alignment can be difficult, and it primarily stems from two common challenges:

- **Silos.** Marketing and sales work is different, and in time they tend to develop into silos. Siloed teams present a threat to effective ABM motions. For example, if sales reps have little understanding of prospect or account engagement related to marketing activities, they won't know how to leverage that engagement to inform and guide their subsequent actions.
- **Change.** There is only superficial buy-in from teams. For instance, many sales teams are skeptical about integrating ABM into their selling strategies, sometimes because they think ABM produces fewer leads. Other times, they've been burned with aborted ABM efforts that just didn't get results. Once bitten, twice shy.

Superficial buy-in from sales, marketing, or both creates a lack of sustained alignment at every level. In the end, it's almost impossible for revenue leaders and the C-suite to implement and maintain a consistent, effective ABM motion to drive growth.

3 Steps to Align Your Revenue Team

Use the following three steps to fully align your revenue team:

1. Bring your sales, marketing and customer success teams into the ABM strategy from Day 1. Whether it's one meeting or multiple meetings, the entire team must acquire a top-down understanding of your company's ABM methodology, how it benefits the company and each team, and what their roles are to make it effective. Communicate how ABM enables functional teams to market, sell and service smarter and more quickly. From the very beginning, ABM will require shared objectives, metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs).

2. Train functional teams on the new ABM playbook. It's important your revenue team understands ABM is not the same old lead generation and scoring approach, but rather a sales influence methodology. At their roots, ABM motions nurture customers and measure

behavior through brand engagement, all the while tracking sales intent. Shift your teams' mindset to a tech-driven approach using combined data to influence accounts, not just leads.

3. Collaboratively execute upon your ABM strategy. The alignment of functional teams at the beginning of an ABM motion is not a "set and forget" kind of deal. Weekly reports are essential for the heads of sales, marketing and customer success, along with their managerial teams, to analyze and evaluate engagement for target accounts. Each account will be different, and each will have opportunities to not only adjust and customize your engagement activities, but to coach up your team members as well. ABM is all about testing, learning, acting and repeating!

Step 3: Identify Targeted Accounts

A logical place to start compiling a target account list is with your ICP. Your ICP is, in fact, important, but don't jump there right off the bat.

First, be very clear on your organizational goals for an ABM campaign. Obviously, growth is the top-level goal. But, drill down a little deeper into your growth goal.

Your objectives in deploying ABM will determine the framework for developing your target account list, and those objectives might include the following:

- Renewals, upsells and cross-sells — If the revenue team has identified a large opportunity here, the target account list will consist of existing customers.
- New logos as “social proof” — Taking the step up to closing bigger enterprise-level deals often requires curating a client list of well-known brand names.

- Accelerating existing opportunities — If potentially lucrative deals are languishing in the pipeline, a campaign targeting existing opportunities at accounts can grease the wheels.
- Land and expand — Utilizing a strategy of closing one deal to establish a starting point for subsequent deals requires a targeted account list of companies with multiple business units and/or subsidiaries.

Of course, the objective of your ABM strategy might be to more aggressively grow new customers who are in your “best fit” category, and that's likely where your ICP falls into play. However, again resist the temptation to jump into your ICP blindly.

Evaluate your ICP every year. Your ICP is reflective of your current best customers. But, your marketplace is constantly changing, as is, perhaps, your company's offerings. Are your current best customers, and those prospective customers just like them, the best customers for you next year and into the mid-term? If yes, then no worries. If maybe not or no, then re-evaluate and redefine your ICP as necessary.

Step 4: Create & Curate Content for Target Accounts

A tenet of account-based strategies is creating and delivering customized, personalized campaigns to a marketplace that consists of a single account. So, once you get your team aligned and processes in place, get to producing tailored content and campaigns to spark engagement with your target accounts.

Your content should either address challenges and pain points that a specific account faces, or a specific obstacle or blocker your sales team is facing in facilitating the buyer journey and, ultimately, converting. Your content might very well run the full gamut for each account, from blog posts and solution briefs to eBooks, videos, events and more.

Look for opportunities to leverage the “good bones” of content. In many cases, 75-85 percent of a particular piece of content collateral might suit multiple accounts. Edit and refine the remaining parts to make it fit perfectly with your target audience. Additionally, design content to play across both online and offline channels.

Step 5: Develop ABM Playbooks

Critical to your ABM success is the creation of GTM playbooks with turn-by-turn directions so every customer-facing role has an exact process to follow. Then, of course, the revenue team needs to be trained according to their roles.

Your ABM plays bring together your identified target accounts — complete with profiles of all the influencers, decision makers and budget holders — and your best content. Identify the best channels and timing to engage at every step of the process, including LinkedIn advertising, email marketing, direct mail, and targeted PPC ads. Then, plan and execute upon account-targeted, persona-specific campaigns.

Your campaigns will undoubtedly share similarities, but each campaign should be tailored to a particular account. Every message and all related content that each individual in an account receives should look and feel as though it was created specifically for them.

With today's digital buyer journeys, much of your ABM playbook will encompass digital plays. However, in-person interactions should be included in playbooks as well, including account-specific events, particularly in the enterprise space, where it's beneficial to reach many vested stakeholders at one time.

Importantly, look for ways to empower your sellers with content to assist in relationship building. As the buyer journey evolves, critical relationships will mature, allowing your sales team to gain insight into specific interests and needs. As a result, your ongoing content creation and curation will become even more hyper-focused!

Step 6:

Measure & Analyze

Long-term success of ABM initiatives is dependent on fully understanding performance in the marketplace. Poor measurement, particularly in the interim between the beginning of deployment and a significant number of Closed/Won opportunities, is the primary culprit for ABM motions to lose momentum, eventually withering and dying.

To understand performance, measure and analyze everything your revenue tech stack will allow, including website visits, email opens and click throughs, downloads, events, meetings, lead scores, opportunities and Closed/Won or Closed/Lost.

During the alignment phase of ABM, you developed shared metrics and KPIs. Revisit them weekly, create easily accessible and transparent scorecards of shared analytics that keep your revenue team — the entire revenue team — aware of all activities and engagement by account. Don't rest on your laurels and stop your analysis to only celebrate success. Turn a critical eye toward leveraging analytics for insights on how to optimize efforts going forward, both at account and holistic levels.

Step 7: Continuously Improve

ABM motions are ripe with learning opportunities. By its nature of focusing on an account as a market of one, ABM campaigns typically touch a wide scope of personas at each target account. Lessons are undoubtedly learned for those revenue teams who pay attention.

Your ABM efforts will deliver you wins. Yet, at the same time, you'll also experience losses. Concentrate on learning from both.

Don't wait until an account has moved to either Closed/Won or Closed/Lost to conduct a debrief. Continuously evaluate each account in your motion. In doing so, identify the strengths to leverage, not only within that particular account, but with similar accounts as well.

Additionally, examine the engagement tactics that are not delivering expected results. How can they be changed midstream to better effect positive results?

Experiment and test often. Build on success. Learn from shortcomings. Continuously improve.



Summary

There's no escaping it — ABM is here to stay. In fact, ABM is so entrenched in GTM motions, some companies don't even call it ABM. To them, it's just going to market, business as usual.

ABM is a critical growth initiative in that it puts target accounts at the center of your GTM activities. ABM is the construct that empowers marketing, sales and customer success teams to deliver personalized experiences across every singular touchpoint and branded interaction. And, being data-driven and

measurable, ABM allows you to manage your GTM process to deliver a higher return on investment (ROI).

An effective ABM motion establishes trust between your organization and its target audience. But, ABM also requires a high degree of revenue orchestration and alignment between teams. Follow your process, glean insights from your data and continuously improve. Your customers — and all your stakeholders, both external and internal — will notice!

[Request Demo](#)

Get Started Today:

Visit [LeanData.com](https://leandata.com) to learn more about LeanData's go-to-market operations solutions for Automated Scheduling, Matching, Routing and Engagement, or visit us on [AppExchange](#).

Why LeanData?

Today's growth leaders power their B2B selling with LeanData, the gold standard in modern revenue orchestration and an essential element of the modern revenue tech stack. The LeanData Revenue Orchestration Platform, powered by No-Code Automation, simplifies and accelerates coordination of all the people, processes and plays needed to transform buyer signals into buying decisions. LeanData is inspiring a global movement among its 1,000+ customers and community of 5,000+ OpsStars worldwide, empowering them with revenue operations excellence that translates into compelling buyer experiences and competitive advantage.

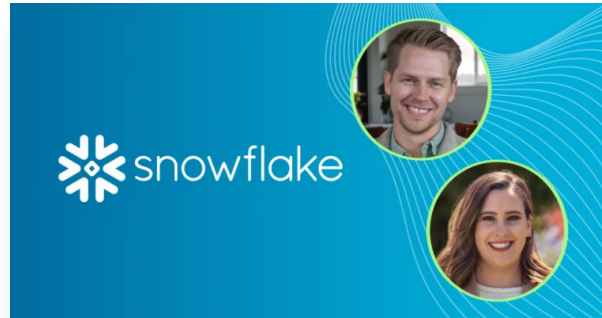


Recommended Readings



Account-Based Lead Routing With LeanData

[Learn More](#)



Snowflake Scales Account Based Plays with LeanData Revenue Orchestration

[Learn More](#)



Gaining Alignment on ABM — Don's Dos & Don'ts

[Learn More](#)