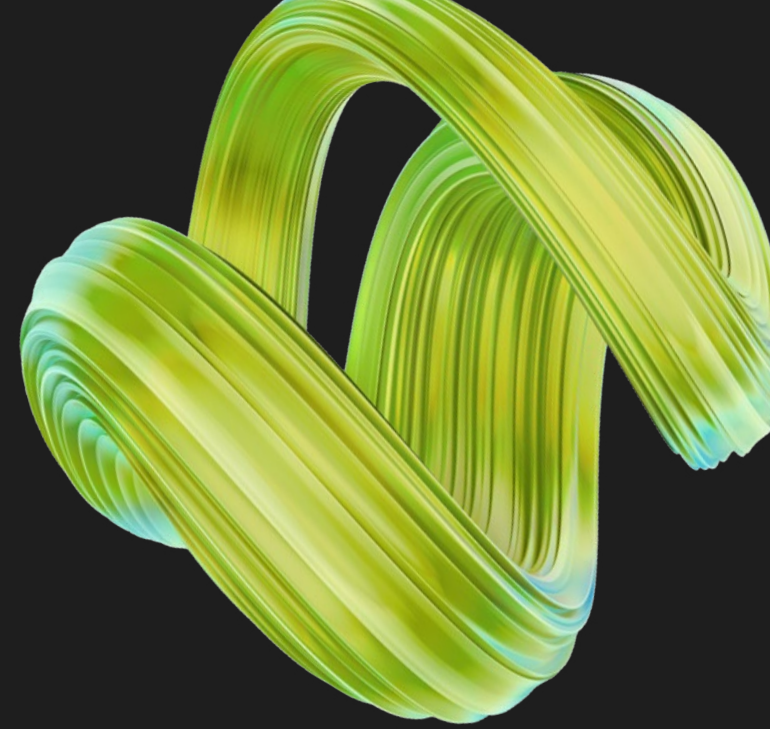


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Demystifying B2B account-based marketing: how to make your ABM a success

Executive summary	3
Six reasons you should use ABM	4
Start ABM by selecting your targets	5
When is 1-2-1 the right approach?	7
Do your research	8
Delve into intent data	9
Develop buyer personas	10
Create targeted messages	11
Assemble the content toolkit	12
Top content formats	13
Build landing pages	14
Distribute and promote ABM content	15
Nurture your relationships	16
How Futurity can help you	17

Executive summary

Account-based marketing has become a much-used marketing approach. Executed correctly, ABM can be an effective tool in the B2B marketer's toolbox, but it can also be costly and underwhelming if you don't take the right approach. This guide will help you get the best value from your investment.

ABM offers better resource allocation, more personalised engagement, alignment of sales and marketing, and, ultimately, increased deal size. At its core, ABM helps companies deal with complex buying cycles that involve multiple decision-makers.

Research by Momentum ITSMA found that 77% of companies see ABM assisting revenue growth¹, 72% say ABM delivers higher ROI than other marketing techniques, and 66% say ABM significantly improves marketing and sales alignment. Major successes are regularly reported: PayScale increased target account traffic by 500%; DocuSign boosted its sales pipeline by 22%; Personify increased engaged site visitors by 39x and grew page views by 39%; and Snowflake increased its growth rate by over 300%. All were using ABM².

This ebook will give you an in-depth understanding of what goes into a successful B2B ABM campaign. We'll guide you through gaining industry knowledge, buyer persona creation, engagement, tracking, content creation, funnel optimisation, and measuring success. We will focus on valuable tactics and examples and address any challenges you might face.

But we won't try to blind you with science about ABM because, ultimately, it's all about understanding your customers, working with your sales teams, and delivering compelling content that meets your targets' needs.

66% of companies say ABM significantly improves marketing and sales alignment¹



Six reasons you should use ABM

01

Align your sales and marketing

Traditionally sales and marketing teams often work in silos, resulting in disjointed efforts. ABM encourages a coordinated approach where both stakeholders work towards a shared goal of engaging and converting specific target accounts. This synergy can lead to better efficiency, greater account penetration, and improved return on investment.

02

Offer personalised experiences

Customers today value relevant and personalised interactions, and ABM enables you to deliver more relevant marketing experiences. Focusing on specific accounts allows you to create content and campaigns tailored to each account's unique needs and challenges, resulting in higher engagement and conversion rates.

03

Accelerate sales cycles

With ABM, your marketing efforts are concentrated on a defined set of accounts, which means messaging is targeted at the audience's needs. The increased relevance of communications can help accelerate the decision-making process for clients, moving them through the sales funnel more quickly.

04

Increase customer lifetime value

ABM helps you expand relationships with existing customers. By understanding each buyer's unique needs and delivering personalised solutions, you can increase the likelihood of upselling and cross-selling, thereby increasing the customer lifetime value.

05

Better use of marketing spend

ABM can generate a higher ROI than traditional marketing methods. With ABM, marketing budget is spent on the accounts most likely to convert, reducing waste and improving your return on marketing investment.

06

More measurability

Because ABM is focused on specific accounts, it's easier to measure the effectiveness of your campaigns and tactics. ABM allows for precise tracking and measurement of account engagement, providing clear insights into marketing and sales performance and informing strategic decision-making.

Start ABM by selecting your targets

So, where should I start my ABM campaign? The first step is to work with your sales team to identify what companies to target. This could be based on a cluster of industries, requirements, or regions. Sometimes, your sales team might want to target a single company and focus efforts on multiple personas to support a sales opportunity (see next section).

01

Create a target list

Identify companies most likely to benefit from your offerings that align with your strategic objectives. This target list is the foundation of your ABM campaign and will influence the content, channels, and tactics you use.

02

Define the ideal customer profile (ICP)

An ideal customer profile (ICP) describes the company that would gain the most value from your product or service. Consider company size, industry, location, revenue, and technological maturity. Understanding your ICP helps you focus your resources and aligns your sales and marketing efforts.

03

Identify target accounts

Start identifying potential accounts that fit your ICP. You can use various data sources, such as your CRM, LinkedIn, industry reports, event attendees, or intent data from publishers like TechTarget. Look for accounts that closely match your ICP in terms of size, industry, location, and other criteria.

79% of companies with mature ABM strategies put **79%** of opportunities and **73%** of total revenue down to their ABM efforts⁴

04

Check the fit

Not every account that matches your ICP will be a perfect fit for your campaign. Are they currently in the market for your solution? Do they have the budget and authority to make a purchase? Do they show intent signals such as visiting your website, downloading your content, or engaging with your emails? Tools like Bombora or 6sense may provide intent data to guide you on this assessment.

05

Prioritise accounts

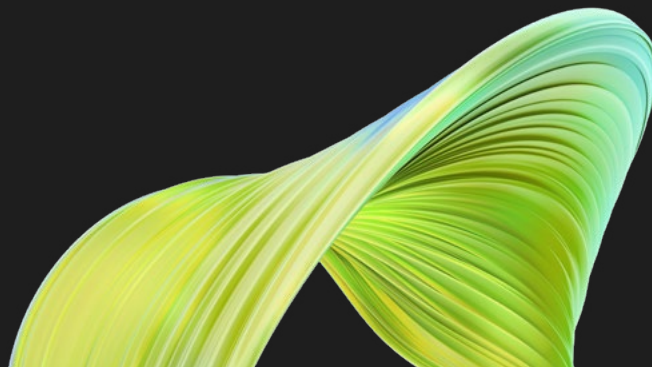
When you've identified potential accounts and assessed fit and intent, prioritise them based on how likely they are to convert and their potential value. Prioritise accounts with a high likelihood of converting and potential for significant revenue or strategic value.

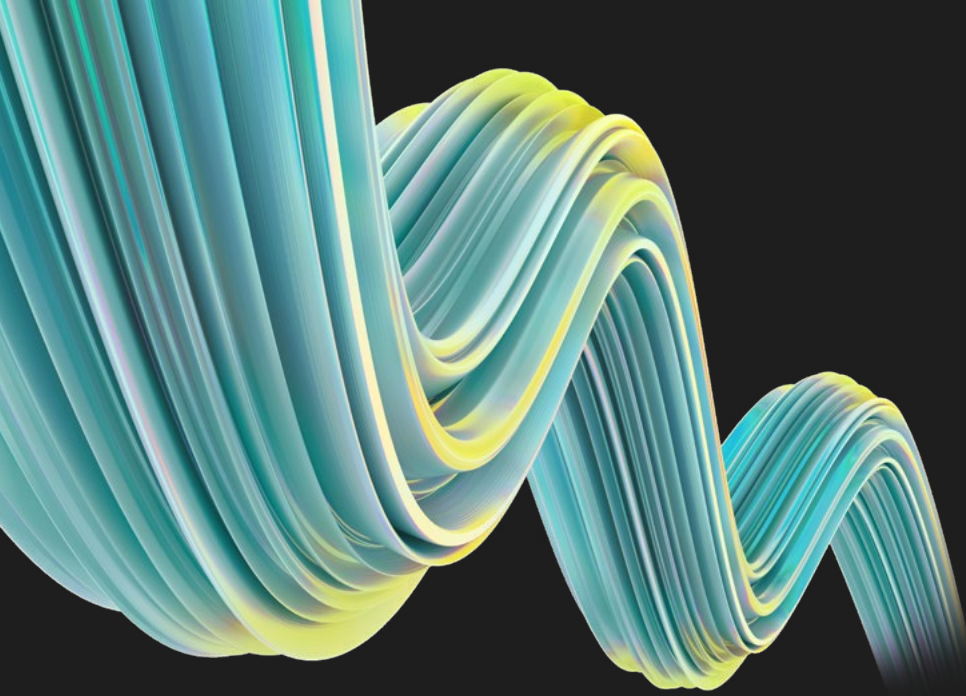
06

Validate with sales

Your sales team's insights and experience can be invaluable in validating whether an account should be on your target list. Furthermore, it's crucial to continuously refine your target list based on feedback from your sales team, new information about accounts, and your campaign performance.

72% of companies say ABM delivers higher ROI than other marketing techniques⁵





When is 1-2-1 the right approach?

1-2-1 ABM focuses your marketing and sales efforts on a single high-value account. Highly customised engagement and communication strategies can be effective but costly. In 1-2-1 ABM, every engagement is uniquely tailored to the selected account.

First, you need to choose the best account to target. This choice should be made with the sales team and represent a high-value prospect or existing customer with significant potential for growth.

Next, research the company, business model, challenges, strategic objectives, stakeholders, and decision-making process. Knowing as much as you can is the launchpad for developing highly personalised engagement strategies. Then focus on solving the account's specific problems, aligning with their business objectives, and providing value.

Work with sales

Coordinate your efforts closely with your sales and marketing teams. Sales can provide account insights and personal knowledge, while marketing teams create tailored content and implement personalised engagement strategies.

1-2-1 ABM success is typically measured by account engagement and revenue growth rather than by traditional lead-based metrics. So clear communication and cooperation between your sales and marketing teams is essential for accurate measurement and reporting.

Potential benefits of 1-2-1 ABM include high returns from individual accounts and in-depth, long-lasting relationships with key customers. However, 1-2-1 ABM takes significant resources and a lot of coordination between your sales and marketing. Further, the highly customised nature of each campaign means it can take time until you see results.



Do your research

Once you have selected your targets, you must research them thoroughly. This due diligence ensures your activities will be correctly targeted and personalised, and you'll be more knowledgeable about your accounts. In fact, your research might eliminate your initial targets, identify new ones, or highlight a company particularly suitable for a 1-2-1 approach.

Company research

Begin by understanding your target's strategic goals, operational challenges, competitive landscape, and market position. This helps you assess how your products and solutions match up with their needs and how you can provide value. To build this research, look at various sources like the company's website, annual reports, press releases, and LinkedIn profiles.

Industry research

It's also important to understand the trends, challenges, and opportunities in the industry sectors of your target accounts. This could include the regulatory environment, technological advancements, competitive dynamics, and market trends. The research helps you position your solutions as a response to industry-specific needs. Also, it enables you to demonstrate your understanding and expertise in the industry, building trust and credibility with your targets.

Research tools

Several tools are helpful for this research, such as Google Alerts, SEMRush, and Feedly. You can also use industry-specific databases to automate and streamline your research process and simplify the exercise. And remember that your sales teams are a crucial asset because sales execs will have personal knowledge about target accounts that aren't in databases.

Delve into intent data

Another area of research into companies can come from intent data. This refers to behavioural signals that indicate a potential buyer's interest or intent to purchase a product or service. It can help you understand where companies are on the buyer journey and tailor your marketing efforts accordingly.

First-party or third-party data

Intent data is generally classified into two categories: first-party intent data is behavioural data you collect directly from website visits, email opens, form fills, webinar attendance, and similar; third-party intent data is data outside your digital properties, like content consumption or engagement patterns across different industry websites, forums, or platforms.

Both these types of data can help you identify and prioritise target accounts, particularly on how ready to buy they are. They can also guide you on the types of solutions targets are interested in, informing your content strategy.

Consider integrating intent data with your marketing and sales platforms to get the most from it. This helps you maximise your data with personalised outreach or nurturing activities based on buyer intent signals. For example, if a target shows increased interest in a specific topic related to your products, you can tailor your content and communications to that.

Data quality issues

Data quality and accuracy can vary depending on the condition of its source. And that can impact your ability to interpret data, which needs a clear understanding of your buyers and their journeys. You also need to factor in privacy regulations like GDPR.

Intent data can be useful, but there are a few things to remember. First, multiple intent data services providers use different methodologies and sources to collect and analyse data, so it can vary. Second, when choosing a provider, consider data accuracy, coverage, integration with your existing systems, and compliance with privacy regulations before getting started. And third, don't forget to think about cost: some platforms can cost over \$10,000 per month.



41% of marketers say the inability to track the right data is their biggest challenge⁶

Develop buyer personas

According to Gartner, when midsize companies (100–500 employees) invest in new IT solutions, around seven people are involved in purchasing decisions. For larger enterprises, buying decisions can span departments. So, it is essential to include multiple stakeholders in your ABM campaign. To speak directly to their needs, consider developing buyer personas.

Buyer personas are fictional representations of ideal customers based on real data about demographics and behaviour. They help you understand your target audience and tailor your messaging to their needs.

Your ABM campaign should identify the profiles within your target companies matching the buyer personas to focus your campaign and content on. It's also worth including educated speculation about personal histories, motivations, and concerns.

Identify buyers and influencers

Persona creation starts with identifying key decision-makers within target accounts. These might be CEOs, CTOs, CFOs, factory managers, HR, CRM or other individuals with significant influence over purchasing decisions.

Consider the needs, challenges, and goals of each decision-maker. Do this using market research, customer interviews, and data analysis. This information guides the creation of personalised content and messaging that resonates with each persona.

Going deeper, understand how decision-makers research and purchase solutions. Questions to ask: What channels do they use? What kind of content do they consume? What influences their purchasing decisions?

Consider interviewing existing customers to gather insights into their goals, challenges, and preferences. Also, speak to your sales teams about the types of prospects they engage with and what they talk about.

56% of marketers say personalised content is key to a successful ABM strategy⁷



Create targeted messages

Content is a key part of an ABM campaign, and getting the messaging right is essential. Otherwise, all your other efforts could be undermined. A message house helps you organise and streamline key marketing communication messages. It's designed to keep you on track and deliver consistent messages to your targets and across your various channels.

The messaging will also vary depending on your campaign persons. Different profiles of target employees will have different interests: a finance officer at a target company will have other motivations from someone in HR or IT, for example.



Key messages

Identify the most crucial points about your offering that you want your target accounts to remember. They should convey your unique value proposition, address the needs and challenges of your target personas, and make you stand out from your competitors. These are the bedrock of your ABM campaign.



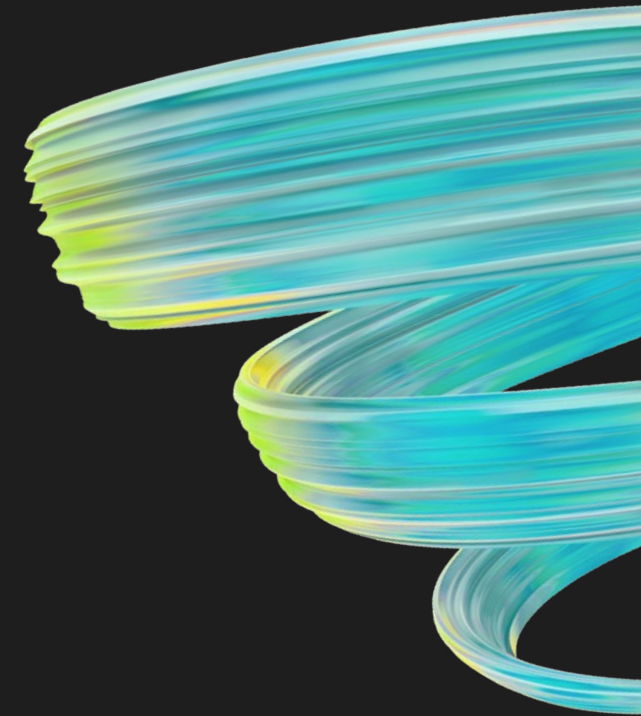
Supporting messages

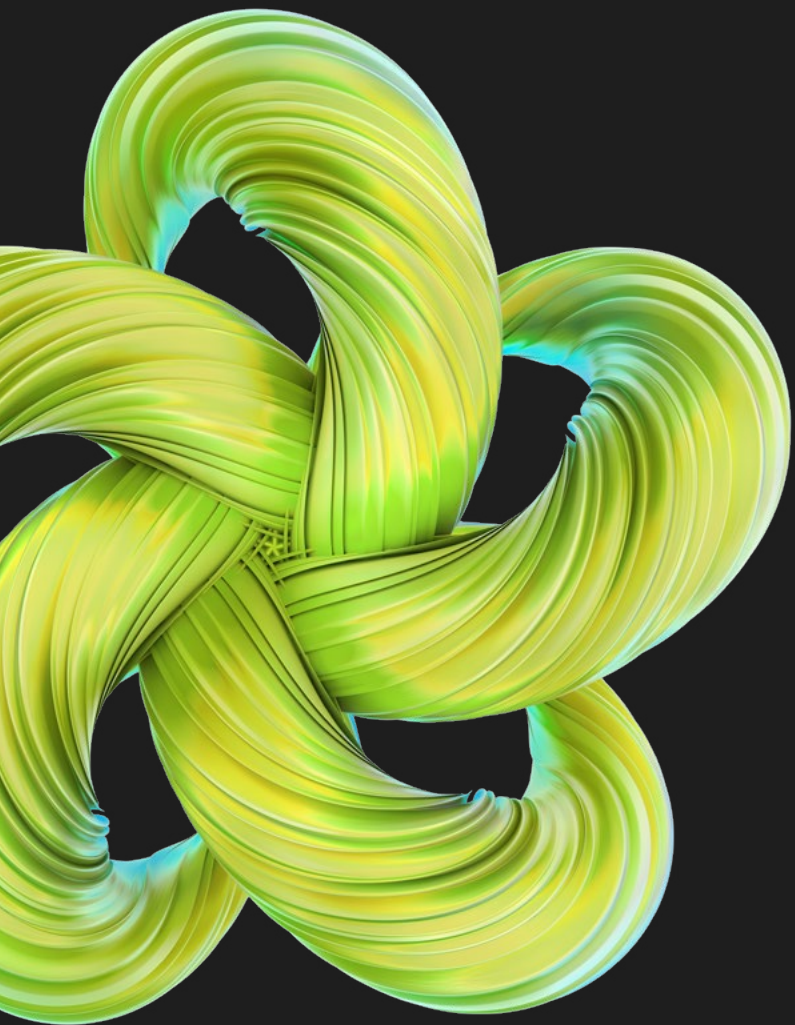
These evidence-based messages corroborate and give additional weight to your key messages. They could be data points, case studies, testimonials, or any other proof that validates your key messages. They add credibility to your campaign and make engagement more likely.



Call-to-action

Your messages should always finish with a clear and compelling call-to-action (CTA). Your CTA guides targets on what to do next – that could be downloading a whitepaper, scheduling a demo, signing up for a newsletter, or contacting a sales rep.





Assemble the content toolkit

Content is a vital tool in effective ABM. It shows you know what you're talking about and positions you as a thought leader and someone worth listening – and talking – to. Creating insightful and shareable content will help cut through to targets. However, according to LinkedIn, 40% of B2B marketers still struggle to develop the right content for their target audiences⁸.

Recycle, reuse, repurpose

It's a good idea to start by doing a content audit. This means reviewing all the content and assets you already have in your library and seeing what's ready to use immediately, what can be repurposed, and where you have gaps. You might find that you have white papers or brochures that can be updated or blog posts and articles that can be easily refreshed and turned into quick wins. A gap might reveal that you need a new whitepaper, which could also be adapted for other ABM campaigns. Knowing what you already have is the first step to maximising your ABM budget.

Align your content with buyer personas and the buying cycle

Your content needs to align with your buyer personas and their specific stage in the buying cycle: it's crucial for driving engagement and moving prospects through the sales funnel. Educational content like blog posts and infographics can be more effective for engaging prospects in the awareness stage, and driving readers to a gated asset. Case studies and product demonstrations may resonate better in the consideration stage.

Be aware that developing a diverse range of content that aligns with buyer personas and their stages in the buying cycle can be resource-intensive. So, prioritise content formats and topics on their potential impact on engagement and conversions, and use marketing automation tools to help manage content creation and distribution.

68% of executives say they're more likely to do business with a company if they are impressed by their content⁹

Top content formats



Whitepapers and ebooks: in-depth insights and analysis on industry trends, challenges, and best practices that position your company as a thought leader in your field.



Blog posts: publish regular blog posts on various topics relevant to your buyer personas. Cover industry news, trends, and tips for overcoming common challenges in tech and telecoms. Share on LinkedIn.



Case studies: success stories and testimonials from customers in the tech and telecom sectors that showcase your solution's real-world impact and benefits.



Videos and webinars: engaging visual content that addresses specific needs and challenges of your buyer personas, using product demonstrations, expert interviews, and how-to guides.



Infographics: create visually appealing infographics highlighting key data points, trends, and insights relevant for your target audience.

Always remember that producing high-quality content in multiple formats can be time-consuming and resource-intensive. To overcome this, consider outsourcing your content creation to a specialist content marketing agency with expertise in crafting tailored ABM content.

Build landing pages

Landing pages are a crucial element of your ABM campaign and a key repository for content and capturing data. They provide a personalised touchpoint for your target accounts, and are often the first place your targets encounter your messaging, so they are crucial to get right.

Personalisation

Ensure you personalise landing pages to specific accounts or account clusters you're targeting. This could include using the prospect's name, industry-specific imagery, and content that addresses their unique needs and challenges.

Messaging

The messaging should be clear and concise and quickly and efficiently communicate the unique value of your solution. Use the key messages and supporting messages you generated with your message house to ensure consistency across your content and landing pages.

Call-to-action

The landing page should include a clear CTA that guides the reader to the next step along their buying journey. This could be a downloadable resource, the opportunity to schedule a consultation or request more information.

Design

The design of your landing pages should be clean, professional, and reflect your brand. Use visuals strategically to capture attention, convey your message, and guide readers towards your CTA.



Distribute and promote ABM content

There are several ways to get your content out and in front of the eyes of your targets. Emails and LinkedIn InMails can be highly effective communication channels for ABM, and let you engage with targets in direct and personalised ways.

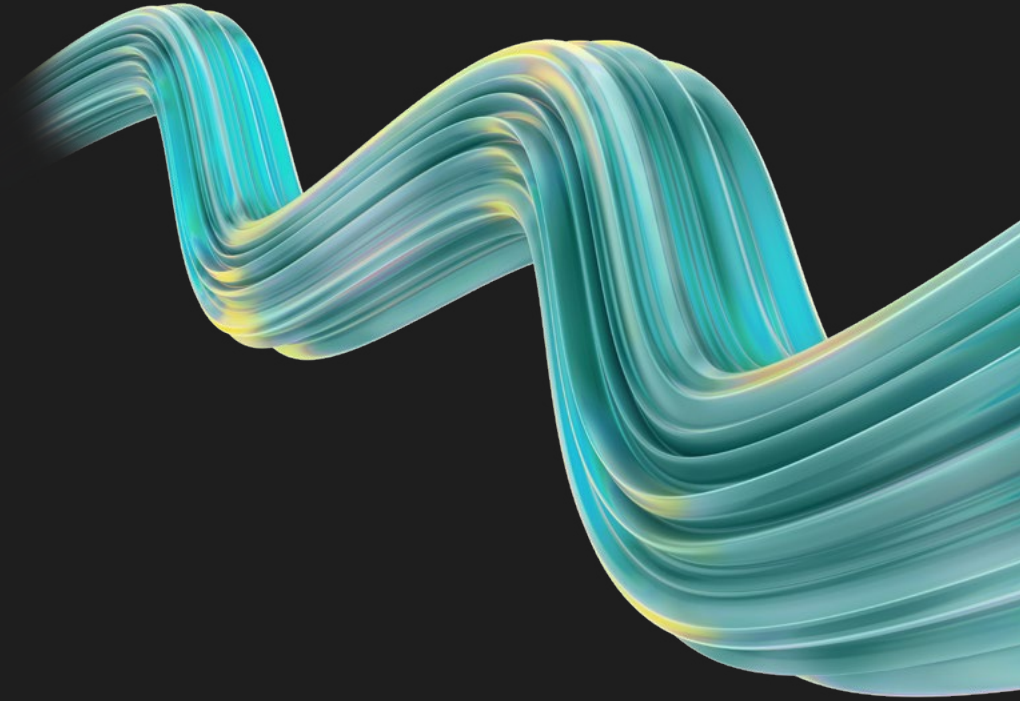
But always remember to keep them tailored to the recipient in question, keep the language punchy and concise, and ensure the content aligns with their needs and challenges.

Advertising to target accounts

Advertising can play a big part in helping you increase the visibility of your ABM campaign content and driving traffic to where you want it to go. LinkedIn Ads let you target users based on job title, industry, company size, and more, making it ideal for ABM. Depending on your goals, you can also use sponsored content, message ads, text ads, or dynamic ads.

Banner ads are another form of online advertising that uses visuals like images, videos, or animations to convey your message. You can use banner ads for retargeting users who have previously visited your landing pages, but that didn't convert. However, many people have ad-blocking software, which limits the applications of this.

Pay-per-click (PPC) advertising is beneficial for intent-based offers but is less helpful when targeting individual companies and people. You could use IP targeting and geolocation, but it is challenging to identify your prospects' location or IP addresses.



Nurture your relationships

When you have succeeded in capturing the attention of your target accounts, it's crucial to nurture these relationships and get them to the point when they're ready to make a purchase. Remember that this is the start of a journey – don't expect results and a massive spike in sales overnight. ABM is a long game.

Key to this is maintaining regular communication that keeps your target engaged and your brand top of their mind. Do this with personalised emails, LinkedIn posts, and newsletters. Each interaction you have with a target should give them some value. This could be valuable content, insights, or solutions to their challenges.

As your prospects move along the buying journey, you should guide them toward the next step. This can be done by offering product demos, consultations, or answering any queries they have. Close collaboration with your sales teams is essential to drive a seamless transition from marketing to sales. So, your sales team should be updated with interactions with the account so that they can tailor their approach based on the account's engagement history.

How to track targets

Part of the nurturing process is to track your engagement. Doing this accurately across multiple channels and platforms can be a complex exercise. Here are five key metrics to track:

- 01 Website engagement**
Monitor website visits, page views, time spent on site, and content downloads
- 02 Email open and click rates**
Track email open rates, click-through rates, and conversions
- 03 Social media interactions**
Monitor likes, shares, comments, and direct messages on social media
- 04 Content downloads**
Track numbers of downloads for gated content, such as whitepapers and ebooks
- 05 Event attendance**
Measure the number of attendees, engagement, and follow-up actions for webinars and virtual events

70% of companies using ABM see a 70% increase in opportunities created¹⁰

How Futurity can help you

We have many years of experience in ABM: we know what works, what doesn't, and what to do at specific stages of the journey.

We've learned that successful ABM is a collaborative effort between sales, marketing and Futurity, as the content specialist. The more interaction between your content agency and your own marketing teams, the more streamlined your ABM campaign development becomes and the more successful the results.

In addition to creating compelling content, we can help with planning and company research, personas, and messaging. We can also assist you with distribution and advise you on monitoring and measurement.

Our production teams encompass content and design from end-to-end. Our writers are highly experienced and know what content works and how to produce it efficiently and consistently, and our designers are experienced and constantly striving for new and original concepts.

Futurity knows how to do ABM effectively and we can help you drive results for your own campaigns. If you would like to discuss further, please get in touch today at stewart@futuritymedia.com.

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