

Ebook

ACCELERATE PIPELINE WITH CONVERSATIONAL ABM

**A Step-by-Step Guide to Launching
Account-based Marketing Programs
that Accelerate Pipeline**



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INTRODUCTION

The Shift to Opportunities & Buying Groups

B2B marketing keeps evolving. For several years, marketers have worked on providing personalized content and relevant messaging to engage their audiences. Now it has evolved into marketing for buying groups where several decision makers within the accounts are targeted. Today's ABM marketer must identify and engage with these buying groups at scale if they want to compete and accelerate revenue across their waterfall.

Purchases are never made by one person in B2B. Forrester says that 66% of B2B decisions are made by a team of more than six people. Gartner argues that the buying team size is between 14 and 23 people, based on the size of the spend. This is exactly why marketers should focus on buying groups.

Companies with mature ABM strategies put 79% of opportunities and 73% of total revenue into their ABM efforts. If you are selling more than three solutions, you need to evolve your ABM strategy to identify, engage, and prioritize buying groups. This guide will help you break it down in three simple steps.

How to use this Guide:

Use this guide as a roadmap to align your sales, marketing, and success teams to generate a steady stream of high-intent opportunities and accelerate pipeline.



ELEMENTS OF ACCOUNT-BASED MARKETING

The successful coordination of marketing, sales, and customer success teams to drive engagement of a targeted set of accounts has been discovered to be a game-changer for marketers. Let's look at some of the driving forces of ABM.

1. High-value and targeted accounts

In ABM, organizations focus on defining their ideal customers and concentrate their efforts only on a few of these accounts. They target accounts that are looking for a solution similar to the one you offer, and these are usually high-value accounts, so the time spent on them is worth it.

2. Data and intelligence-driven campaigns

Account-based marketing programs do not run on a hunch or because a higher-up thinks a particular strategy would work. Each of the decisions made as a part of the ABM strategy is data-driven and based on information gathered from several reliable sources. Comprehensive data about the target accounts are collected before the campaign gets underway.

3. Personalized buyer experiences

In ABM, you focus only on a select set of high-value accounts. To realize their value, extra efforts are put to woo them with the right set of content.

4. Cooperation between departments

The sales, marketing, and customer support teams must work together to identify the accounts to target. Before launching the program, they must align its objectives, including their respective roles.



REQUIRED TECH STACK FOR ABM

The basics of B2B marketing have been transformed by technology. Because of its advancements, marketing has become comprehensive and precision-targeted. To build successful ABM programs, you need to have a clear idea of the necessary tools and technologies. When you have the right set of tools, you can gather a sea of data, find the right accounts, and offer personalized messaging.

CRM

A customer relationship management (CRM) tool is critical for marketing and sales alignment. The CRM has to be integrable with other platforms to share information and easy access.

Content & Web Personalization

To segment content to the targeted accounts, you need content personalization tools and contextual marketing platforms. These help you with domain-based targeting, geo fencing, keyword targeting, IP targeting, 3rd party cookie targeting, etc. Based on your targeting approach, these tools can tell you when key accounts visit your site, the keywords used, their location, etc. It can be leveraged to send them personalized and relevant content.

Marketing Automation Platform

It provides marketing intelligence by integrating marketing and sales activity, including aggregation of all interactions and touchpoints. Align your marketing automation platform with your CRM to manage your ABM campaign.

Social Media

You need to use the right channels that the targeted accounts use to promote the highly-personalized content. Paid promotions on social media can result in relevant engagement between your sales team and key account individuals.

HOW TO ACCELERATE PIPELINE USING CONVERSATIONAL ABM

Use the Detect-Engage-Convert Framework to activate your ABM programs at scale.

Detect

The first step is to identify the accounts to target and how you will detect the ones that are in-market and searching for your products or services. Your entire ABM strategy depends on this step. You need to employ the following strategies to identify buying groups and individuals influencing the purchasing process clearly.

1. Define your ideal customer profile (ICP)

A clear idea about your ideal customers creates alignment between the sales, marketing, and customer success teams. If the idea of your ideal customer isn't the same across these departments, your ABM campaigns won't be successful.



You can identify your ideal customer profile by analyzing the common attributes accounts have that your company has managed to close regularly. Gather data from the below places to get your ICP:

- Talk to your sales team to understand more about your ideal customers. Interact with your support team to see the kind of queries most customers ask for and the type of solutions they prefer.
- Check the list of your existing clients, competitors' clients, and those currently in the pipeline.
- Gather the details from your predictive analytics engine.
- Use historical data and find out the accounts that were won.

Here are a few questions that you should ask to get your ICP:

- What is the usual size of some of your clients? Who are the main points of contact (POCs)? How long have they been in business?
- What are the industries they serve?
- What is the average annual revenue of our customers?

There are several more questions that you can ask related to your niche to get a more refined view of your ICP.



Identify the common characteristics within these targeted accounts that match your ideal customer profile. What is your ideal customer profile?

Create Buyer Personas: Using this information, each buyer persona should describe their motivations, pain points, career objectives, decision-making power, and other characteristics. It helps the marketing, sales, and customer success teams to engage several stakeholders from each account.



Who are the buyer personas that are involved in the buying decision process and approval process?

Buyer Persona #1:

Buyer Persona #2:

Buyer Persona #3:

Buyer Persona #4:

Buyer Persona #5:

Tip: Do not disqualify a potential customer because they did not check all the boxes. There is a reason it is called an 'ideal' customer profile.

2. Create a target account list

Once you are clear about your ideal customer, the next step is to create a target account list. This list of accounts you target will be the foundation of all your account-based marketing activities.

Your target account list should include the following:

- Accounts that the company will engage with.
- Contacts of those accounts that match the buyer persona criteria.
- Details of each of the contacts and that of the accounts.

The above information helps your team to identify who to reach out to first, when they will be available, which channel to use, and where they usually go to find information. The target account list helps you understand the type of content or CTA that would work best for them.

If your target account list is too small, adjust your ICP or prioritize your criteria better. When the list is too extensive, add some non-negotiable criteria to trim it. The main reason why account-based marketing works better than other marketing strategies is because you only spend your time on opportunities that fit the best.



What accounts are on your target list? Your list needs to include the following details:

- Account names
- Contact name and emails of key buying personas
- Any context surrounding the contacts

3. Determine who is In-Market and Active

After you are clear about the list of target accounts, the next step is to gather as much information as possible about each of them. You need to find out their intent and the probability of them purchasing your product within a reasonable timeframe.

To have a deeper understanding of the target accounts, you must also understand the contacts who are a part of the account. Here are a few questions to figure out if the target accounts are likely to purchase your product:

- Are they looking for a product similar to yours?
- Have they been talking to your competitors?
- Is the solution that you offer solving their pain point?
- Do they have the requisite budget to buy your product?
- What would be their goals if they were looking to purchase your product? How would they benefit by using our product?
- What are the responsibilities of each of the contacts from the targeted accounts?
- Who is the key decision maker here?
- Where do they stand in the organizational hierarchy?

The answers to the above questions will help you determine if they are seriously searching for a solution in the market.



Engage

Keeping the buying groups interested in what you offer is a pivotal part of the ABM strategy. ABM is great at retaining and expanding existing client relationships. You need to engage each of the individuals from the buying groups so that they eventually become your customers.

1. Identify buying groups from active accounts

A buying group in an organization, usually upwards of six individuals, are those who play different roles in their purchasing decisions. It could be anyone with technical knowledge, operational managers, or major stakeholders of the organization. Their intent signal reflects their role as each individual plays a part in the buying group.

Each person in the buying group will have their research for moving forward with the purchasing decision. Their research pattern can be mapped to the buyer personas and understood through the intent data collected. It can help you prioritize your ABM accounts.



For the 5 personas listed above, define the role they play and what is important to them in their research.

Persona	Role they play in purchase decision:	What's important to them in their research:

2. Develop rich and helpful content

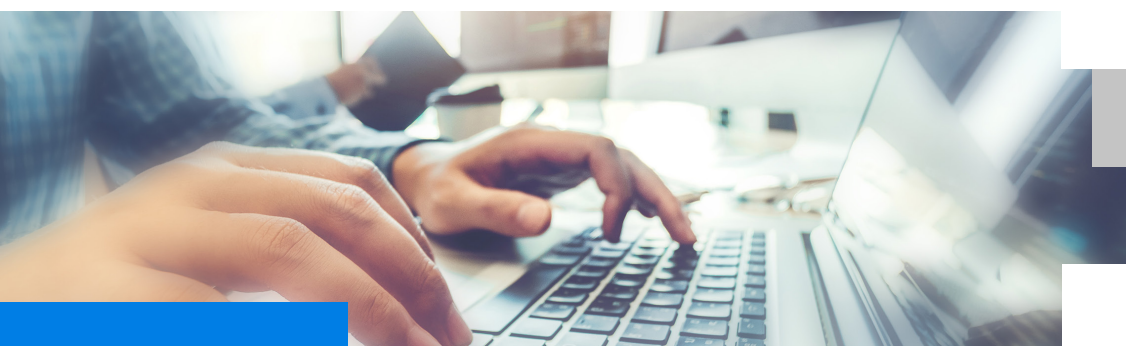
Create highly personalized content using everything you know about your target accounts. Most of the content that you already have will be generic in nature. 40% of B2B marketers find it difficult to develop the right content for their target audience.

That's why you need to collate available data sources to produce highly targeted, relevant, specific, and personalized content. According to a CEB survey, individual stakeholders were 40% more likely to buy from suppliers who send personalized content.

Here is how you can create content for the buying groups:

- Perform account mapping and profiling of the account to understand their journey through the funnel.
- Get inputs from the sales team as they know the type of content that works best to close accounts.
- Understand your existing content– who was it written for– early, mid, or late- stage content, and identify the content gaps.
- Develop a content plan for each stage of the sales funnel. Ensure that it is a mix of personalized content strategies for each buying group.
- If your content asset doesn't work for the accounts at a specific stage of their buying journey, do not overthink pivoting your content strategy. Repurpose your ABM content into different formats.

By creating engaging and personalized content, your ABM strategy will be able to land the target accounts.





For each persona listed above, define what content you want to develop or can repurpose at each stage of the buying journey.

Persona	Content - Early Stage	Content Mid- Stage	Content Late-Stage	Retention/Cust omer Content

3. Engage and execute many-to-many omnichannel conversations

An omnichannel strategy allows ABM marketers to identify, engage, and prioritize their most important accounts across several channels. It helps reduce sales cycles and creates more robust engagement, higher value perception, excellent deal value, and increased ROI. Businesses that employed ABM reported an average **171% increase in their annual contract value (ACV)**.

You should engage with the targeted accounts, but it should not just be about them seeing your brand all the time across multiple channels. Executing omnichannel conversations means putting the right messages using the right platform and the right content asset to the right audience at the best time possible— consistently across their buying journey.

Create content for every member of the buying group and different stages of the buying journey for each persona. You should see consistent engagement increasing across every channel. When your digital channels are seamlessly integrated into an omnichannel ABM platform, you can see the critical engagement data at the account level. Using this data, you can identify the most effective omnichannel ABM strategies for strategic account expansion.

You will be able to zero in on a buying group that may form and share details of the products and services they are interested in.





For each buyer persona listed above, identify the selling team member on your team that will engage in the conversation, the channel, and how many times they will touch your buyer persona during your ABM campaign.

Selling Team Member				
Buyer Persona				
Channel				
Buyer Persona				
Week 1 Touch				
Week 2 Touch				
Week 3 Touch				
Week 4 Touch				
Week 5 Touch				
Week 6 Touch				

Convert

According to The 2020 State of ABM Report, 90% of companies say that their main objective with ABM is lead generation. After you attract the buying groups with relevant content and omnichannel conversations, the next step is to convert them into customers. Let's see how you can do that.

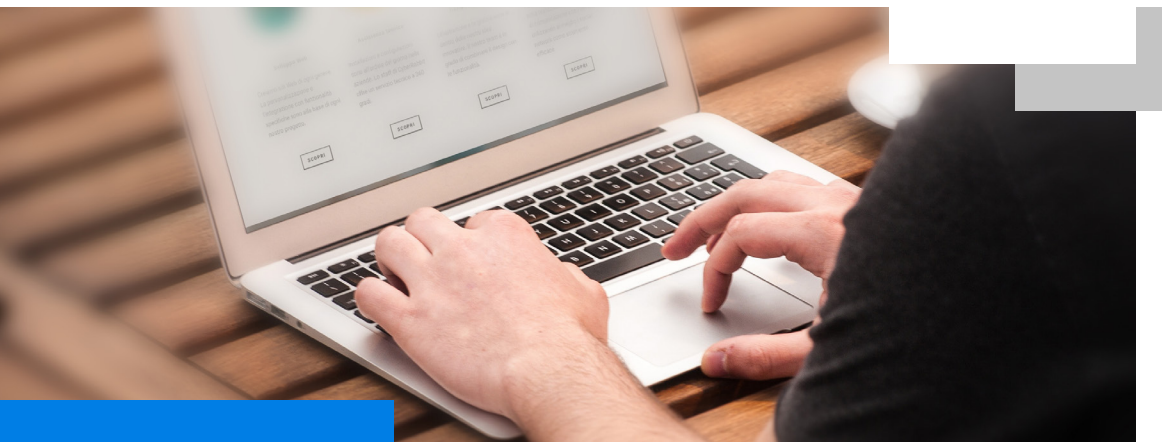
1. Redefine MQL and Opportunity

In traditional marketing, the leads are passed by the marketing team to the sales team based on a set of criteria- no intent is involved. However, in account-based marketing, an MQL, or a marketing-qualified lead, has interest in your offering. You can gauge their signal of intent from the content they consume to the web searches they perform.

Here's where you can find intent data of your accounts:

- Website analytics.
- Downloads of case studies, whitepapers, and tech publications.
Subscription to updates.
- Signing up for your newsletter.
- Spikes in content consumption related to your offering.

The above data can be considered reliable buyer signal internet sources. Intent data can help ABM groups to develop processes with a clear strategy. You can even gain access to behavioral data of prospects and their actions.





How will you find intent? What score is given to each intent signal?

Intent Signal	Score

2. Monitor & track engagement at the opportunity level

It will be important to track how the individuals within each buying group engage with your content. Is there an uptick in their engagement levels? Check out their content consumption progress. Based on the type of content that each individual from the buying group consumes, you can map their role in the purchasing process.

Here are some of the metrics that your ABM campaign should track:

Deal close rate

It is the percentage of accounts you close. If this metric is good, it implies that your target account selection and ABM campaigns are effective.

Pipeline velocity

It measures the speed at which your target accounts move from being an MQL to the final stage of the ABM funnel. If the pipeline velocity is low, you must bring more accounts to the top of your sales funnel.

Average deal size

When running ABM campaigns, you should know the value you offer to your leads, including an estimate of the deal size. If the campaigns work successfully, the average deal sizes should be higher than earlier.



Target account coverage

Finding the correct accounts and the right buyers within the account is difficult. You will never know if the person you are targeting is the right person until the campaigns start. To ensure your team is targeting the right people, tracking your coverage metrics will help. Coverage indicates the level of database completeness. Let's say that more than 50% of accounts do not have their contacts mapped with the buyer personas, this data gap should be closed significantly.

The coverage metrics include the following:

- The number of contacts for each account. Percentage of contacts connected with. Contacts you have data for.
- Details of each of these contacts.

3. Measure & optimize results

Measure the results of your ABM campaigns; otherwise, you will overspend. Create a framework for tracking every engagement, response, and result, before the campaigns. Since the ABM sales cycle is long, you need to measure activity-based and outcome-based metrics.

Activity-based metrics

They are indicators of future results, and they will help you identify if there is any progress. It will also keep the ABM team motivated, even without immediate results. An example of such a metric is the number of calls made to each account. It is easily quantifiable and will keep the teamwork focused.



What are the activity-based metrics you plan to track?

Outcome-based metrics

These are results generated because of the ABM campaign. Deal close rates or ROI generated are specific outcomes your team was working towards achieving. If you don't measure this, you will not be able to gauge the impact of your ABM campaigns. Do measure the outcome generated by your ABM campaign vision vs. non ABM campaigns. It will help you check whether ABM campaigns yielded better results.



What are the outcome-based metrics you plan to track?



CONCLUSION- PUTTING THE FRAMEWORK INTO ACTION

The marketing and sales team should work together to engage the targeted accounts for an effective ABM program. ABM is not a strategy that can be applied similarly to all businesses. You need to define your success metrics and rethink strategies based on your engagement and the sales insights data you gather. Remember that ABM doesn't have to be a huge marketing exercise, you can start with a few accounts, define your success, and execute the campaign. You can pull it off on a large scale later, but it is always possible to start small.

About SALESBOXAI

SalesboxAI delivers an intent-based Conversational ABM platform that can identify the accounts actively researching solutions like yours (or your competitors) and launch demand generation or ABM programs that engage the entire buying committee. With SalesboxAI, B2B marketing teams can accelerate pipeline and revenue growth leveraging its platform, intent data, and content network to launch go-to-market programs with precision – and at scale.

To learn more about **SalesboxAI**, visit salesbox.ai or schedule a demo