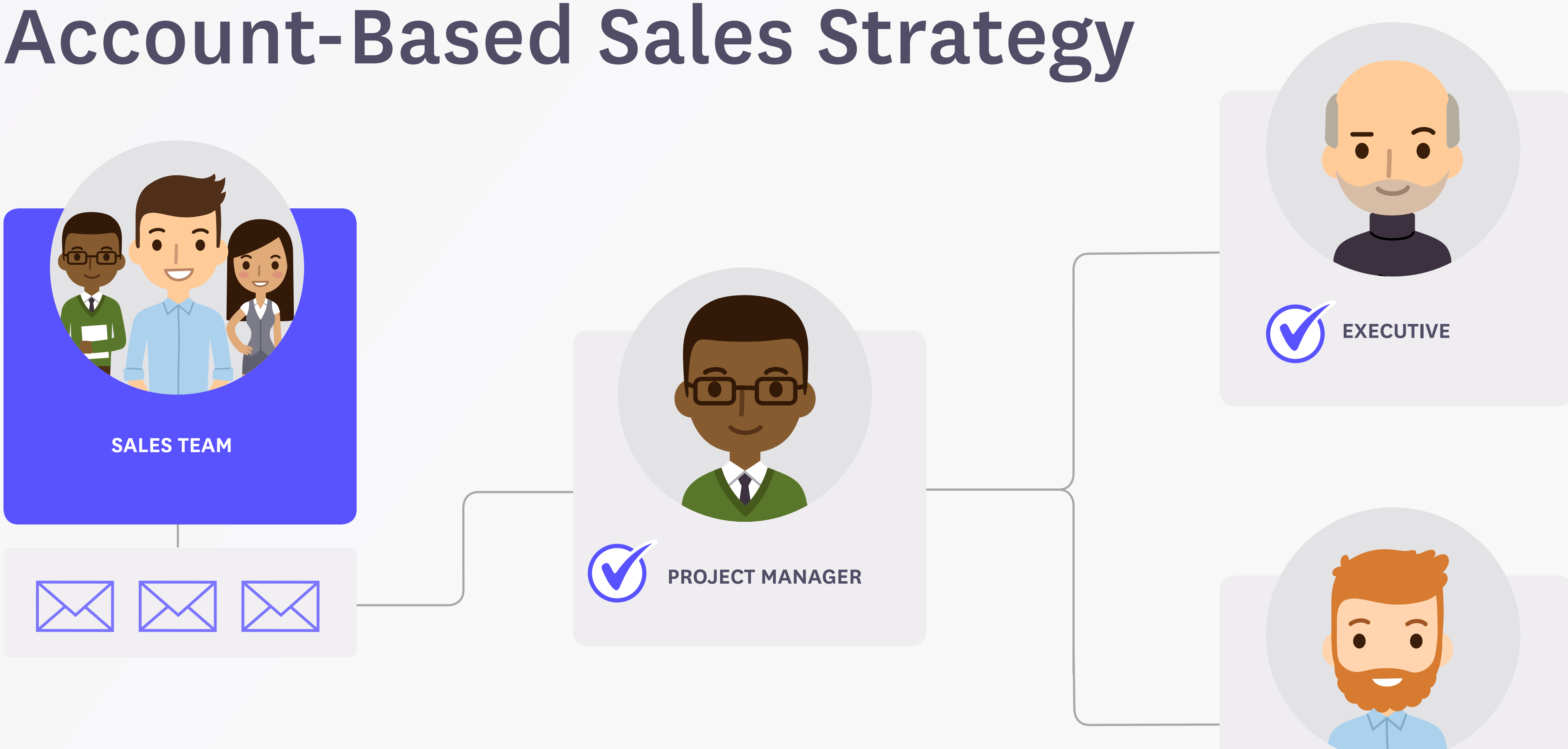
LEADERSHIP GUIDE

Lucidchart Outreach

An Operation Leader's Guide to Rolling Out an **Account-Based Sales Strategy**



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"The need for account-based strategy can be largely attributed to the idea of the changing and evolving buyer. Most recently, we've heard that upwards of six to ten stakeholders are involved in a purchase."

Stephen Farnsworth
Strategic Programs Manager – Outreach

Years ago, networking was everything in sales. Today, data is quickly becoming the most important element in your sales strategy. But like most things, you need the right data, especially if you plan to take an account-based approach. Account-based sales (ABS) is a strategic alignment between sales and marketing to target and win deals with specific organizations. With precise ideal customer profiles (ICPs) and thorough research, your team can personalize their plan for every stakeholder responsible for making a deal.

This type of approach requires communication protocols, frequent meetings, detailed organization of data, alignment with marketing campaigns, and a dedicated effort.

This guide brings together the shared knowledge of two of the sales industry's leading experts to help you build the foundation and structure for your own account-based sales strategy. Get excited—you are learning from some of the best here.

Planning/Strategy

As with most worthwhile ventures, planning is key. When building a house, you don't start by building a roof, or even the foundation. You design the entire structure and create detailed blueprints that will help ensure you are building the structure the right way.

With an ABS strategy, start by mapping it out. Ideally, this plan will be a living document that all team members will be able to access. Your strategy should include:

- Plans for marketing and sales to align in order to target an organization
- The roles of each team member and the strategy they will employ
- Protocols for communication across the team
- Frequent team meetings to share strategies, roadblocks, and other data
- Leadership roles in regards to account-based sales
- Software and applications needed to power your strategy

Sales orgs should also consider implementing account maps to support an account-based sales strategy. Similar to an org chart, account maps help sales reps visualize the landscape of an organization, identify key stakeholders within a deal, and find the best path to closing the deal. With the Lucidchart Sales Solution, you can quickly build account maps by importing your contacts from Salesforce.

Marketing's Role in ABS

Marketing has its own responsibilities and abilities in regards to ABS. They have their own vendors and tools they can use to assist the sales team in a wide variety of activities. They can help with messaging, retargeting ads, and pitches. They do their own persona/customer research and can help the sales team understand what individuals need and want from an organization and solution.

Every organization, as well as your own teams' dynamics, will differ, so however much you want them to be involved is up to your sales and marketing teams. When the two are aligned, they will share data, offer additional insight, speak up about opportunities to assist, and, in some cases, hold events to reach your target accounts.

Marketing should be proactive in coming to you and should be present at meetings, especially deal reviews. Your sales reps can also give marketing access to their account maps so they can understand the specifics around a deal and plan targeted campaigns aimed at the accounts and stakeholders that matter most, increasing deal momentum. You see, there are countless ways marketing can contribute, as long as they are working in concert with sales.

This alignment is critical in bringing your brand in front of your prospect accounts to get familiar with your offerings. And, especially in this GDPR world, you must be coordinated in your efforts with marketing in regards to email or risk costly fines.

Communication

Perhaps the most critical component of a successful ABS approach is communication. Since account-based sales is a team sport, every member needs to be reading from the same plan.

With multiple team members targeting one organization, there will be a constant need for everyone to stay synced on all communication with stakeholders, all roles in the organization, and any other changes. This can be accomplished by "closing the loop" whenever communication happens, and by syncing all sales touches back to Salesforce or another CRM. This can be done manually—which is tedious and, frankly, detrimental to data integrity—or by using a sales engagement platform like Outreach that employs a sophisticated bi-directional sync with Salesforce.

> " It comes down to this, you can't stress enough how important communication is when you're implementing an ABS strategy."
>
> **Lee Hacohen**
>
> *Vice President of Sales*, West – Outreach

Notes

Whether your sales org uses Salesforce or another CRM, make sure that sales reps and the rest of your team understand the importance of documenting all updates on their accounts. Sales operations and enablement may even want to optimize the CRM, adding fields that prompt sales reps to include information that's proven essential to closing the deal.

By noting all interactions and updates in your CRM, every person working the account will be able to see the current status of the deal, from sales leadership trying to gauge the likelihood of close to sales engineers who'd like to tailor demos and proposals better to buyers.

If your sales org uses the Lucidchart Sales Solution, all of the account maps your reps create will be centrally owned and managed in Salesforce so all stakeholders on the account can have instant access from a centralized location. Plus, any notes and contacts created in Lucidchart will sync back to Salesforce and vice versa, eliminating duplicate work for reps and keeping documentation always up to date.

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Meetings

This may be unpopular advice—because no one wants the sales team spending time on non-selling activities—but make sure that your sales teams meet regularly to ensure that everyone knows where the team's at in terms of penetrating that account or executing on that ABS strategy.

During deal reviews, team members and executives can focus on specific deals and accounts, creating an action plan and determining how everyone in the room can help push the deal over the finish line. Account maps once again help teams execute account-based strategies: Because account maps allow people to quickly review a deal's status, sales teams can spend the deal review giving input on roadblocks, dependencies, personalization, and contact strategies—instead of providing a recap.

> "We have biweekly executive business reviews where we invite our executive team and all the stakeholders from product, marketing, sales, etc. We review key deals we're working on. We'll pull up our screen or account map, and we'll actually show the progress that we've been making."
>
> **Peter Chun**
> *Vice President of Sales* – Lucidchart

External Communication

It's not just internal communication that you have to worry about. To close deals, your sales reps need to understand how communication flows within the client's organization and how decisions are made.

Coach your sales reps to ask questions like:

- Who should be cc'd on emails?
- Who should be invited to calls?
- What approval does your contact need to get to make a deal?
- Who approves the budget for the department you are selling to?
  You want to know all of the people who are a part of this deal, so you can proactively work on communication with them.

Research & Data

When it comes to ABS, research is one of the most critical components. While you may keep your ICP in mind, you want to name specific accounts you will target. Then it's time to dig a lot deeper into those specific accounts. In just the past few years, sales has changed considerably. Five years ago, you might have been able to target an account based on basic firmographics (company size, revenue, etc.). Unfortunately, this is no longer true: too many variables play a part and ICP creation target account determination should include all available information.

At the end of the day, every prospective client will have its own nuances, and you will only discover them by taking the time to execute an account-based approach and talk to as many people as you can within that account.

At its core, a successful ABS strategy is about understanding the different players, understanding their roles, and taking the time to do that discovery. You're never done doing discovery, but you should put processes in place to ensure that the entire org can benefit from that information as you uncover it. Capture that data in your account map or CRM, where others on your team can view it. Visual cues, such as colored labels for the different roles within an organization, can help your sales team quickly understand who champions your product or service, who might create a roadblock, and who ultimately holds buying power.

> "It's the right message to the right person at the right time."
>
> **Lee Hacohen**
>
> Vice President of Sales, *West – Outreach*

Deep Personalization

What is deep personalization? TL;DR: It's messaging tailored to each individual on the account. You need to understand what each individual needs and what might motivate them to buy. You're spearfishing, and deep personalization is what really defines an account-based approach from that wide-net, spray-and-pray approach that so many companies fall back on.

You may think personalization is too time-consuming to be practical, and you'd be right if you had your reps writing one-off emails packed to the brim with customization. Sales engagement platforms like Outreach solve for that, allowing reps to customize and personalize their outreach quickly and at scale.

Focus on Personas

Developing personas is very important for ABS. Why? Because you need to tailor your messaging to specific titles, levels, etc. According to CEB Global, each B2B deal has nearly seven stakeholders involved. Some of those will be senior level, some will be mid-level managers in the field, and some may be influencers or operations who, depending on the size of the company, could be the decision makers.

You want to figure out different ways to communicate to the unique needs and challenges of each persona. You want to use persona-specific messaging in your touchpoints, calls, emails, and social outreach to successfully connect with your target prospects. At the same time, marketing is doing the same thing, messaging and using the different tools that will help reach those people differently.

Start Slow

It can be time-consuming since you've got multiple people you're going after. As you start personalizing your messaging, keep it simple. Start with identifying your ideal customer profile, personalize, and build as you go.

Measurement & Results

You've now spent a lot of time making sure that you have a strategy. You have aligned your organization. You've done a lot of the things that we've asked you to do. How do you measure to see whether it's all effective?

Measuring results can be difficult from a top-down view because, if deals haven't closed yet, you can't measure ROI. There are, however, several factors you can measure:

- Are email sequences going out? Are they being opened and answered?
- How does the top of the funnel look? Is marketing bringing in leads?
- If you are working a new account, do you have penetration into the organization?
- How many people are you talking to a specific account?
- Have there been meetings scheduled and attended?

Keep in Mind that ABS Is a Long-Term Play

Remember it takes somewhere between 14 and 17 touches to actually get a response and connect with a single person. Getting responses will take considerable time and the combined efforts of both sales and marketing.

Until deals start closing and you see the results, you're only able to see where everyone is in terms of their efforts. You can hold each other accountable through thorough communication, meetings, and benchmarks.

Don't Give Up Too Soon

A major issue with ABS is that sales leaders do not have the patience to stick with their strategy. It takes time to land targeted accounts. This is a time-intensive process because so many people are involved. Be prepared to commit to the timeline.

Key Takeaways

Identify the right accounts and really get to know the organization, the people in the organization, and their needs. You need to really understand these companies because you're going to be using coveted dollars to target those companies. You need to show them the value of your product or service via your aligned efforts.

Use communication protocols and mechanisms to stay in sync. Whether your communication plan involves meetings, conference calls, or a platform that everyone can work from, make sure everyone is on the same page. Account maps can help sales orgs not only discover key decision-makers but communicate a deal's status with everyone working the account.

Because it's a team sport, everyone needs to be doing their job to succeed. They need to be doing it correctly and they need to know what everyone else is doing so that you can move in concert as you implement an account-based strategy.

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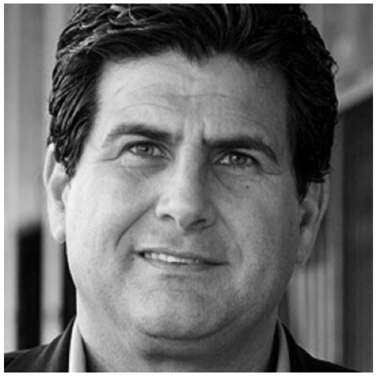

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