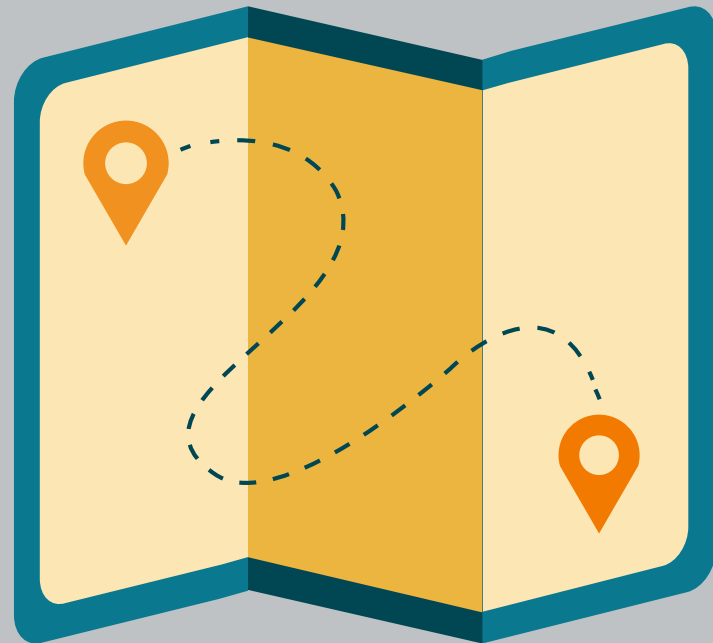


How to launch and operate an *integrated* *ABM* campaign



While account-based marketing (ABM) is not a new concept, it's regained popularity among marketing and sales professionals due to its personalized and targeted nature. Rather than casting a wide, one:many net, which has long shown its limitations, marketing and sales teams personalize their outreach to a narrower pool of best-fit prospects. Sirius Decisions found 92 percent of companies recognize the value in ABM.

The hype is there, but this is no fad. It's a real solution to B2B marketing challenges.

ABM gives marketers more control of their pipelines and, done correctly, fosters sales and marketing alignment. Other benefits include better customer experiences, faster return on investment and revenue growth. According to a survey by Alterra Group, 97 percent of marketers say that ABM had higher ROI than other marketing strategies.

Are you ready to launch your first ABM campaign?





**STEP
1**

Set a budget and assemble your ABM team.

To implement an ABM strategy, you need buy-in from the top-down, as it requires a shift in organizational strategy and measurement philosophies. One of the biggest challenges of launching an ABM strategy is **securing a budget** and the **necessary internal resources**. [Bizible outlines](#) several options to help you win the budget argument with your executive team.

Many organizations hire ABM marketing directors or managers to drive the strategy. If that's not an option for your company, **assign a marketing point person** and give them authority to assemble a team and make decisions throughout the campaigns. You will also need alignment and buy-in from both the sales and marketing teams, and support for sales intelligence research, content development and marketing operations.

“ Account selection as a first step brings your marketing and sales teams together from the start, because both have valuable insights about accounts and communications...The process of agreeing on the target accounts will necessitate alignment. ”

- [Jon Miller, CEO and co-founder of Engagio](#)





**STEP
2**

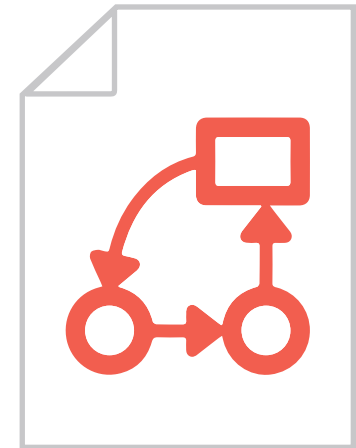
Determine
your
approach
and goals.

Two of the most common strategies for ABM novices are the **1:1 approach** (one salesperson to no more than 10 targets, giving highly personalized attention to each individual account) or the **1:10 approach** (one salesperson to more than 10 accounts typically segmented based on similar attributes, pain points or industry, meaning accounts received a contextualized, but not personalized, experience). You can customize your approach depending on how many accounts you have selected to target, but the fewer accounts per salesperson allows for more personalized touchpoints and higher returns.

As a sales and marketing team, it's important to first discuss together **why you are launching an ABM strategy**, and your intended outcomes to determine which goals and key performance indicators (KPIs) your organization should set and track.

Examples include:

- › Grow revenue within an existing vertical or industry
- › Enter a new market or vertical
- › Expand relationships within existing accounts
- › Land more net-new accounts
- › Reduce sales cycle time





**STEP
3**

Create a list of your ideal target accounts and stakeholders.

This is the step that requires the marketing team to shift their mindsets from ***demand generation*** and ***buyer persona-based marketing*** to ***ideal customer profiles***. To build the ideal profile, consider the DNA of your most successful customers, or prospects with strategic importance that align with your company's priorities.



Consider these factors when building your ideal customer profile:

- › Revenue and opportunity deal size
- › Employee headcount
- › Size of customer base
- › Geography
- › Vertical
- › Potential budget
- › Competitors

If you plan to continue to execute supporting marketing and sales campaigns in addition to your ABM strategy, keep in mind the ideal number of target accounts will ***not necessarily equal your target revenue goal***. The number of target accounts is also dependent on the size of your ABM budget, access to resources, size of your sales and marketing teams, and your additional marketing activities.

“ ABM requires marketers to operate with the mindset of sales—identifying accounts and how to target them, bringing them to the table, and generating revenue from them. Marketers and sales need to be aligned to identify the right accounts and how to pursue them, but this is impossible without accurate data on your prospects and customers. You need to use data to score and segment accounts that have a high propensity to buy or fit the right parameters for your target market. ”

– Steve Pogorzelski, former CEO, Avention, acquired by Dun & Bradstreet



**STEP
4**

Gather sales intelligence, build an influencer hierarchy.

Sales intelligence is one of the most critical steps in the ABM process. After you've finalized your ideal target accounts, you need to identify the most influential contacts within them. The right contacts speed up the campaign timeline and potential sales cycle. If you have the budget, consider purchasing data tools such as **data.com**, **LeadGenius** or **Node**. If not, ask your dedicated ABM team members to support the data collection process to determine the right contacts for each target.

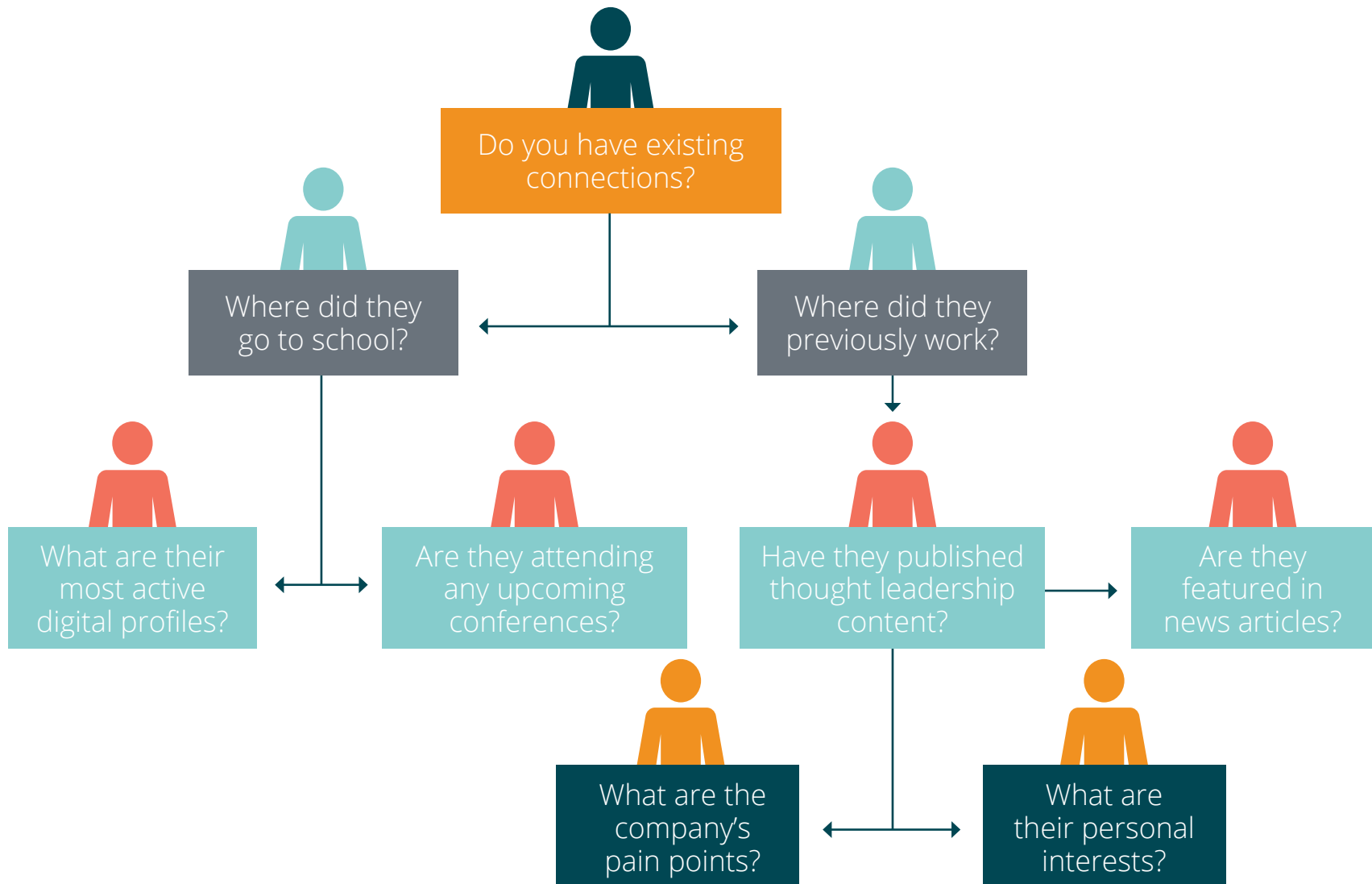
Consider the following:

- › Job title
- › Tenure
- › Previous job history
- › Skills and experience
- › Industry experience
- › Thought leadership



After you've determined the priority players within each account, **build a hierarchy** to provide the sales and marketing team with clarity about the involved users, influencers and decision-makers.

Gather intelligence about each contact. You might ask questions such as:

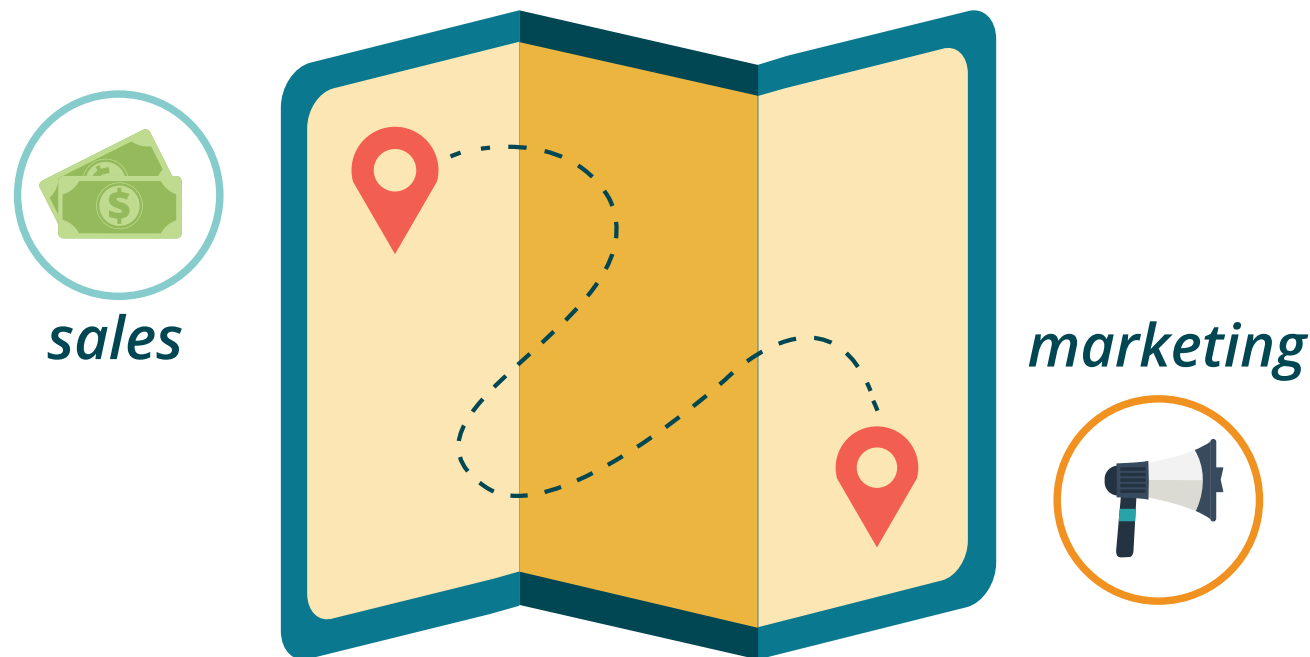




**STEP
5**

Design a workflow between the sales and marketing teams.

It's imperative to have **real-time, transparent communication** between the sales and marketing teams throughout the ABM campaign. Your organization likely has a preferred channel in place, but if not, consider a Slack channel or a project management tool like Basecamp to collect all conversations, feedback and updates. Host a **weekly** or **bi-weekly meeting** for the account owners, sales leadership and marketing teams to review progress, campaign timelines and upcoming activities, as well as recent market triggers and new sales intelligence.



Most organizations segment and divide the target accounts and contacts among the sales owners based on expertise, connections or region. Regardless of the account ownership and workflow, the primary fundamentals for marketing and sales remain the same: **marketing attracts the target; sales nurtures and closes it.**



STEP
6

Create a
campaign
timeline,
calendar and
distribution
strategy.

Your campaign timeline is dependent on many factors, such as ***budget, scope*** and ***typical sales cycle***. Marketo recommends building a lean ABM program within one quarter and executing it the next, then adjusting the duration depending on the results generated.

There are multiple frameworks for building the ideal ABM buyer and customer journey. Here is a simple take on the buyer's journey that you can adapt to your needs:

Awareness → Interest → Evaluation → Commitment.

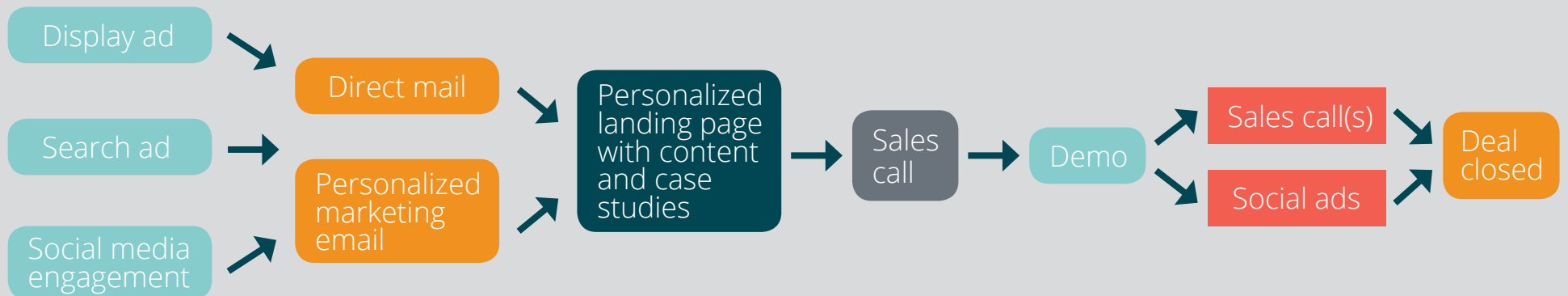
Also, remember that ABM campaigns do not end once an account becomes a customer, so you should also address stages related to cross selling or upselling and ongoing engagement for existing customers.



A successful ABM campaign combines a mix of online and offline channels and maps activities back to each stage of the customer journey. Marketing channels could include:

- › Direct mail
- › Paid and organic social
- › Personalized email campaigns
- › Personalized landing pages
- › Search, display and retargeted ads
- › E-books or other content assets
- › Case studies
- › Phone outreach
- › Webinars or other virtual events
- › In-person events
- › Video

Here's an example of a simple campaign workflow:





**STEP
7**

Create
personalized
and timely
content for
your target
accounts.

There are multiple schools of thought about the relationship of inbound marketing and ABM. Realistically, inbound activities feed your ABM funnel and the two strategies can – **and should** – support each other.

Before you start creating a repository of new resources, evaluate your existing content and **identify the potential gaps that hinder you from delivering an integrated campaign**. Analyze the most successful content assets to date and determine the best way to repurpose and personalize them based on relevant sales intelligence and target pain points.

“ ABM makes sense now because it’s filling the void created by limitations of inbound marketing – **that is, it takes a long time to work** – and the blanket ineffectiveness of outbound marketing. In between the two, something else had to emerge to help marketers generate near-term results, but results in a compelling and account-friendly way. **That’s where ABM enters the picture.** ”

– Joe Chernov, VP of marketing, InsightSquared

It's important to include your **communications** and **social media teams** at this stage. For example, if you have a general blog post that's performed well in the past, your PR team can repurpose it to address a specific segment among your ABM accounts and pitch it as a thought leadership piece in a relevant publication. Your social team should set up a **listening station** to monitor target accounts, contacts and priority topics and themes within the distributed content. Use the listening station to identify **real-time engagement opportunities** for both your company and owner of each account, or provide updated sales intelligence to fuel your content pipeline.

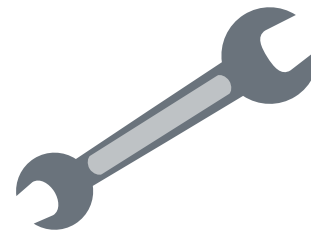
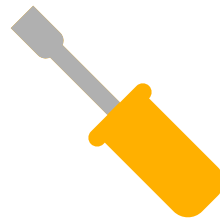
As with every activity in marketing, **testing is important**. By A/B testing multiple assets throughout each stage of the customer journey, you can learn which content will deliver the most engagement and results among your target accounts and contacts. The value of ABM is that you can test not only your content assets, but different distribution channels, including direct mail.



For example, Matt Heinz of Heinz Marketing commented on his direct mail success:

“ We sent two-day packages to executives in advance of a big conference. The package was an **empty iPad box**. We wrote in the direct mail to come by our booth to pick up the iPad. Most executives came by just to compliment us. **It worked.** ”

To support your channel strategies, consider tools like **Demandbase** for advertising or **Marketo** for personalization, serving unique and differentiated content to each target contact that visits your website.





STEP
8

Measure
your
success.

Increased revenue is the ultimate factor to determine ABM success, but like demand generation measurement, *it's important to analyze top-of-funnel and middle-of-funnel successes* (and failures) to optimize your campaigns. Mapping funnel results to your customer journey, you can adjust your content and channel distribution strategies for the next campaign.



Additional KPIs to consider include:

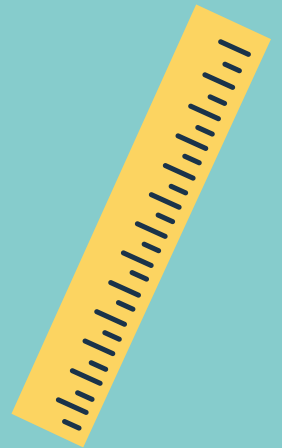
- › **Account engagement:** did you motivate an action by the target contact?
- › **Account-lead conversions:** how many and at what stage are they converting through the funnel?
- › **Close rates:** are they increasing and at a faster rate?
- › **Deal sizes:** are they increasing?
- › **Land and expand:** are you able to expand your relationships with current accounts faster?

Ultimately, what you're measuring should map back to the goals and KPIs you agreed upon across the organization in step 2.

Remember that your goals should focus on accounts, and not on leads.

“ Most companies are measuring success in terms of leads. **The new way is to focus on accounts.** When you think about accounts, you're thinking about engagement as the major way of seeing success. Are we getting more demos from that account, are we creating new opportunities from that company and are we engaging more decision makers? ”

– Sangram Vajre, co-founder and CMO, Terminus



Ready to take your ABM efforts up a notch?

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