

### 2017 State of Account-Based Marketing

Industry Report and Roadmap to Account-Based Funnel Management Success

#### Account-Based Alphabet Soup

With the recent hype around account-based methodology soaring above the B2B landscape, a frenzied landgrab has unfolded as influencers, vendors and practitioners scramble to stake a claim to account-based expertise. By the end of 2016, we were seeing a variety of monikers for the present-day evolution of the Named Accounts approach. Most prevalent among them is, of course, Account-Based Marketing (ABM). You may have also heard the terms Account-Based Sales (ABS) and Account-Based Sales Development (ABSD) in a few circles – a nod to the customer facing side of the equation. On top of that there are account-based evangelists who embrace the broader term Account-Based Everything (ABE) in recognition of the importance of close alignment and orchestration of the sales and marketing function – a necessity for the account-based approach to be successful.

Independent industry data and our own research, alike, reinforce the idea that engaging in sales efforts and marketing activities in serial, or – worse – in isolation, breeds significant inefficiency and opportunity cost. And we agree that appending "Marketing" or "Sales" to the account-based name erodes the crucial underpinning of sales and marketing alignment. As you'll see in our roadmap for account-based success in 2017, we champion an integrated strategy that treats all activities across the sales funnel holistically, which we accordingly refer to as Account-Based Funnel Management (ABFM). More than mere semantics, ABFM depends on collaborative, concurrent planning and execution between sales and marketing organizations across key accounts at all stages of the sales funnel.

In our survey, we used "ABM" when referring to account-based strategies and tactics. For the purpose of this report, we retained "ABM" when referring directly to the survey questions and responses we received. In our analysis of the responses, however, we refer to the account-based strategy simply as "AB," and in our roadmap for 2017 we use the preferred name "Account-Based Funnel Management."



#### Introduction

### Welcome to the 2017 State of Account-Based Marketing Industry Report and Roadmap to Account-Based Funnel Management Success

#### Brought to you by Scratch Marketing + Media and demandDrive

This report is the confluence of an independent industry survey undertaken in January and February of 2017, third-party research, and our firsthand experiences supporting the integrated sales and marketing efforts of numerous clients looking to maximize their penetration within the accounts that matter most to their businesses.

The survey, aggregating the responses of 106 participants representing a range of functional roles, explored current and planned investment in account-based initiatives across B2B organizations. The majority of responses came from marketing – sixty-seven percent – followed by sales at twenty percent, and a small representation of operations, finance and other functions, totaling thirteen percent.

The resulting insights in this report illuminate current trends in account-based methodology. This report reveals where organizations are struggling with their account-based strategy and execution, and it identifies where the opportunities for growth are in 2017. At the end, we offer a practical roadmap for launching your AB initiative through a new lens – Account-Based Funnel Management (ABFM) – which is the lens you need to succeed and grow your business.



Lora Kratchounova Principal, Scratch Marketing + Media



Lindsay Frey President + Co-Founder, demandDrive



### 2017 State of Account-Based Marketing (ABM)

While it's true that last year, account-based marketing gained significant name recognition within B2B marketing circles, 2016 may have been most aptly named The Year of ABM *Proof of Concept*. With the sky-high promise of account-based (AB) effectiveness, many organizations launched their first AB initiatives last year, tentatively chasing gaudy ROI statistics into the beginning of 2017. And many more organizations that hadn't yet embarked on an AB approach by year's end had laid plans for doing so in 2017.

Planned investment in AB is, at this moment, widespread (74 percent plan to invest in 2017, and 67 percent plan to invest more than in 2016), but modest (64 percent are not planning to invest beyond \$100,000). The good news is the funding is enough to get small, targeted programs underway.

We see that 2017 will be The Year of the ABFM Pilot. The survey reveals that budgets are skewed toward building the foundation for account-based, with dollars spread somewhat thinly across the full range of AB activities. Most organizations are not yet sold on the merits of investing in AB analytics, though, making it difficult for AB evangelists to prove the value of even these moderate investments.

# **Overcoming Obstacles**

Before the account-based model can move beyond the pilot stage to a widely implemented frontline strategy, AB proponents must help their organizations overcome significant challenges. Survey respondents report, among the highest hurdles, a lack of confidence in both their own and their organizations' AB proficiency. The vast majority describe themselves as a work in progress and are looking for external help across the board for much needed AB expertise.

Further, our survey exposes significant fear, uncertainty and doubt about numerous aspects of the accountbased strategy. This must be overcome if AB is to take root and bear fruit. As B2B organizations seek out external expertise to help build their AB skill sets, account-based pilots will start to demonstrate the favorable returns promised by the account-based approach. Eventually, acceptance of the account-based philosophy will trickle up to the executive suite, opening the taps for deeper investment in the future.

# A Dire Need for Sales and Marketing Alignment

Perhaps the biggest challenge to a successful and scalable AB approach lies within the ranks of those directly responsible for executing on the strategy – sales and marketing. While both organizations demonstrate openness towards an account-based strategy, these findings show marketing is far and away the leader in pushing for the AB model, followed by sales solidly in second position, while the executive suite is a distant third.

While our firsthand experience tells us that close alignment of sales and marketing must be foundational to the AB approach, we also see this assertion bolstered by a wealth of third-party research:

- Forrester says that marketing and sales efforts remain misaligned. ABM provides the best opportunity to achieve real alignment, but today, only one in five marketers fnd ABM is very effective at improving how sales and marketing work together. <sup>1</sup>
- According to MarketingProfs, organizations with tightly aligned sales and marketing functions experience 36% higher customer retention rates and 38% higher sales win rates.<sup>2</sup>
- Marketo reports that lost sales productivity and wasted marketing budget costs companies at least \$1 trillion per year.<sup>3</sup>
- According to SiriusDecisions, cross-functional alignment among sales, marketing, and product
  organizations can help companies achieve up to 19 percent faster revenue growth and 15 percent
  higher profitability.<sup>4</sup>

1. http://learnmore.insideview.com/forrester-reportdemysitfying-abm-ty.html 2. http://www.marketingprofs.com/ opinions/2016/29 174/the-secret-to-account-basedmarketing-success 3. http://docs.cdn.marketo.com/b2blead-marketingsales-alignment-ebook.pdf 4. https://www.siriusdecisions.com/Blog/2015/ May/Summit-2015-Highlights-The-Economics-of-Alignment.aspx



#### A Dire Need for Sales + Marketing Alignment, continued

We have observed that when sales and marketing organizations look at AB from unique points of view, with sales pursuing account-based sales development (ABSD) while marketing pursues account-based marketing (ABM) – much like the blind men describing the elephant from their respective perspectives – significant gaps and divisions leading to inefficiencies will surely remain. Without a clear mandate coming from the C-suite – including assignment of shared accountability for the success of the sales funnel - alignment between sales and marketing is anything but a given, leaving organizations to pursue hollow shells of account-based strategies in silos.



#### Account-Based Funnel Management: A Singular Path Forward

Taking these factors together, it's no wonder that many organizations are struggling to prove to executive leadership that an account-based approach warrants the investment needed to scale and sustain these initiatives. B2B organizations must set aside the divisive activities that isolate marketing from sales – and vice-versa – in favor of a carefully orchestrated process aimed at sharing tools, know-how, and incentives to make the organization sell and grow.

This shared process is Account-Based Funnel Management (ABFM), and as internal expertise grows through partnerships with providers of ABFM services, and as increasingly favorable results continue to roll in, fear, uncertainty, and doubt will dissolve, and willingness to fund extensive ABFM programs will grow throughout the year.



In our 2017 State of Account-Based Marketing industry report, we've aggregated the survey responses, external research and our firsthand experience into eight key insights. Taken together, these point to organizations being at the formative stage of AB strategy:

- 1. AB is Game-On in 2017! B2B organizations are executing or considering AB initiatives and AB investment is increasing for 2017.
- 2. The art of the AB start is elusive even those with AB programs in place are cautious about its practical potential to drive sales and growth.
- 3. With AB proficiency at modest levels, proponents of AB initiatives are looking for external support across the numerous aspects of AB strategy.
- 4. A lack of confidence in AB proficiency organization-wide coupled with an inability to adequately assess AB effectiveness are curtailing AB investment at scale.

- 5. No clear consensus exists on how to allocate the dollars that have been budgeted for AB initiatives.
- 6. The industry needs to do a much better job of addressing the fear, uncertainty, and doubt (FUD) that permeates all aspects of the AB approach before AB methodology can take root organization-wide.
- 7. Sales and Marketing alignment is the first challenge organizations must overcome in order to maximize return on their AB investments.
- 8. With the right care and feeding, 2017 will be The Year of the ABFM Pilot. To succeed, organizations will be looking for outside help in the areas of account intelligence, best ABM tool-set, and planning and delivering personalized content.

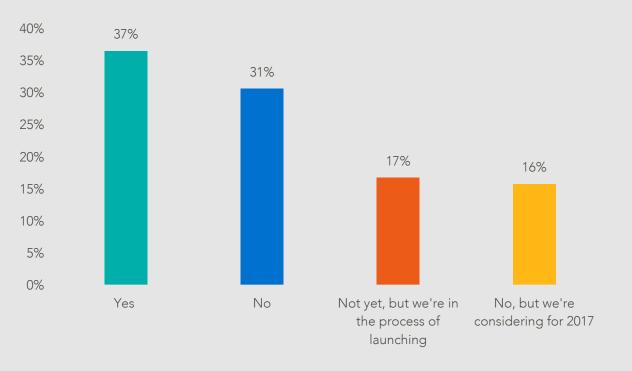
#### 1. Account-Based is Game-On in 2017!

#### The 2017 State of Account-Based Marketing

Nearly seven in ten respondents to our survey are either currently engaged in, or are planning to launch, account-based marketing acitivities in 2017.

While our findings closely mirror the results of a Demandbase industry report<sup>1</sup> published at the end of 2015, wherein 71 percent of B2B organizations reported either interest in adopting ABM or concrete steps to engage in ABM, our survey also finds that investment in ABM is increasing for 2017.

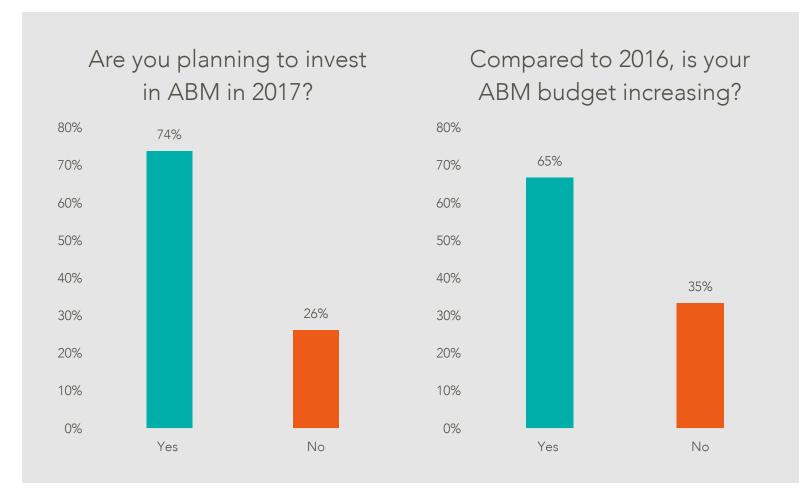
# Does your company have an account-based marketing (ABM) program in place?



#### 1. Account-Based is Game-On in 2017!

#### ABM Investment Is on the Rise

Of those organizations with an ABM initiative currently in place, three of four are planning to continue their investment this year. Further, nearly two-thirds report plans to increase their ABM budgets for 2017.





2. The art of the AB start is elusive: Even those with AB programs in place are cautious about its practical potential to drive sales + growth.

> 75%

**64**%

of respondents rate themselves as less than most proficient in ABM of respondents see their organizations as well positioned to deliver on the promise of ABM

13%

are not planning to spend more than \$100,000

# Top 4 challenges getting ABM initiatives off the ground:

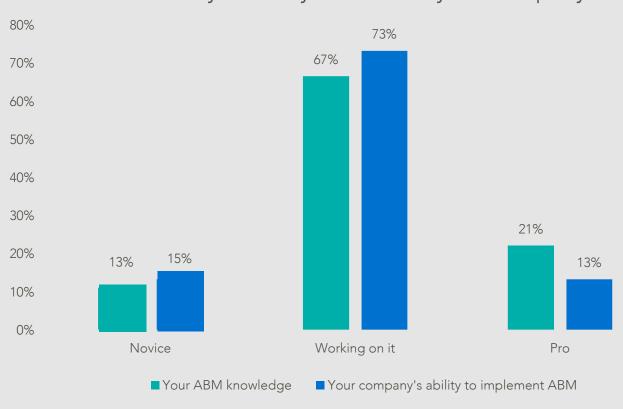
- 1. Delivering Personalized Content for each Account
- 2. Account Selection
- 3. Sales + Marketing Alignment
- 4. Delivering Intelligence on Key Accounts and Decision-Makers for In-Market Campaigns

The most common challenges to launching AB initiatives cited by respondents reveal that organizations are struggling with defining and effectively reaching their ideal target accounts. Uncertainty around how to select target accounts in an ABFM strategy comes from poor communication and coordination between sales and marketing, as well as a lack of familiarity with AB technology tools available to address these challenges.

2. The art of the AB start is elusive: Even those with AB programs in place are cautious about its practical potential to drive sales + growth.

### Most Rate Themselves as Learning ABM

Survey respondents admit ABM is a work in progress for the majority of them. Fewer than one in four rate themselves as ABM pros, and even fewer – 13 percent – qualify their organization as having the ability to implement ABM skillfully.

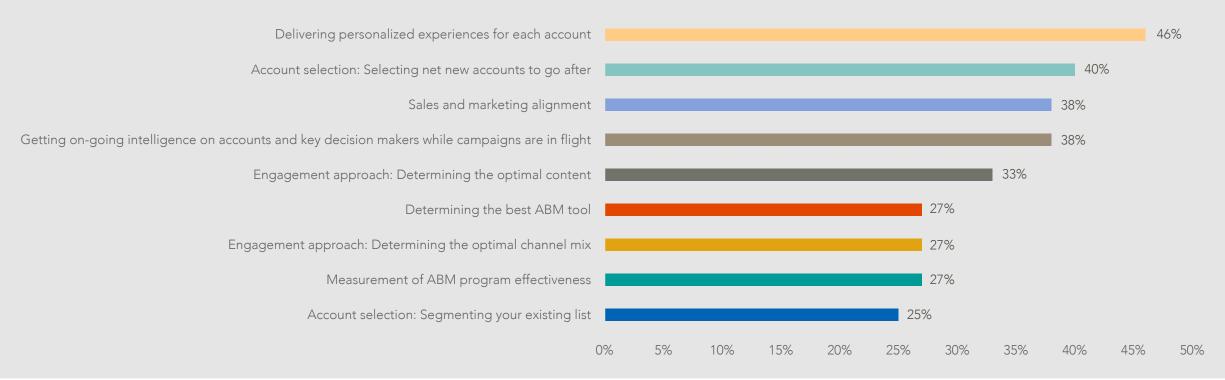


#### How would you rate yourself and your company?



2. The art of the AB start is elusive: Even those with AB programs in place are cautious about its practical potential to drive sales + growth.







3. With AB proficiency at modest levels, proponents of AB initiatives are looking for external support across the numerous aspects of AB strategy.

#### Wanted: ABM Intelligence

Practical experience implementing AB initiatives is hard to come by, and respondents indicate they are looking to bolster their AB proficiency by seeking information from colleagues and self-educating by consuming current content offered by publications and other media outlets. Misconceptions can spread easily, though. Many marketers believe that unless content is personalized, it won't work, sidestepping some of the core tenets of market segmentation in the process. Although content does need to be tailored to each segment, it doesn't need to be customized to each organization for AB to scale. The notion that we need to have the real-time pulse of the customer, coupled with myriad tools that offer real-time account and buyer intelligence, has rendered most organizations paralyzed in how to action AB.

#### Top 4 areas marketers are looking for outside help in:

- 1. Planning and Delivering Personalized Content for Each Account
- 2. Obtaining On-going Intelligence on Accounts and Decision-Makers while campaigns are running
- 3. Determining the Best Toolset for their Organization
- 4. Determining the Best Engagement/Content Approach

When faced with fear, uncertainty and doubt (FUD), marketers and sales leaders are looking to vendors in the space to help them sort out what sticks, even though most of these tool providers are not in a position to singularly enable organizations to start effectively. Then comes the challenge of what moves buyers within targeted accounts – the right content strategy and cadence that would turn them from somewhat interested to eager buyers. 3. With AB proficiency at modest levels, proponents of AB initiatives are looking for external support across the numerous aspects of AB strategy.

# Peers and Media Publications Are Go-To Sources for Bolstering ABM Knowledge

Media/Publications and Peers are cited by a clear majority (each 60 percent) as a top source for information on ABM. Conferences, Twitter/LinkedIn and Analysts each received less than 50 percent support.

70% 60% 60% 60% 50% 42% 40% 35% 33% 30% 20% 13% 10% 0% Media / Industry Twitter / Analysts Other Peers LinkedIn Publications conferences

#### What are your top resources for ABM intelligence?

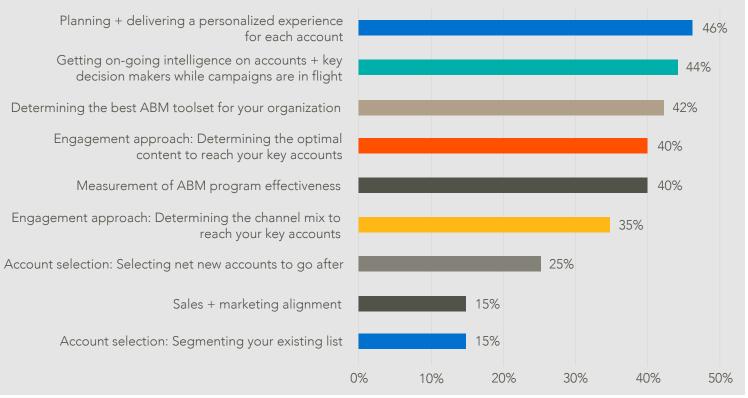
3. With AB proficiency at modest levels, proponents of AB initiatives are looking for external support across the numerous aspects of AB strategy.

# External Expertise to Be Sought in 2017 for a Wide Array of Services

Planning and Delivering Personalized Content (46 percent) leads the list of ABM tasks likely to be outsourced, with Getting On-going Intelligence on Accounts and Determining the Best ABM Toolset each also receiving at least 42 percent of respondents' consideration.

Four in ten plan to outsource ABM analytics. More than one-third cite content and channel mix as a high priority for outside assistance.

# In what areas of ABM would you most likely seek outside consulting help in 2017?



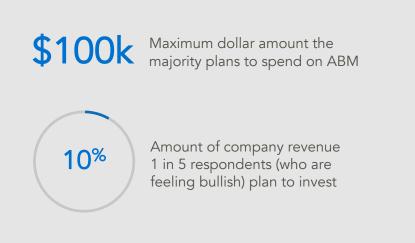


4. The lack of confidence in AB proficiency organization-wide coupled with an inability to adequately assess AB effectiveness are curtailing AB investment at scale.

# Most Are Not Planning Substantial Investments in ABM Analytics

We have all heard the old adage that you cannot manage what you cannot measure, and we are in danger of running afoul of this wisdom with AB programs. It is easy to blame marketing and sales leaders for their measurement shortcomings until one looks for available advice on the AB metrics that matter, or the tools available to measure them. A recent absence of each may be the real culprit behind the little-planned investment in AB Analytics in 2017. The good news – are methods for measuring AB initiatives and there are tools that are emerging to help sales and marketing professionals with both sides of the account-based equation get a real handle on what is working – and yes – in real time.

(More on that in our Roadmap to ABFM Success at the end of this report.)



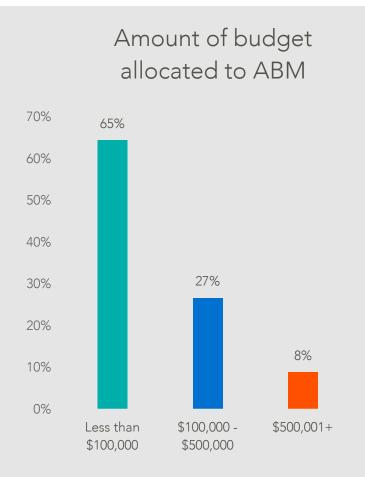
The numbers indicate that most organizations are comfortable piloting AB but are not yet investing enough to get AB programs off the ground at scale.



4. The lack of confidence in AB proficiency organization-wide coupled with an inability to adequately assess AB effectiveness are curtailing AB investment at scale.

### Yet, Most Are Cautious About Their AB Investment

For most, ABM investment as a share of revenue is likely to stay below 5% in 2017. Only three in 20 (15%) anticipate spending more than 10% on ABM in 2017. A majority of ABM budgets are projected to be around \$100,000.





5. No clear consensus exists on how to allocate the dollars that have been budgeted for AB initiatives.

### Top Areas of Investment Will Span the Range of ABM Foundational Elements

There is no doubt that organizations are still building their AB foundation and looking to pilot as opposed to optimize or scale. The investments are across the board. Marketers are still grappling with the right data set and content to start; then they are also looking for the best ways to reach and engage their ideal customers and their buying committees. AB reach and engagement needs to come first; scale comes later.

#### Top 3 areas of investment within ABM:



Content Development



In-Market Campaigns

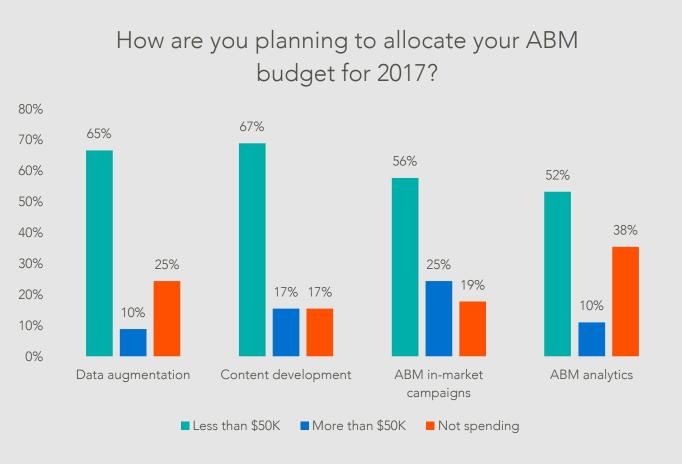


Data Augmentation

Conspicuously absent from the top areas of investment cited by survey respondents is ABM Analytics, the means for measuring the effectiveness of AB programs. Measurement tools are critical to making data-informed decisions on how to optimize and scale AB initiatives. 5. No clear consensus exists on how to allocate the dollars that have been budgeted for AB initiatives.

# ABM Investments Skewed Toward Initial Roll-Out

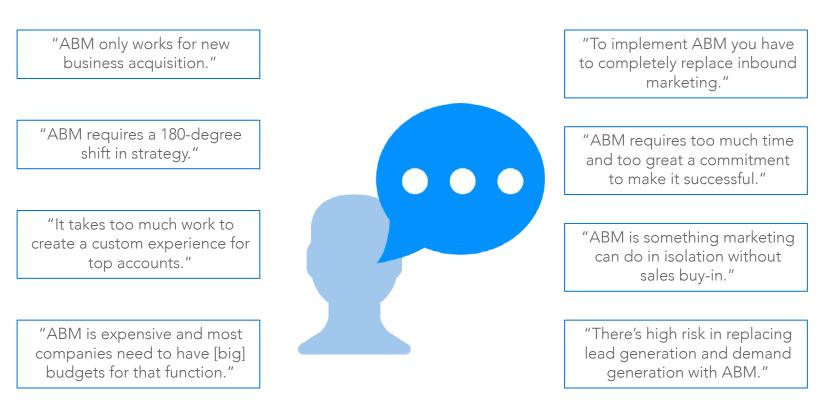
Planned areas of ABM investment reveal that most have not moved beyond the ABM proof of concept stage. Investments are skewed toward foundational ABM elements such as data augmentation and content development, followed by ABM in-market campaigns and lastly ABM analytics.





6. The industry needs to do a much better job of addressing the fear, uncertainty + doubt (FUD) that permeates all aspects of the AB approach before AB methodology can take root organization-wide.

### What FUD, you ask?



Many mistakenly think of AB initiatives as requiring a clean break from the past, when, in fact, ABM (well, more precisely ABFM) can and should be a complement to other established marketing activities. ABFM does work for new and current accounts, and if it is, indeed, a 180-degree shift for your organization, it is the right shift. ABFM can be a lot of work, but it doesn't have to be, nor does it have to cost you an arm and a leg. ABFM is not replacing inbound - it needs both inbound and outbound for it to work. When executed properly, juxtaposing an ABFM pilot against other traditional marketing initiatives will yield valuable evidence on which to base future investment.

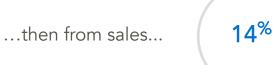


# Acceptance of ABM by Functional Area Is Widespread, but Not Yet Universal

44%

The impetus for launching ABM clearly comes first from Marketing...

**28**%



...followed by the C-level as a distant third.

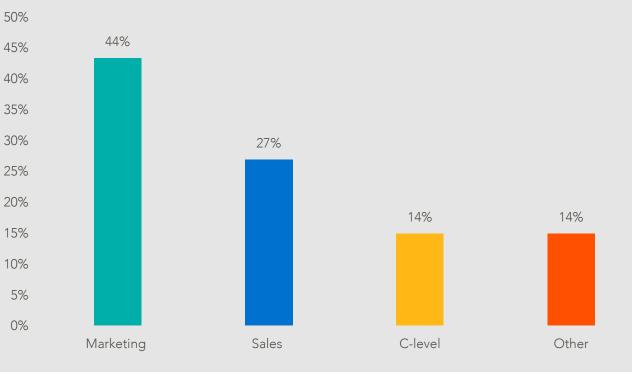
At this point, we aren't seeing a clear mandate for AB approaches coming from the C-Suite. Sales and marketing teams need to coalesce around shared accountability for the success of the sales funnel. In the absence of a clear directive coming from the executive level, alignment between sales and marketing is anything but a given. If each business unit institutes its own version of AB, with sales pursuing account-based sales development and marketing pursuing account-based marketing, results are not likely to be as robust as they would be if these organizations were working within the coordinated constructs of an ABFM approach.

While disparity exists among functional roles in pushing for AB methodology within organizations today, we expect to see these numbers even out as more ABFM successes are shared in 2017.

# Marketing Is the Primary Driver of Account-Based Adoption

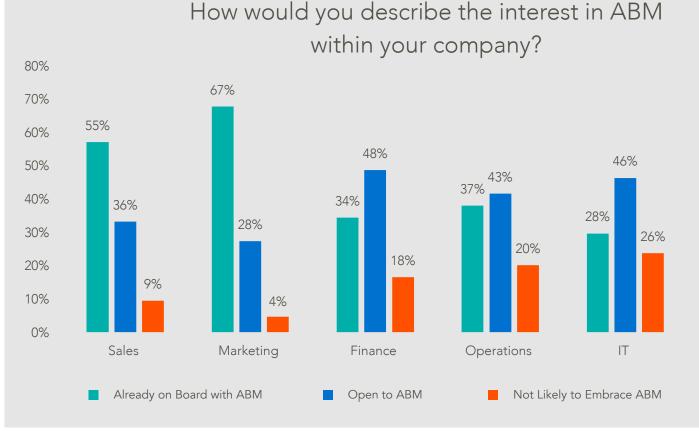
Marketing is leading the push for ABM adoption, followed by sales. Although the C-suite in most settings is not currently driving adoption of the AB mindset, it is encouraging to see that company leaders are paying closer attention to what ABM can do for their organization.

# Where has the impetus for an ABM strategy come from?



# Marketing and Sales Need to Convince the Rest To Invest in ABM

For ABM to succeed and earn a high level of organization support and investment, marketing and sales need to achieve alignment first and bring the rest of the organization on board.





# Marketing Automation: Largely Present, But Not Universally Accounted for in ABM Initiatives

Of the 83% who report utilizing a Marketing Automation platform, nearly 42% report that their marketing automation system is *not* being utilized to help execute their ABM strategy. In order to most effectively institute an AB approach, these tools must be pressed into service for the benefit of all members of the aligned AB team.

# Do you have a marketing automation system in place? 48% Yes, and it's helping execute our ABM initiative 35% Yes, but it's not supporting an ABM initiative 17% No 0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35% 40% 45% 50%



#### 8. With the right care and feeding, 2017 will be The Year of the ABFM Pilot.

With the Right Expertise, AB Success Is Within Reach



Planning and Delivering Personalized Content leads the list of ABM tasks likely to be outsourced, with *Getting On-going Intelligence on Accounts* and *Determining the Best ABM Toolset* each also receiving at least 42% of respondents' consideration.

4 in 10

Number of respondents who plan to outsource ABM Analytics

> 1/3

Number of respondents who site Content and Channel Mix as a high priority for outside assistance

#### ABM + ABSD = ABFM

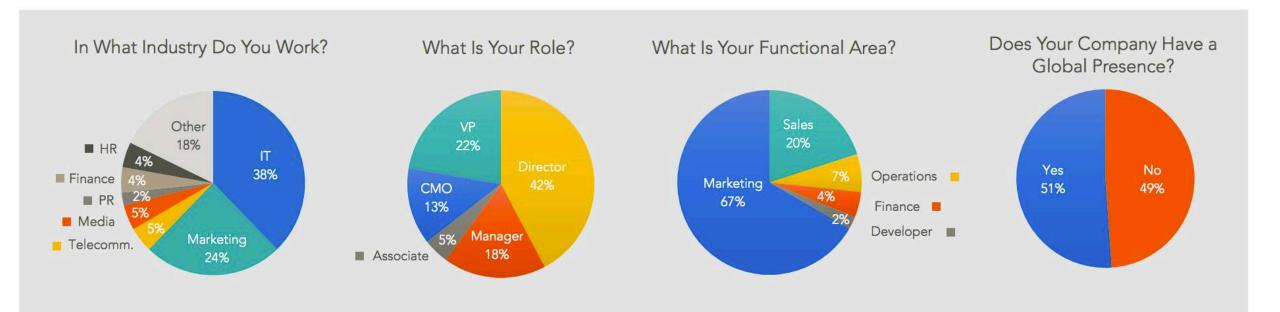
# Integrated and seamless flow between marketing, sales and customer success

- to land
- and expand
- the accounts that matter the most to your business.

To start AB properly, companies will need outside assistance, and here's where the industry pros can help. The first priority is to help marketing and sales not only talk alignment, but actually get aligned. This means putting a stop to the ABM vs. ABSD talk and marrying them into one integrated funnel. Only then can AB teams move on to putting the right processes, content, and toolset in place.



#### Respondents represented mid- to large-sized enterprises from a wide range of industries.



# The Roadmap to ABFM Pilot Success in 2017

To be successful with AB, organizations first need to align sales and marketing into an integrated account-based funnel management:

# ABM + ABSD = ABFM

Integrated and seamless flow between marketing, sales and customer success

- to land
- and expand
- the accounts that matter the most to your business.

#### Next, they need to clear the fear, uncertainty and doubt:

- It is not ABFM vs lead gen it is a combination of the two. You don't need to rip and replace all that you do; you can augment your current campaigns with a solid ABFM approach.
- ABFM is not digital only; it won't kill or replace inbound or outbound. You guessed it; it is a combination of all of the above.
- The marketing-qualified lead/ sales-qualified lead framework is dead. You don't need to score leads anymore. If a lead fits your Ideal Customer profile criteria, you need to use the lead as a buying signal. If one persona in your buying committee raises a hand and shows interest, it is often a sure sign that you have a prospect account on your hands. Someone who solicits information is demonstrating stronger buying intent than derived intent coming from what your prospects are reading or websites they are visiting. Ditch lead qualification and your scoring, and focus on qualifying account readiness to buy – whatever you decide to call it or whatever abbreviation you choose. And if you call those accounts Sales Qualified Accounts (SQAs), then
  - a) Recycle your SQAs regularly. If a lead matches your Ideal Customer Profile, then it is not a question of *if* they buy, but *when*.
  - b) Change your measurement lens.

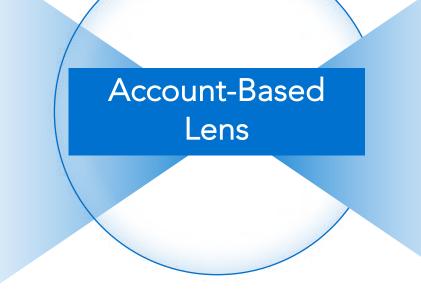
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### ABFM Metrics + KPIs

Change your measurement lens. Shift from Lead Gen metrics to ABFM measures.

#### Lead Gen Metrics

- Impressions/CPM
- Click-through rates
- Conversion rates
- Unique visitors
- Net new leads
- Inbound inquires
- Downloads
- MQLs



#### Account-Based Funnel

- *#* of Target accounts
- # of opportunities
- Close rates
- Lifetime value

#### Account-Based Velocity

- Marketing penetration across accounts
- Optimal # of touch-points
- SDR capacity + performance

2016 was widely heralded as *The Year of Account-Based Marketing*. In fact, it turned out that 2016 was *The Year of ABM Proof of Concept*, and we can see that 2017 will be *The Year of the ABFM Pilot*.

With the proliferation of countless technology tools aiming to solve either very broad or very specific AB challenges, many organizations are coalescing around the account-based approach. At the same time, however, many more will need the enthusiasm of AB evangelists armed with the evidence of AB effectiveness to adopt and scale an account-based approach.

With nearly every aspect of ABM receiving at least one in four votes as a top priority for seeking external help, the need for disseminating ABFM expertise is clear: ABFM leadership has not yet widely permeated B2B organizations.

To scale ABFM, companies need real-time analytics on both marketing and sales activities. Without this timely insight, ABFM effectiveness will be compromised by a limited understanding of what works, what doesn't, and what needs to be optimized.

Interested in executing an ABFM program of your own? Take our ABFM assessment: <u>www.scratchmm.com/abm-questionnaire</u>

#### Talk to us:

Scratch Marketing + Media <u>contact@scratchmm.com</u> <u>www.scratchmm.com</u>

demandDrive <u>contact@demanddrive.com</u> <u>www.demanddrive.com</u>



#### About Scratch Marketing + Media

Scratch M+M is a growth advisor and nimble execution partner for game-changing technology and innovation companies. Bringing the latest methodologies, insights, ideas, and execution to our clients, we chart impactful, integrated growth plans. Once we take off, we continue to execute those ABFM programs in an integrated manner. Take our <u>ABFM assessment</u>.



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#### About demandDrive

demandDrive is a leading Demand Generation firm that specializes in developing and executing sales and marketing programs for clients in the technology space. demandDrive takes a consultative approach to lead generation and combines the flexibility of outsourcing with the expertise and continued employee development of hiring an internal team.



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