

Leveraging the Power
of Personalization for
**Account-Based Marketing
(ABM)**

White Paper



The Power of Personalization

Drive business demand with ABM using the power of personalization—now and in the future

A pandemic-induced recession has spurred massive marketing budget cuts, with about 50% of B2B companies slashing their budgets, according to McKinsey¹. The decrease in marketing spend is especially evident in ad and media spend, which has plunged to an all-time low at 9.1%².

This period of enforced pause and marketing contraction comes with a silver lining — now's the time to consider where the marketing budget is best spent. Marketers should uncover ways to connect with consumers with relevance and empathy, rather than the traditional tone-deaf, "spray and pray" approach. One such approach that's promising, mainly because of its impact on direct sales, is ABM or Account-based Marketing.



Why should enterprises adopt ABM?

When marketing and sales teams collaborate to create personalized experiences, it directly impacts revenue growth. Forrester Research³ states that organizations with aligned sales and marketing teams see an average of 32% annual revenue growth, whereas companies without such alignment see a 7% decline in growth.

ABM engages a target set of high-value accounts with personalized content through web pages, emails, digital ads, and social platforms like LinkedIn. By weeding out less-valuable companies and targeting a few high-value accounts, ABM helps increase engagement and ROI on a tighter budget with fewer resources. Depending on the number of resources available, enterprises can use strategic, lite, or programmatic ABM to meet their business goals.

The ROI of ABM in B2B marketing is well-established. Alterra Group⁴ reports that 97% of marketers achieved higher ROI with ABM than with other marketing initiatives. An ITSMA⁵ survey found that strategic ABM delivers the highest ROI of all B2B marketing strategies.

While there are several ways to activate ABM campaigns, most enterprises employ four principal activities to close high-value deals. These include:

Activity Stream	Goal	Tactics	Channels
Thought Leadership	Position as a leading supplier by advancing the conversation	Thought leadership content promotion to drive brand awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blog • Email • Paid media (social, digital, & print) • PPC advertising
1-to-1 ABM Demand Generation	Support sales in target accounts. Book sales meetings	Individually personalized content and messaging via multiple channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct mail • OOH advertising • Email • Assessments
1-to-Many ABM Demand Generation	Demand generation and lead nurture for a vertical or segment (at scale)	Customized content and messaging at the segment level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webinars • Events • Assessments • Paid media (social, digital, & print)
Sales Enablement	Support sales meetings drive conversions	Content to leave behind with prospect plus training materials (all formats)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customized workshop in a box • Sales playbooks • Training webinars/videos

Four key ABM activities for hi-tech enterprises

- 1 Thought leadership: Position the enterprise as a market leader with relevant blogs, email, paid media, and PPC advertising.
- 2 1-to-1 ABM demand generation: Handpick some best-fit accounts and get them sales-ready with individually personalized content distributed across multiple channels.
- 3 1-to-many ABM demand generation: Support demand generation and account nurture with customized content (webinars, events, or paid media) to secure a higher number of sales meetings.
- 4 Sales enablement: Support sales with relevant content such as customized workshops or training webinars to be used during sales meetings to convert best-fit prospects quickly.



Two compelling ABM success stories

Spigit⁶, an idea management software platform, adopted the 1-to-many demand generation tactic to improve its conversion rates and overall ROI. Spigit ran six ABM campaigns to target high-quality leads on LinkedIn using sponsored content. The result – 7X ROI from ABM campaigns featuring a mix of highly tailored case studies, webinars, and e-books.

Another example is that of Skytap⁷, a cloud service provider that struggled with finding high-quality leads. They switched gears from traditional B2B marketing to ABM. Working closely with marketing and sales, Skytap built a high-value account list and set up ABM demand generation campaigns. As a result, they increased their pipeline conversion opportunities from 60% to 78%.

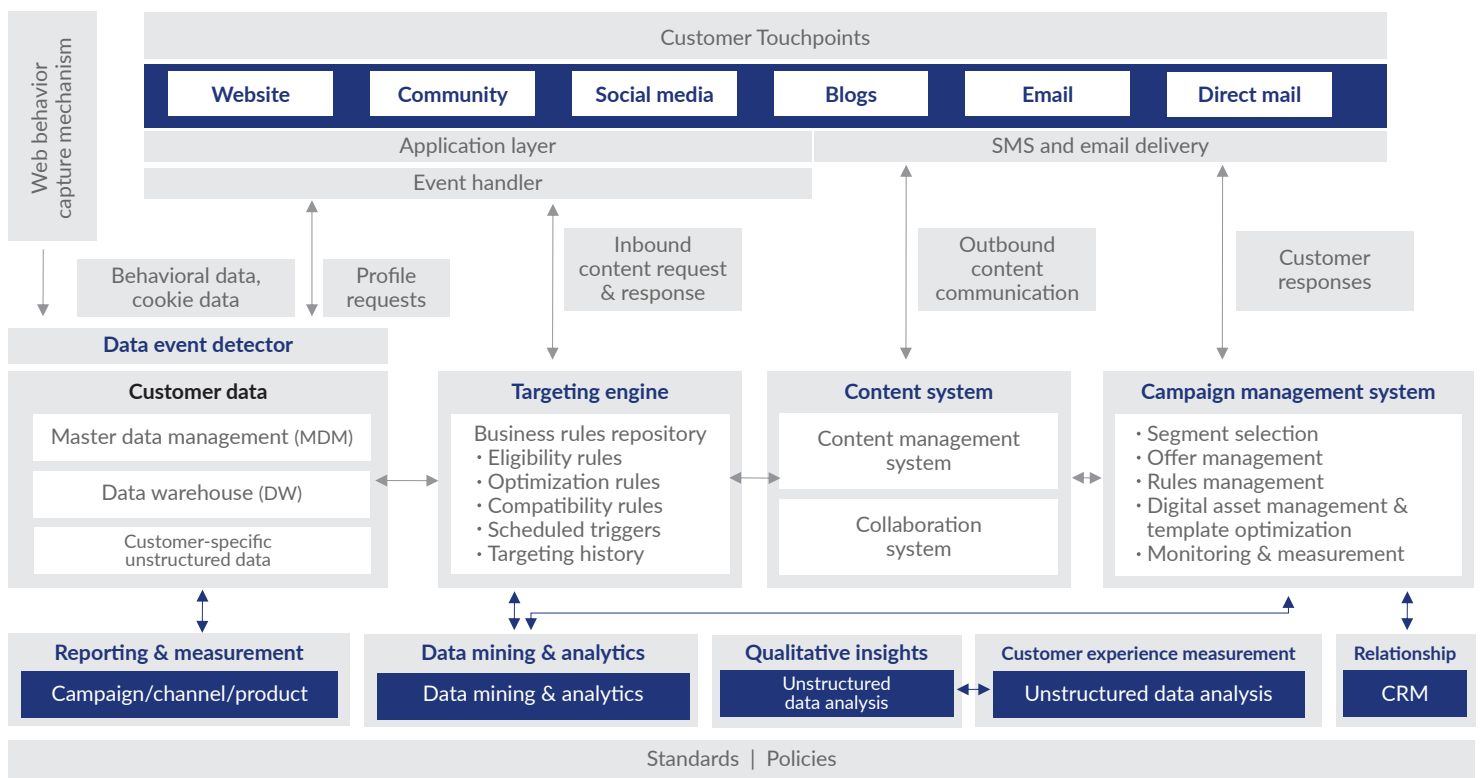


How can enterprises scale ABM to improve engagement and sales?

While the effort and investment required might seem simple enough at the onset, things can get messy quickly when attempting to scale. That's why it's crucial to have the right technology and marketing infrastructure in place.

Before thinking of ABM at scale, there are five prerequisites to consider:

- 1 Automated workflows: Automated campaigns ensure that your prospects see the right message at the right time at every stage of the customer lifecycle.
- 2 AI-powered customer research: AI-powered insights help marketers understand their ICP (Ideal Customer Profile) at granular levels.
- 3 Advanced analytics: Gathering insights using advanced analytics enables you to make more accurate predictions on the content your target accounts are most likely to consume.
- 4 SEO strategy: Highly optimized keywords help create laser-focused content that deeply resonates with your target audience.
- 5 Referrals and advocacy: Referrals and advocacy are the best ways to build trust, and ABM campaigns geared towards such goals help you establish a more trustworthy brand.



The technology stack required to scale ABM programs

Enterprises need a comprehensive technology and marketing infrastructure stack to fulfil these prerequisites. The five core elements of such stacks include:

- 1 A complete mapping of all customer touchpoints (website, social media, or email)
- 2 IT infrastructure supporting high volumes of big data processing and analysis (requiring data warehousing and MDM tools).
- 3 Content and campaign management systems.
- 4 CRMs for account relationship management.
- 5 Data mining, analytics, and reporting tools for rich insights on ABM campaigns or customer behavior and preferences.



A typical ABM program at scale

Once the foundation's secure, it's time to develop an ABM program at scale. Any ABM program has five critical stages.

1 Research and discovery

The first stage is understanding the competitive landscape and identifying key accounts to target. Once the target list is ready, the next step involves analyzing the target accounts for further segmentation as per their needs or pain points. Lastly, it's imperative to define the activities or approaches that your campaign would use right at the onset.

2 Strategy and planning

Since ABM is all about delighting customers with stellar experiences, it's crucial to identify the key customer touchpoints and develop a content plan for each touchpoint. Simultaneously, map the user journey from the first contact to conversion to define account scoring or qualification metrics and KPIs that will capture your campaign's effectiveness. Lastly, have an editorial calendar in place for each stage of the user journey.

3 Campaign identity

The next stage is developing a complete framework for your ABM campaign by considering additional content formats and resources. Also, identify ways to integrate elements of personalization.

4 Content creation

Identify the data capture functionalities, such as landing pages or assessments, and create campaign hooks or online promotions that will appeal to each user segment.

5 Execution and optimization

You can't improve what you can't measure. So, it's essential to set up campaign tracking and monitor the week-on-week performance. Make sure that the reports track your KPIs to get fresh insights on the campaign ROI and ideas to optimize future ABM campaigns.

1

Research and discovery

- Understand ABM drivers and competitive landscape.
- Define ABM program audience segmentation based on needs and pain points.
- Refine themes and sub-themes for campaign.
- Evolve messaging and positioning framework for extended campaign needs for 1:1/1:Many programs.

2

ABM Campaign strategy and planning

- Define priority touchpoints and marketing moments.
- Create channel plan and content plan for promotions.
- Create editorial calendar.
- Define user journey from initial engagement to qualification.
- Define lead scoring and routing.
- Agree KPI framework.

3

Extend the ABM campaign identity

- Building on the 'Pursuit of' campaign, extend this core concept into additional materials and formats.
- Define and design personalization.
- Tie in the core concept with secondary themes.

4

Content creation

- Develop personalized hero content for promotion.
- Apply campaign hook to promotional elements (social, email, web).
- Customize content based on segmentation strategy.
- Build landing pages and data capture functionality for lead registration.

5

Execution and optimization

- Set up ABM campaign tracking tools.
- Ensure KPIs are available for reporting.
- Execute across all channels.
- Monitor performance and report weekly.
- Optimize promotional messaging based on performance.

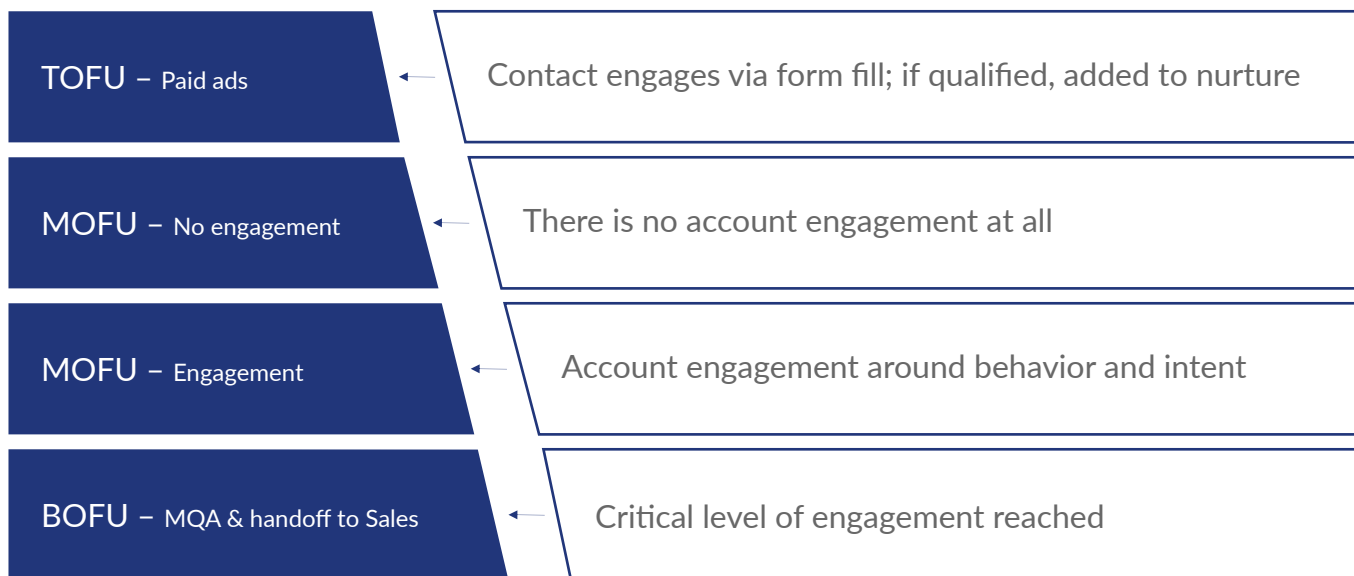


Measuring the campaign performance and impact

Since we're targeting accounts rather than individuals, the data you measure should also focus on account-level metrics such as volume (the number of accounts), conversion (sales enablement), or velocity (acceleration of the sales cycle).

Besides, account-level metrics also help you answer questions such as:

- 1 How many accounts from the target list were engaged this month?
- 2 How many accounts are at the various stages of the account funnel?
- 3 How many marketing qualified accounts (MQAs) did we create this month?

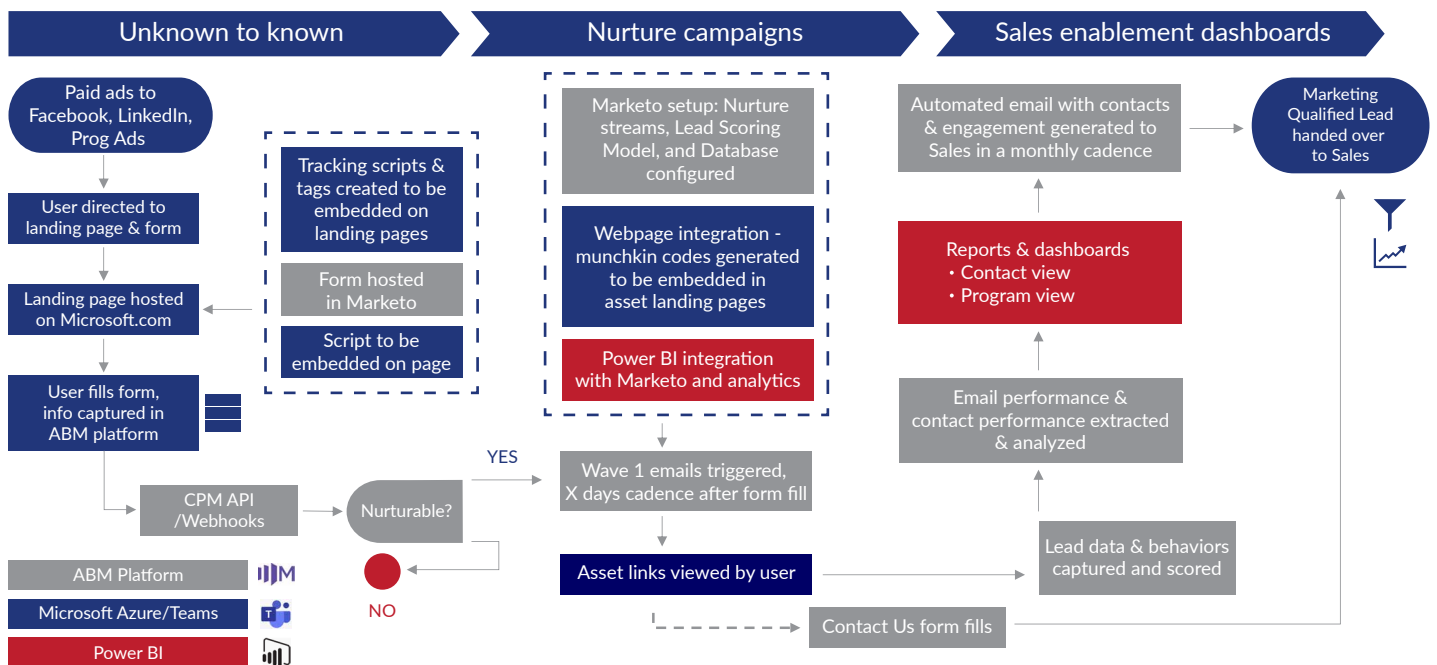


ABM account funnel

TOFU = Top of funnel | MOFU = Middle of funnel | BOFU = Bottom of funnel

An ABM campaign at scale in action

The moment an account engages with your content at any touchpoint, they transform into a prospect. With the technology and marketing stack, you understand the ICP and automatically enroll the accounts into a highly customized nurture sequence.



ABM program flow

For each action, the accounts are awarded points that qualify them as they progress through the account funnel. Once they're deemed sales-ready, the MQAs are handed over to sales. At every touchpoint, you gather data to understand the account behavior and tweak your campaigns to get better results.

Three critical factors will help you shape your ABM campaigns better:

- 1 Use storytelling to develop attention-grabbing hooks and drive engagement.
- 2 Aim to create depth with your content to increase your campaigns' relevance and build deeper connections with your accounts.
- 3 Scale ABM activities and activation tactics, especially the 1-to-1 techniques, to close more deals.

That brings us to the ideal ABM team structure that will improve the odds of success.

Building efficient ABM teams

Since ABM campaigns are laser-focused on engagement, quality, and the ability to delight your target accounts, having a designer, a copywriter, and an engagement manager is mandatory.

Besides these roles, every ABM team requires a marketing strategist to develop a comprehensive campaign with effective activation strategies. Every team needs a creative director to look at the big picture and oversee the entire project. Above all, the ABM team must be agile, ready to pivot strategies as per market fluctuations, and willing to innovate and test various channels, tactics, and activation strategies. With that, we arrive at one last criterion for ABM campaigns to succeed—personalization.

A large crowd of diverse people is arranged on a white surface to form the letters 'ABM'. The 'A' is on the left, the 'B' is on the right, and the 'M' is in the center. The people are of various ages and ethnicities, wearing different colored clothing. The background is a plain white surface with a few scattered individuals walking around.

The key to success with ABM: Personalization

Nothing beats personalization for improving the chances of success of any marketing campaign. Experian⁸ reports that personalized email campaigns have 5-6 times higher open rates as compared to mass mailers. It's no wonder that 56% of marketers strongly agree that personalization is the key to ABM's success, as per a Forrester⁹ report.

A splendid example of a Hi-Tech enterprise leveraging personalization to maximize its ABM campaign ROI is Snowflake¹⁰, a cloud data warehousing company.

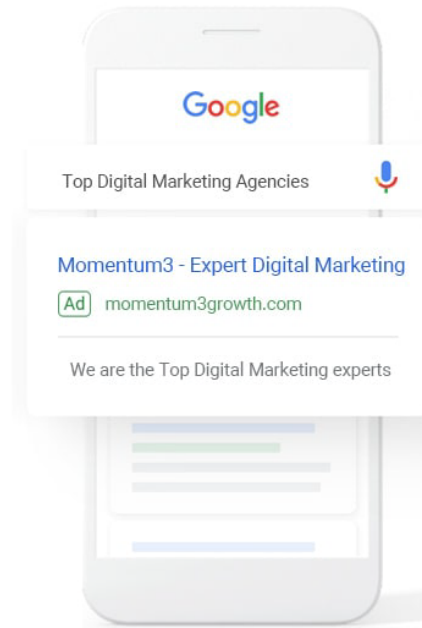
Snowflake's team runs around 500 individualized ABM 1-to-1 demand generation campaigns through display ads. They've built highly personalized content experiences on their website to target accounts from various departments, industries, and with different requirements. They've also set up an extensive library of high-quality resources such as webinars, events, training sessions, workshops, blogs, and support documentation.

Another example is that of Google Ads. Notice how their messaging reflects what their customers look for from display ads (show up on search and maps).



Grow your business with Google Ads

Get in front of customers when they're searching for businesses like yours on Google Search and Maps. Only pay for results, like clicks to your website or calls to your business.



Personalized messaging on the Google Ads website

The rules of personalization are straightforward:





The way forward

The days of casting a wide net and hoping to capture highly qualified marketing leads are long gone. The time is now ripe for ABM to go mainstream, which is clear from a McKinsey¹¹ survey's findings on ABM spend. More than half the firms surveyed said that 25% of their overall marketing budget was allocated to ABM campaigns, and this allocation was slated to increase by over 10% annually.

More marketers increasingly favor ABM because of its degree of targeting and personalization—a must in the age of digitization and digitally savvy consumerism. If you're ready to take your B2B marketing to the next level and would love to understand how ABM can help you meet your KPIs, reach out to us at marketing@zensar.com.

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Vishal brings over 20 years of digital marketing experience with in-depth expertise in the entire gamut of Sales and Marketing functions with more than 130+ customers. Vishal has been recognized as a thought leader in the Marketing Domain (Lead engagements in Market Strategy, ABM, EMM Strategy, Integrated Digital Experience Transformation, Digital Strategy, Marketing Analytics Strategy, and Advanced Analytics Solutions) and in building customer experience and marketing strategies to drive growth and customer retention. He has led and managed solutions and delivery across diverse industries like Hi-Tech & Manufacturing, Banking & Financial Services, Telecommunications, Airline, and Retail & Hospitality globally. Vishal can be reached at vishal.machewad@zensar.com

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