



BUYER'S GUIDE

ACCOUNT-BASED

MARKETING SOFTWARE



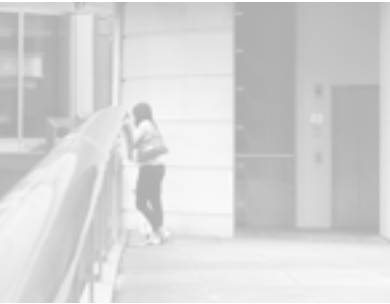


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Introduction

Of all the innovations that have gone to market and captured the interest of B2B professionals in the past decade, account-based marketing (ABM) takes the cake for reach and hype. As a formal process supported by technology, it has only been around for a few years, but 90 percent of marketers already call ABM a “must-have,” according to SiriusDecisions.¹ Roughly 52 percent already have ABM pilot programs in place. If you’re planning to make ABM part of your marketing strategy, you won’t get far without the necessary tools and systems. The sales team is already hard at work pursuing specific accounts based on their buying propensity and potential customer value. To support their efforts, you’ll need to align technology as well as strategy, but the market can be hard to comprehend for a first-time buyer.

In this guide, we’ll divide the market into three major categories (predictive analytics, marketing automation, advertising automation), provide tips for your purchase decision, and highlight a case study from a leading vendor.

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Understanding Account-Based Marketing

The consulting firm ITSMA takes credit for coining the term “account-based marketing” in 2004. According to their definition, ABM is “a vital strategy for companies that want to create sustainable growth and profitability within their most important client accounts . . . [and] a collaborative approach that engages sales, marketing, delivery, and key executives toward achieving the client’s business goals.”²

This definition paints a broad picture of ABM as a discipline, but it doesn’t speak to its history or the moving parts that make it work. The idea of targeting specific accounts and groups of decision-makers within those accounts is nothing new. Sales teams have been using this tactic to maximize revenue since the Mad Men era. Only recently — thanks to a new wave of technology — have marketers been able to contribute in a meaningful and measurable way.

ALSO READ: [Land and Expand: Selling ABM to Internal Stakeholders](#)

ABM technology gives marketers the ability to build scalable, personalized campaigns, measure their results against a set of KPIs, and prove revenue contribution. But account-based marketing isn’t just a new software platform; it’s a larger strategy that changes the way marketers drive business. Instead of filling your top-of-funnel programs with thousands of leads and isolating the most qualified over time, ABM is about identifying the best opportunities up front and dedicating resources to those accounts. It also acknowledges that most B2B purchases aren’t made by individual leads, but by a group of decision-makers with different objectives and different reservations. Thus, instead of “lead conversion,” the goal of ABM is to create consensus and advocacy among the buying group.

In the digital age, ABM becomes useful when supported by the right matrix of tools and systems. The recent upsurge of ABM software vendors, in part, explains why so many companies are putting ABM on their agenda. But it’s more than hype: according to the 2016 #FlipMyFunnel ABM Benchmark Survey, 71 percent of B2B marketers plan to purchase ABM tools this year.³

ABM tools help you gather and analyze account data and turn your strategy into a live campaign. A well-constructed ABM stack can offer a number of significant benefits for B2B marketers (and salespeople):

- **Account-level personalization:** Instead of trying to engage a broad prospect audience in a certain market, you can present content and offers that reflect the unique attributes of your target accounts. This applies to site content as well as display ads, email, and in some cases, direct mail.
- **Account-level analytics:** ABM software gives you the ability, through closed-loop reporting, to trace your efforts to specific financial outcomes. In the era when marketers face increasing pressure to impact revenue, account-level analytics are a requirement.
- **Strategic alignment:** With the power to identify, track, target, and engage specific accounts, marketing will be much better equipped to support the efforts of the sales team. The sales team will gain a medium for communicating objectives and a more useful body of intelligence for each opportunity they pursue. Of marketing departments pursuing account-based marketing, 74 percent say they work with sales to define account goals and plans.¹
- **Improved prospecting:** As you research and develop processes to identify target accounts, you'll build a deeper understanding of your ideal customer profile(s). Some ABM tools can do the data mining and account-identification steps for you, which means you can bring in new business faster and with greater accuracy.

Of course, not all ABM tools are created equal, or even called by the same name. The software and platforms you purchase will depend on which ABM tactics you plan to pursue. In the following section, we'll divide the market into three major categories and provide examples of each.

ALSO READ: [What Does ABM Mean for the B2B Sales Funnel?](#)

I. Predictive Marketing Software

Predictive marketing software offers many different capabilities, but its overlap with ABM occurs during the account identification process. Predictive analytics tools (also referred to as “predictive marketing” or “sales intelligence”) can mine your existing customer data, use pattern recognition to build a set of ideal account profiles, and help you find new leads and accounts that match. Most platforms consist of two main components: data mining (analyzing your CRM and marketing databases), and data aggregation (pulling in new data from public directories, social media, and third-party sources).

The goal here is to build a database of qualified accounts and define where sales and marketing should focus their efforts. Predictive marketing software automates some of this process by identifying firmographic patterns.

Depending on the vendor, a predictive marketing platform may be able to isolate accounts based on criteria such as:

- Industry
- Company size
- Geographic location
- Revenue
- Technographics (what technology they currently have in place)
- Lifetime value potential (which products and services they might implement)

According to a recent study by Everstring, of marketers already running ABM campaigns, 80 percent believe predictive marketing is “a critical piece of the marketing stack.”⁴

Leading Vendors:



II. Advertising Automation Software

Advertising automation gives you the ability to manage offers and messages being presented to accounts as members of their buying group visit your site, leave your site, and travel to other destinations. Since most of the early ABM software vendors have focused on personalized advertising and retargeting, many software buyers think these are the essence and entirety of the ABM software market.

Of course, the reality of ABM — and the technology stack which supports it — is far more complex. But personalized advertising and retargeting is an important strategy for creating awareness at the beginning of the buying cycle. With the right approach, a personalized message and relevant offer can direct a decision-influencer to one of your product or landing pages and get the ball rolling for future engagement. Marketo, for example, saw a 33 percent increase in conversion rates and a 20 percent increase in qualified leads by targeting specific accounts with display advertising.⁵

Many platforms that specialize in advertising automation, personalization, and retargeting also provide a reporting component, which gives marketers the ability to track digital behavior and engagement at the account level. That said, you'll usually find more advanced reporting capabilities in an enterprise marketing automation or business intelligence platform.

Leading Vendors:



III. Marketing Automation Software

Marketing automation platforms typically serve as an operational hub and data management tool for all of the campaigns a company has in play. ABM campaigns are no exception, especially given the number of moving parts they entail. You might use a predictive tool to identify new target accounts, and an advertising automation tool to engage those accounts online. You also might run co-marketing, email, direct mail, and event marketing plays.

What happens to all of the data and analysis from these initiatives? Without a centralized tool, it can be nearly impossible to track performance, let alone know when an account is ready for sales follow-up. According to Aberdeen, 96 percent of marketers are not satisfied with their ability to capture, store, analyze, and use customer data.⁶

A marketing automation platform — especially when integrated with your CRM — is the perfect tool to manage ABM efforts. You can build custom email campaigns to nurture accounts and measure engagement across multiple channels (similar to lead scoring in lead-level marketing). If you're running more than a few ABM plays at a time, this capability is a must. Keep in mind,

Leading Vendors:



Case Study

Case Study: SuccessFactors⁸



Solution: DemandBase

SuccessFactors — founded in 2001 and acquired by SAP in 2012 — is one of the world’s leading HR software vendors. During the SAP acquisition, it was decided that SuccessFactors would remain an independent company and operate under the moniker, “SuccessFactors, an SAP Company.” As such, they would remain responsible for driving digital traffic and demand.

Challenge

SuccessFactors faced a couple of sizable challenges during this period. First, they needed to target and move SAP’s on-premise customers to the SuccessFactors cloud platform. Second, they need to improve their website and integrate digital messaging with larger demand gen strategies.

Solution

Sean Browne, SuccessFactors’ director of web marketing, lead the search for a new solution. Browne started by rolling out Adobe’s Experience Manager content management platform, but needed a tool that would let him target anonymous visitors. Soon thereafter, he discovered Demandbase, whose solution integrated directly with Adobe. SuccessFactors built their new site with Demandbase’s targeted, dynamic promotions baked directly in. They used company-targeted advertising to increase marketing opportunities and Adobe Analytics to identify companies visiting their site, by industry and segment. Demandbase’s web forms feature helped them improve accuracy and completeness by auto-populating fields based on data discovered.

“Targeting is fundamental to the way we sell,” Browne said. “I had the advantage of being able to revamp the entire site and put it on a new platform . . . I truly believe Demandbase can make marketing a hero to sales.”

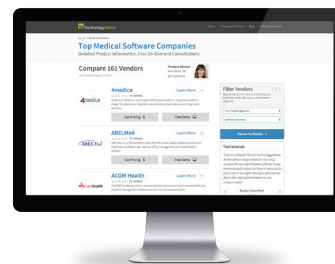
Results

- 175 percent year-over-year growth in web leads
- Increased engagement with all visitors, even anonymous ones
- Higher web conversion rates, thanks to personalized promotions

Choosing the Best ABM Software

TechnologyAdvice helps businesses find the best technology for their needs. We've compiled product information, reviews, case studies, features lists, video walkthroughs, and research articles on ABM software to make the buying process more straightforward for decision-makers like you.

If you're curious about any of the account-based marketing solutions or vendors listed in this guide, we'd love to talk. Call one of our in-house specialists for a free consultation, or use the Product Selection Tool on our site to get a custom recommendation based on your industry and feature requirements.



Visit - www.TechnologyAdvice.com

Have Questions?

Our team of experts is ready to help!

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