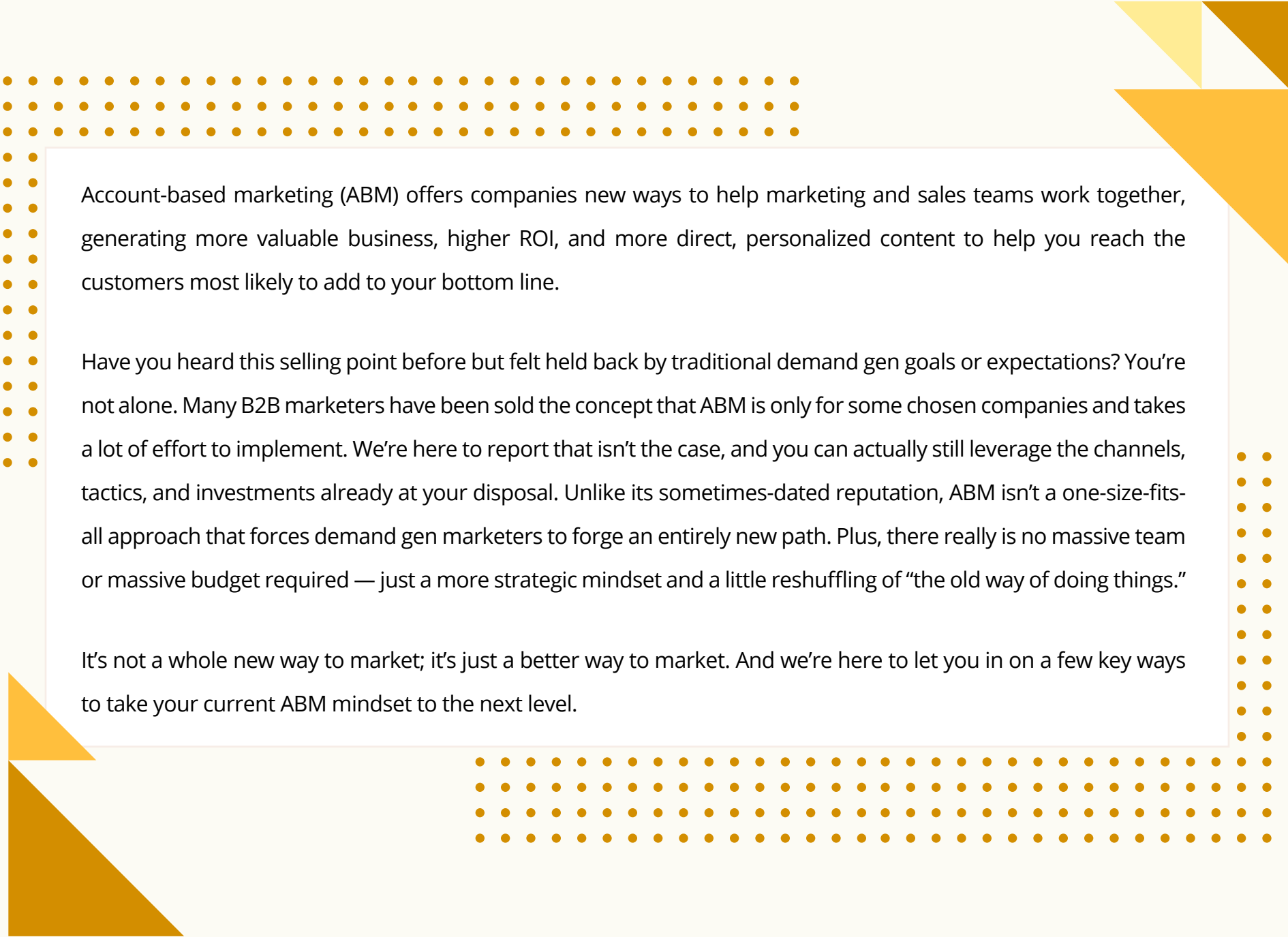# The B2B Marketer's Guide to ABM

Demystifying Account-Based Marketing:
How ABM Can Work for You

RollWorks

Account-based marketing (ABM) offers companies new ways to help marketing and sales teams work together, generating more valuable business, higher ROI, and more direct, personalized content to help you reach the customers most likely to add to your bottom line.

Have you heard this selling point before but felt held back by traditional demand gen goals or expectations? You're not alone. Many B2B marketers have been sold the concept that ABM is only for some chosen companies and takes a lot of effort to implement. We're here to report that isn't the case, and you can actually still leverage the channels, tactics, and investments already at your disposal. Unlike its sometimes-dated reputation, ABM isn't a one-size-fits-all approach that forces demand gen marketers to forge an entirely new path. Plus, there really is no massive team or massive budget required — just a more strategic mindset and a little reshuffling of "the old way of doing things."

It's not a whole new way to market; it's just a better way to market. And we're here to let you in on a few key ways to take your current ABM mindset to the next level.

GETTING REAL: ABM VS. TRADITIONAL DEMAND GENERATION

Traditional marketing and sales in B2B organizations can be cumbersome, resource-intensive, and fragmented. The best leads are often personally cultivated by individual salespeople, while marketing often focuses on "spray and pray" approaches that can create waste and result in as many poor leads as good ones. And in all but the smoothest-running operations, the hand-off of leads and responsibilities from marketing to sales can be awkward and messy.

ABM is here to address most of these sometimes avoided, but very apparent issues. The biggest change in an ABM approach is a shift in focus from broad demographic groups or personas to target specific companies and buying committees. The goal is to build a unified marketing and sales funnel for each target account, weeding out just "anyone" and focusing on a data-backed list that's a far better bet than traditional lead-first demand gen.
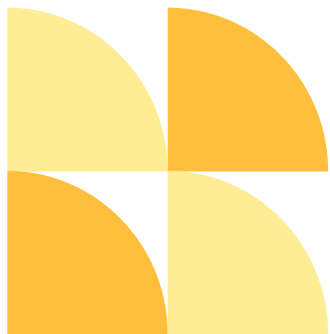
ABM takes the guess-work out of marketing, and instead allows companies to leverage data and automation platforms to identify the best targets, figure out who the buyers are, engage them on a mass scale with personalized outreach using a blend of channels, and then smoothly transition the resulting high-quality account contacts to sales while still providing marketing support. It's marketing and selling with the same goal: generating revenue.

Get Started
with ABM

IDENTIFYING TARGETS

All marketing begins with identifying targets. For conventional consumer-facing marketing, these targets can be pretty broad — "men aged 25-45 with a middle-class income and an owned home," for example. For conventional B2B marketing, the targets are often narrower, focusing on personas including job roles, experience level, pain points, etc. That's where traditional demand gen often falls short — it assumes that any B2B buyer with that profile is worth investing against.

Using historical data, many B2B marketers have come to realize that buckets full of "leads" rarely converted into truly revenue-generating customers and something had to stop. Instead, ABM starts at a more strategic level. It forces you to ask, what companies are the best fit for our products and services, turning them into the best customers? That's where investments show the greatest results.

Instead of building an audience of similar people who might be interested in your products or services out of a population of everyone on Earth, ABM isolates the accounts that are likely to give you business and the people who work in key roles at those companies.

The first step, then, is to build out your hit list of companies, or Target Account List (TAL). And that begins by creating an ideal customer profile (ICP).
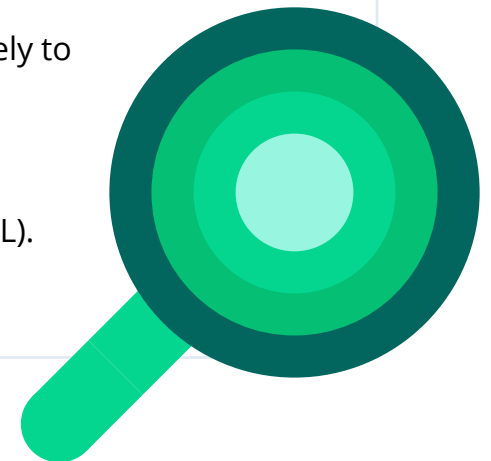
BUILDING YOUR IDEAL CUSTOMER PROFILE

For companies selling to consumers, an ICP is a descriptive profile of the kind of person most likely to buy your product. For companies looking to supercharge growth with ABM, the ICP is almost the same thing, except that instead of looking at individual people it looks at enterprises. So rather than building a persona for Jane Smith, the ABM approach would build a persona for *Jane, Smith, & Assoc.*

An account-based ideal customer profile starts with descriptive characteristics: firmographics (what the enterprise looks like), and technographics (the technology stack used by the enterprise). It then layers on behavioral characteristics: how does the enterprise make decisions, who do they engage with, and how do they engage with them, and what is their intent for purchasing?

This analysis can be quantitative, relying entirely on hard data, but the reality is most companies might not have access to the level of information required, and a fully quantitative approach might miss some specific nuance. Therefore, it's usually best to supplement the numbers with qualitative assessments that can provide additional detail and context to the numbers. It's also important to dig through internal sales history to make sure that the ICP makes sense based on who has given you business in the past.

For a full dive into building an ICP, take a look at RollWorks' guide for using an ICP in ABM, which includes a helpful template for putting together one of your own. And remember that you're never really "finished" developing your ICP — it's a process that may need to be iterated over and refined regularly depending on changes within your business.

BUILDING YOUR TARGET ACCOUNT LIST (TAL)

Once you've established an ICP, it's time to build your target account list (TAL). A TAL is a strategic list of accounts most likely to buy your product/ service, generated from an ideal customer profile (ICP) that serves as the core go-to-market (GTM) strategy between marketing, sales, and customer success. Using a combination of static and dynamic data to build and tier accounts, marketing and sales are able to prioritize which accounts to reach, with what budget, and when.

While a TAL may sound complex, building one shouldn't be. After all, you put effort into building an ICP for a reason — that's your blueprint of attributes for pulling together a list of real companies that are a match.

When building your TAL, here are a few tips and tricks to keep in mind:

❶ **Generate your total potential TAL:**
Using available vendor data, place each possible target account into a list. You should choose accounts based on how well they fit your ICP.

❷ **Right-size your list:**
Determine the ideal number of accounts in your TAL by analyzing your revenue goals, estimated conversion rates, and seller headcount. If too large, consider further limiting your ICP profile or manually reducing accounts based on region or company size.

❸ **Get a TAL capacity calculator:**
These handy little tools set the baseline TAL size you'll need to accomplish your revenue goals. Using the RollWorks TAL capacity calculator template, you can better understand typical deal size and conversion rates, create multiple TALs if needed, and clarify seller quotas based on clear revenue objectives.

ACCOUNT SCORING

Scoring is the backbone of a high-performing ABM plan, so it's important to know what you're looking for. A good account score is made up of three components:

Fit: How similar is the account to your ICP — this includes firmographics, technographics, and other "looks like" factors that have been good business for you in the past **(Tip: Machine learning models can help with this)**.

Intent: What are the purchasing goals of the account? Are they in-marketing for your category or product? Are they buying today or tomorrow? A month from now?

Engagement: Engagement is all about behavior — how is the account interacting with your brand across all channels throughout their buying journey?

You can begin to tier your TAL early on by measuring intent signals, such as an account's consumption of specific content on B2B websites. Engagement signals, consisting of direct interactions with your company, are even more powerful interest indicators.

ACCOUNT TIERING/ROTATION

So far, the only real difference we've talked about between ABM and traditional demand gen marketing is a smaller pool of target accounts, the TAL. Tiering and rotation, the next step, is where the magic of ABM combines with marketing automation to supercharge your funnel.

Tiering is the process of breaking up your scored TAL into individual tiers based on how valuable the account is and how resource-intensive reaching them will be. The more valuable the account, the higher their score, and the more comprehensive attention they'll need, the higher the tier.

Each tier should have its own marketing plan and workflow — the higher the tier, the more involved. A good rule of thumb is to spend two to five times more resources on a tier than the tier below it. As you monitor engagement and intent, you can rotate accounts and move them up or down the tier ladder. This allows you to focus your marketing budgets on the most important accounts but also keeps your team from over-saturating any one account. As higher-tier accounts drop down, resources are freed up to address lower-tier ones.

As you rotate through your accounts, you may find that some drop out of your TAL. That's okay — your TAL can and should be updated regularly, with timing based on your sales cycle.

Engaging Accounts

You have your ICP and your TAL, and all the accounts are scored and ranked by tier. Now it's time to start engaging them. Unlike traditional demand gen marketing, you'll be building out engagement plans based on tier rather than a single one-size-fits-all solution. This lets you put resources where they'll get the highest return, without losing sight of lower-tier accounts.

ENGAGEMENT CHANNELS

With a fully fleshed out TAL, it's time to open the playbook and tailor strategies for each audience. If you've done your research right, you will be aware of the various pain points, opportunities, and signals that target companies need to move down the sales funnel. You should also know how they like to be approached, what channels are most impactful when, and who in those organizations needs to be looped in at each step.

This similarity is by design. ABM doesn't replace traditional demand gen approaches — it just allows you to think of those channels in a more nuanced and personal way, increasing engagement and win rates as you go along. And a good ABM strategy will use all of the channels available, since not every stakeholder at every account will necessarily be reachable in the same way.

The good news is that the channels you'll be using for ABM are no different from the channels used in traditional approaches. These will include

- ✓ Email marketing
- ✓ Digital ads
- ✓ Automated sales outreach
- ✓ E-gifting and direct mail
- ✓ Personalized informational landing pages and content
- ✓ On-site chat bots
- ✓ Virtual (or hybrid) events
- ✓ Content syndication
- ✓ ...and of course, many more!

SALES AND MARKETING ALIGNMENT

One of the strongest advantages ABM has over a traditional demand gen approach, especially in enterprise organizations, is how closely it can tie the sales and marketing staff. Because ABM realigns marketing toward an account focus, it immediately makes sense to the sales team because that's the way they've always worked. And because of the tiered approach, marketing produces content that helps sales make connections at every step of the sales cycle.

When engaging with your TAL, both marketing and sales must be aware of the following factors:

- ✓ Where the account is in the buying journey
- ✓ What messaging would be most effective for each account
- ✓ Intent and engagement statistics for each account
- ✓ What channels have been engaged for an account
- ✓ Specifics on the makeup and stakeholders of an account's buying committee

If marketing has no idea what progress has already been made with an account, they are unable to craft content specific to them. If sales is unsure about messaging, an account can receive mixed messages.

INTERPRETING READY-TO-BUY SIGNALS FOR SUB-SEGMENTATION

While picking channels is key, you also need to be more aware of when to activate them and which segments to go after. That's where ready-to-buy signals come in. They'll dictate the cadence and effort you put toward certain accounts, also known as sub-segmenting.

Ready-to-buy signals shouldn't be something new at this point (yes, you already rely on them when building target account scores and prioritizing). All three attributes (fit, intent, and engagement) need to be taken into consideration as you continue to engage across channels. A company showing high intent toward similar products and even engaging directly with your marketing can still be a poor fit due to company size, alone — and therefore not worth your time and resources. Along the same lines, a company with a perfect fit but showing no signs of intent can be a prime candidate for future outreach.
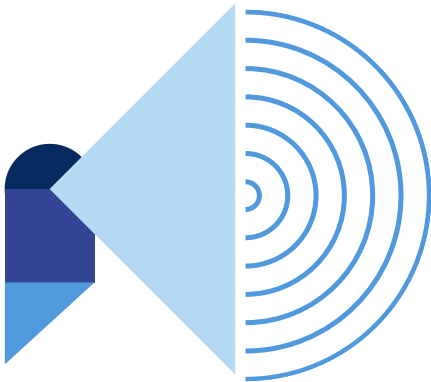
Keeping a pulse on ready-to-buy signals can seem tricky, but regularly evaluating your TAL and comparing current account behavior to past account behavior can give you a good idea of what to look for. You'll be able to ingest different data signals to create sub-segmented audiences based on behavior, versus treating your entire TAL in a uniform manner. If you have a sub-segment of accounts that are high-fit and high-intent, yet haven't shown much engagement, you'll engage that audience differently than one that is high-fit showing no intent or engagement.

INTERPRETING READY-TO-BUY SIGNALS FOR SUB-SEGMENTATION

Even with accounts being tiered or segmented based on these three data signals, sometimes even more personalization is called for. That's where further **audience segmentation** comes in. Creating sub-segments allows your team to craft specific messages for specific circumstances and companies, which is key to high-touch ABM tactics. For each sub-segment you identify, your engagement and outreach becomes more personalized.

These sub-segments can be funnel-stage based, for example changing the kinds of marketing accounts that are near closing. Or they can be based on organizational level or role, for example sending different messaging to directors vs. managers or technical vs. non-technical recipients. Sub-segments can also be used for testing marketing approaches. By creating a test sub-segment, you can experiment with new tactics and strategies without needing to roll out to your entire list.
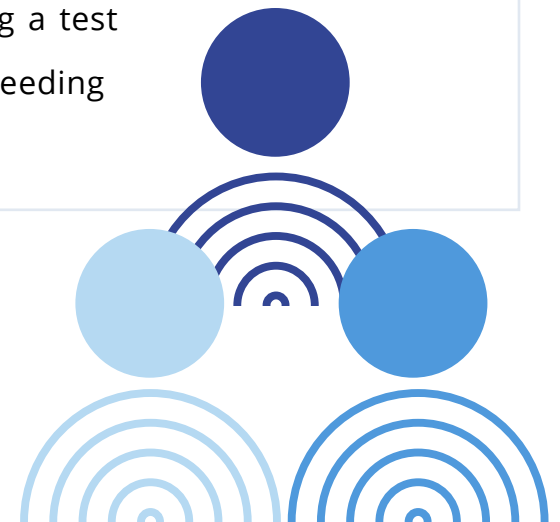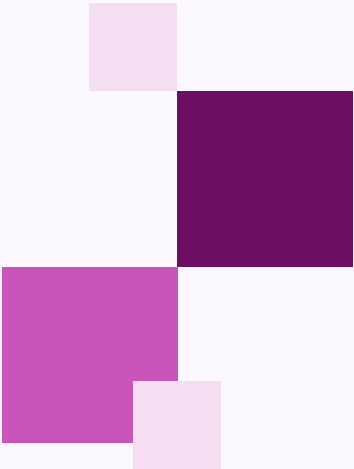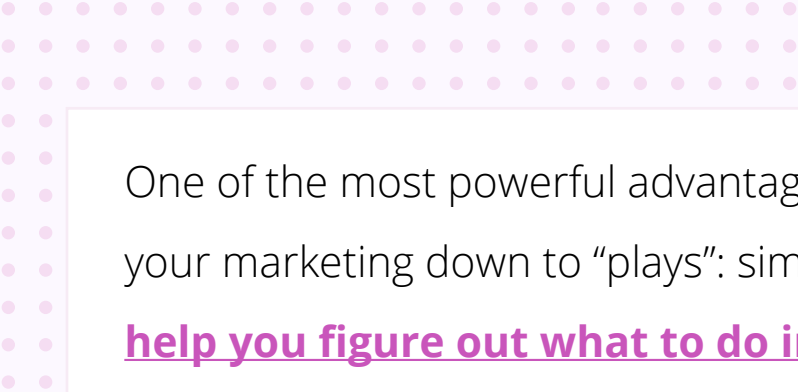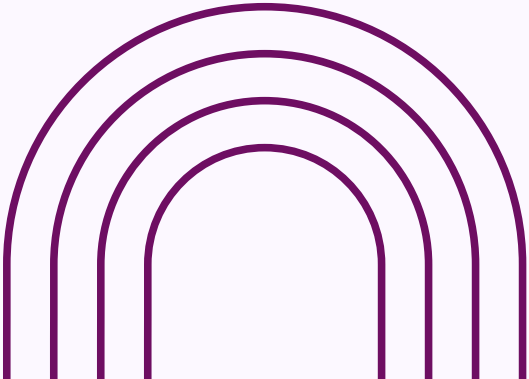
REFILLING THE FUNNEL

Accounts drop out of the pipeline for all manner of reasons. Some are won, others are lost, some pivot to an entirely new business model, and some go out of business. To keep an ABM strategy going, you'll need to constantly fill gaps in the pipeline.

For companies moving to a strict ABM model, that means doing prospecting and researching, and then moving accounts manually into the pipe for scoring. A hybrid model, on the other hand, still maintains a traditional demand gen marketing approach at the very top of the funnel and then moves the conventional leads generated into the ABM pipeline. Both are great approaches, and there is no one-size-fits-all answer.

The important thing to remember is that your TAL needs to be big enough to meet sales goals. Regularly revisiting the TAL capacity calculator will let you know how many new accounts need to be added at any given time, helping you ensure the pipeline never dries up. In an ABM funnel, only accounts on your TAL count, so it's important to monitor and refill the list regularly.

Framing ABM Plays

One of the most powerful advantages of an ABM approach is that it lets you break your marketing down to "plays": simple, repeatable, templated **strategies that can help you figure out what to do in any situation**. A full playbook is beyond the scope of this document, but it's useful to see an example from AdRoll.

THE 3X3X3 ABM PLAY

The goal of this play is to engage both known and unknown accounts with three offers, through three channels, over a period of three weeks. The 3x3x3 ABM play is a solid tactic to build out your pipeline in less than a month and can be an effective starting point for teams new to ABM.

Informed by your audience segmentation data, your offers should be spaced out over a solid timeline with clear objectives for each week. When it comes to the three channels, however, keep these goals in mind for each:

❶ Digital advertising:
This channel will be your best bet to gather new audiences and build out your account data for unknown accounts. Start with account-targeted ads with personalized data about the company, then move to contact targeting based on the sales stage and serve ads directly to known contacts. Finally, retarget high-intent accounts on your TAL to increase return visits and engagement.
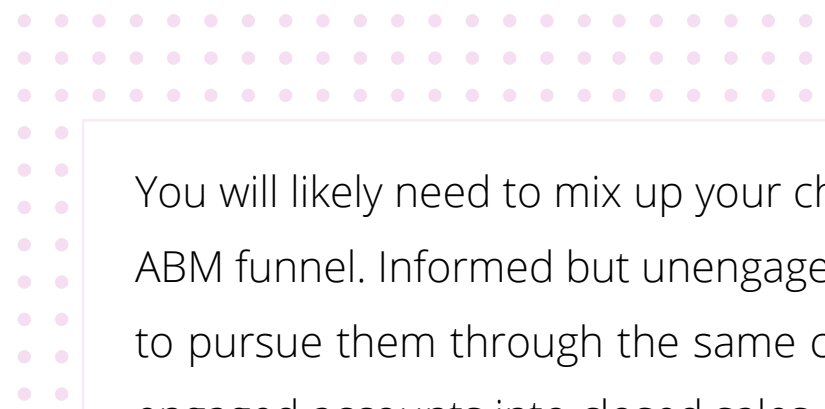
❷ Marketing automation emails:
In the context of the 3x3x3 ABM play, marketing automation emails are a perfect supplement to the digital ads in the first channel. Send personalized emails from the sales member who has ownership over the account. Keep it simple — plain text emails come off as more genuine and bespoke. Consider adding a personalized asset like a message directly from the assigned sales rep to increase click-through rate.
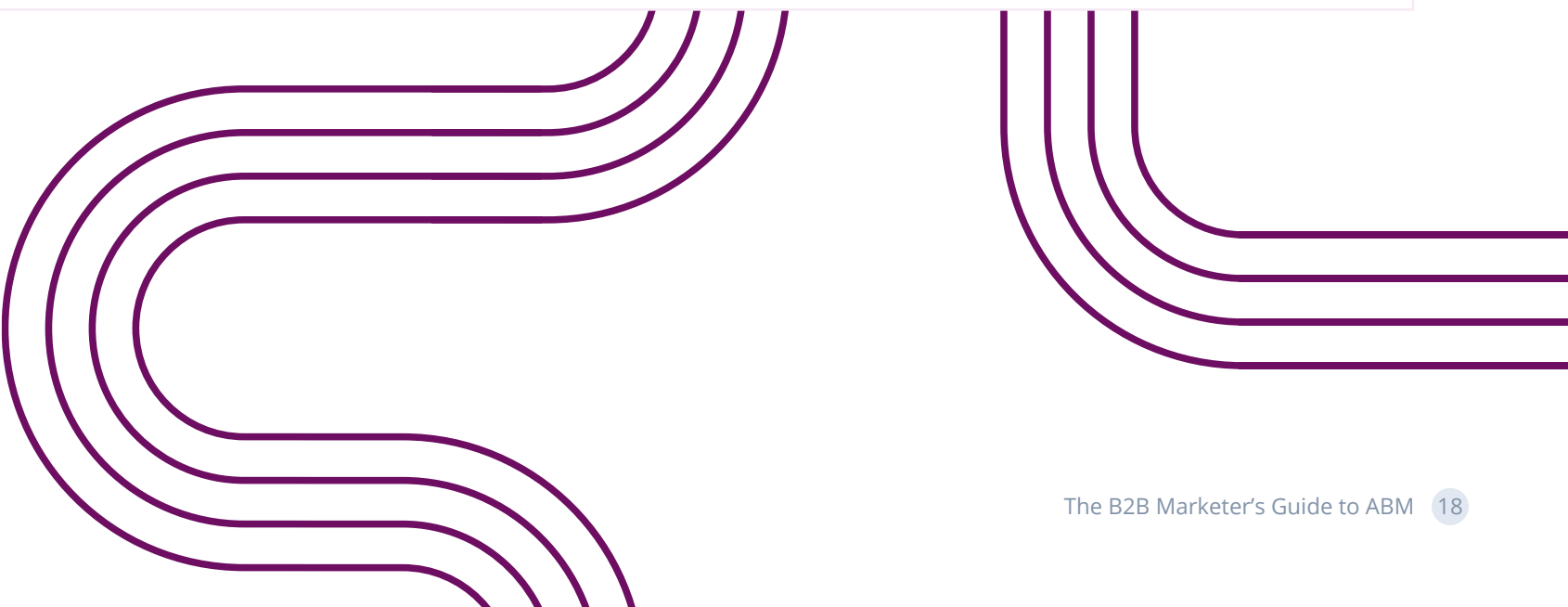
❸ Sales follow-up:
If an account responds meaningfully to the first two channels in this play, coordinate with sales to follow up directly. High-touch sales tactics like setting up direct meetings and mailing personal gifts are now in play. Whatever you do, make it personal.

THE 3X3X3 ABM PLAY

You will likely need to mix up your channels and messaging at different stages of your ABM funnel. Informed but unengaged audiences can become fatigued if you continue to pursue them through the same channels. So mix it up, get personalized, and turn engaged accounts into closed sales.

Measure Reach and Revenue

So you've built your target accounts, and you've engaged them — now what? Let's just say, if you can't measure it, you can't fix it. That's why **ABM measurement** can't be overlooked. The only way to know which channels and tactics are working for your audience is to establish a flexible system of metrics to evaluate your progress. That means tracking from bottom-line GTM impact to account progression to more granular channel-by-channel/program metrics. Each bucket of metrics provides distinct insights that will enable you to optimize programs and strategies to get the best results.

We recommend breaking out your measurement into the following:

ULTIMATE ABM IMPACT METRICS

This is what you're ultimately trying to prove over time: impact across the entire business through an account-based strategy. After all, it's a unified approach across GTM teams and should have a long-term impact on the company as a whole — leveling up your traditional demand gen lead metrics.

These metrics, ranging from acquisition to retention and expansion, will look something like these:
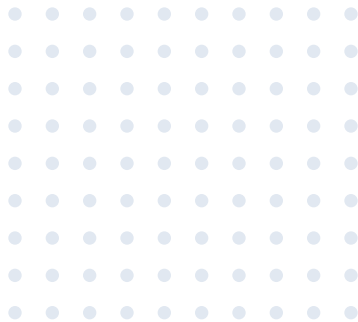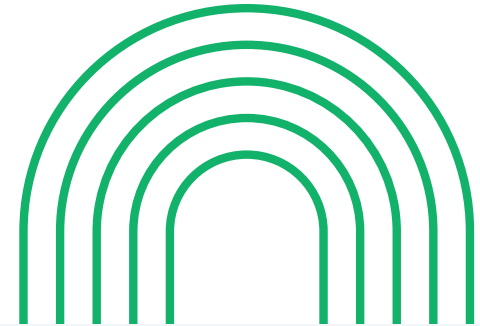
ULTIMATE ACQUISITION ABM METRICS

TAL Opportunities: The total opportunities generated from TAL

TAL Pipeline: The total pipeline generated from TAL

TAL Pipeline Value: The dollar value of the net new opportunities generated as defined above

TAL Sales Velocity: The average speed at which an account moves through the pipeline to generate revenue

TAL Close Rate: The rate at which open deals are converting to won

TAL Average Contract Value: The average contract value of all deals

TAL Revenue: The total revenue earned on all accounts

TAL Average Recurring Revenue (ARR): The total revenue recurring from accounts

ULTIMATE ABM IMPACT METRICS

ULTIMATE RETENTION ABM METRICS

Customer Churn: The rate at which customers stop doing business with you

Revenue Churn: The percentage of revenue you've lost from existing customers in a given period of time

Net Promoter Score (NPS): A quantitative measure of general satisfaction and loyalty to your brand

Retention Rate: The ratio of customers that return to do business at your company

Customer Lifetime Value (CLV): A measure of how much revenue is generated by a single customer over time

ULTIMATE EXPANSION ABM METRICS

Upsell Opportunities: The total opportunities generated for upsell

Customer TAL Upsell Contract Value: The average contract value of all upsell deals

Customer TAL Upsell Win Rate: The number of TAL upsell deals closed

Customer TAL Upsell Sales Cycle Length: The average length of time it takes to move an upsell deal through to close

While this breadth of metrics can seem daunting, you won't be seeing this impact overnight (that's the point!). You can build these into your long-term reporting across GTM teams over time and rely on other leading indicators of success like account progression and channel performance as your program reaches full maturity. It can take up to a full sales cycle to see results above, so stick to the course and focus on optimizing programs in the meantime.

ACCOUNT PROGRESSION THROUGHOUT BUYER'S JOURNEY

While you continue to build and iterate programs, tracking account progression throughout the entire buyer's journey is critical not only for measuring success — but also for informing areas of improvement. Unlike traditional demand gen that tracks how leads move through a journey, ABM tracks an entire account and its various buyers.
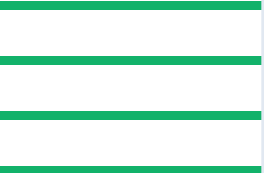
This gives you a pulse check on where accounts may be progressing smoothly or potentially get stuck. Too much open pipeline and not enough closing? That's your signal to address this with new channels or tactics. Typically, this looks like tracking progression or regression through whatever custom stages you've defined, which can have various data sources (advertising, site traffic, CRM details, etc.). You may consider accounts unaware if they've been off-site for over a month, or consider them aware if they're visiting a specific page within a certain time frame. This changes as you move through lower funnel and post-sale stages, including engagement and changes within an account.

These metrics, typically evaluated on a 30-60-90 time period, will look something like tracking progression vs. regression from these stages (you also should have a post-sales funnel! But we can get to that outside of our "getting started" guide).
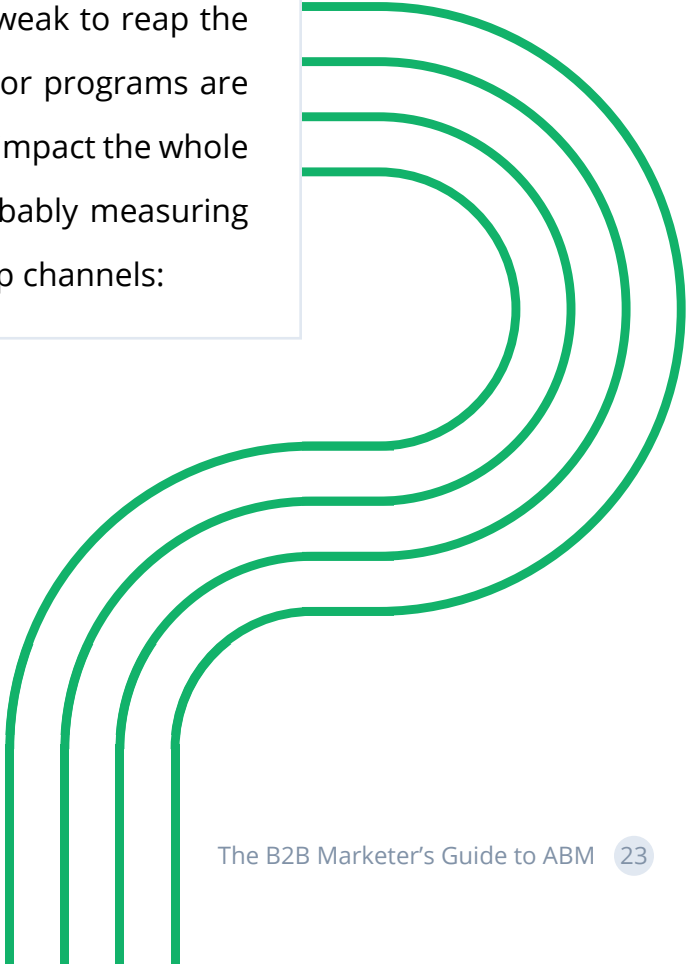
EXAMPLE PRE-SALE ACCOUNT PROGRESSION

Unaware
EG. HAVEN'T VISITED THE WEBSITE

Aware
EG. VISITED WEBSITE IN LAST 90 DAYS

Engaged
EG. DOWNLOADED CONTENT

Open Opps
EG. PROPOSAL

Closed Won
EG. CONTRACT SIGNED

CHANNEL-BY-CHANNEL PERFORMANCE

Here's where traditional demand gen marketers might feel a little bit more comfortable: channel-by-channel performance. And that's what's great, because channels will never be something you don't measure. They're the needle you have to tweak to reap the major ABM benefits over time. Without insight into what channels or programs are performing best, you'll be unable to control higher-level metrics that impact the whole business. This is where investment decisions get made. You're probably measuring many channels at once, but here's the classic breakdown of a few top channels:

CHANNEL-BY-CHANNEL PERFORMANCE

EMAIL METRICS

TAL Targeted: The number of accounts on our target list for the campaign

TAL Open rate: The amount of TAL to open email

TAL Click to open rate (CTOR): The number of TAL clicking CTA from open

TAL Unsubscribes: The number of TAL opting out of emails

DIGITAL ADVERTISING METRICS

TAL Targeted: The total number of accounts targeted in a campaign

TAL Reached: The total number of accounts reached in a campaign

TAL CPM: The total cost per TAL impression

TAL CTR: The total TAL click thru rate

TAL Conversion rate: The total conversion (form-fill, page visit, etc.) for the campaign

WEBINAR METRICS

TAL Registrants: The number of TAL registrants for webinar

TAL Attendees: The number of TAL registrants who attend webinar

TAL On-demand viewers: The number of TAL who view the on-demand recording

TAL Meetings generated: The number of TAL meetings generated from webinar campaigns

TAL Opps generated: The number of webinar campaign members (registrants & attendees) from TAL who translate into opps

How Demand Gen Marketers Can Run ABM with RollWorks

Taking the next step from traditional demand gen to ABM should now feel a little (no, a lot) less intimidating. And that's especially true when you're able to rely on products, processes, and people that have been doing ABM for years. With the right data at your fingertips, taking your lower-impact demand gen programs and turning them up a notch is what RollWorks does best.

By integrating with your pre-existing marketing and sales tech stack, RollWorks enables you to identify your best targets, engage them across channels, and measure for impact and optimization throughout the entire account journey. And that's true for marketing teams of 2-2,000 — yes, you heard that right. ABM is no longer a strategy only left for big companies and massive budgets. ABM is exactly what demand gen marketers need to get even more impact and prove their value not only to themselves but to the entire company.

The Next Step

Now that you know what ABM can do for your company, start your ABM journey by scheduling a deeper dive with RollWorks. **Additional resources** on each of the topics in this guide also elaborate on commonly asked questions.

But why wait? **Get in touch with RollWorks today** and start using ABM to get your message in front of the highest-value buyers in your industry.

RollWorks, a division of NextRoll, Inc., offers ambitious B2B companies an account-based platform to align their marketing and sales teams and confidently grow revenue. Powered by proprietary data and machine learning, RollWorks' solutions address the needs of organizations large and small —from those with best-in-class ABM programs to those just beginning their exploration. By empowering teams to identify their target accounts and key buyers, reach those accounts across multiple channels, and measure program effectiveness in their system-of-record, RollWorks is an indispensable platform for marketers and sellers who believe that an account-based approach is just good business.

To learn more visit **www.rollworks.com**