

# How to Generate

Highly Targeted Leads Using  
an **Integrated Approach** to  
Inbound and Account-Based  
Marketing



# PREFACE

Account-Based Marketing (ABM) has often been described as a marketing strategy that ‘flips’ the tri-section funnel that forms the basis of an Inbound Marketing strategy. While Inbound perseveres to *attract* customers to the offering, ABM believes in *driving* a targeted marketing strategy to the desired customer markets. While both the approaches may seem contradictory in nature, it is not so. Although it is widely believed that ABM is the future of effective marketing, it is not an all encompassing approach. In fact, experts have come to realize that a fused proposition comprising of ABM *aligned with* Inbound marketing gives organizations a competitive edge. Together, this dual approach provides a chance to target and retain the best-fit clients for the long-term, while also attracting attention from varied and as yet untapped customer groups.



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# The Basics of ABM

**Account-Based Marketing (ABM)**, also known as key-account targeting, is a strategic marketing approach that identifies best-fit accounts and treats them as a market of one to drive an effective marketing strategy. In simple terms ABM focuses on identifying accounts (i.e. companies, individuals, user groups etc.) that match their ideal clients and targets the key decision makers in those establishments with personalized messages and content through respective marketing and advertising campaigns. Especially when it comes to B2B businesses,

ABM has gained a lot of traction in the past few years. The key factor in ABM, is **personalization**. For any business, being relevant to their customer base is of high importance. ABM takes it up a notch; In order to appeal to high yield prospects at a granular level, ABM targets specific company accounts and builds relationships with ideal prospects within these organizations. Since the marketing strategy is personalized for each target component, precise lead generation can be expected. As opposed to the traditional marketing methods, in

which a wide, generic net is cast to generate leads, marketers using ABM work closely with sales to identify key prospects and then customize content and messages to the buying team within the target accounts. Hence, ABM results in little to no 'wastage' when it comes to marketing efforts. This change in approach is commonly referred to as "flipping the funnel", where an ABM driven strategy, as shown, offers a more linear and targeted approach as opposed to traditional marketing.

# When is it best to use ABM?

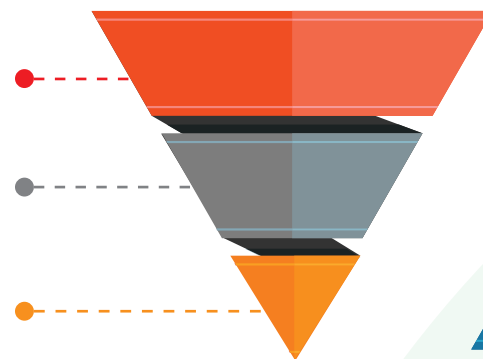
With the buying power of customers on the uprise, it is easy to think that the more leads one has, the better the conversion rate. While this belief has some merit, it is not entirely true. In order to ensure that marketing ROI is maximized, it is important to use a focused approach that targets relationships in the highest opportunity, highest-value customer accounts. This is the reason why ABM is especially useful for high value businesses.

For example, assume you need to sell an expensive global tax management software. Instead of targeting your marketing efforts to ALL companies, focusing on MNCs that can afford the software as well as derive the most value from such a product, is better. When it comes to running such a targeted campaign, for a high value product or service, ABM is the best option.

Attract people to your website and get them to fill out a form

Nurture leads with persuasive, automated emails

Filter & identify target components



Identify target components

Engage them with targeted, personalized campaigns

Build long-term alliances

The traditional marketing funnel Vs the 'flipped' ABM funnel\*

\*Based on Sangram Vajre's #flipmyfunnel ABM model

# Benefits of ABM

As ABM is considered to be a 'zero waste' marketing methodology, **cost-effectiveness** is its primary benefit. Another key benefit of ABM is that it **aligns marketing and sales efforts**. Once a lead has been captured, sales is expected to nurture that lead while marketing has to extend their support to the sales function.

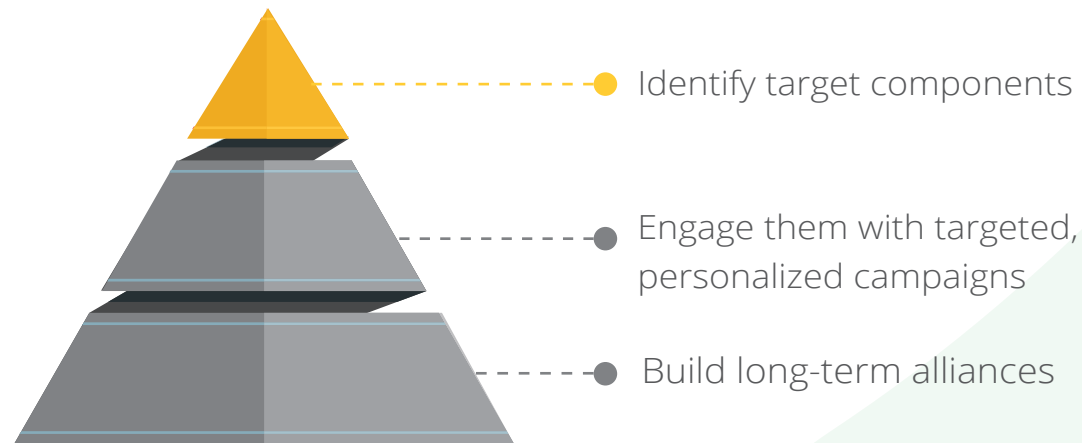
## Other benefits of ABM include:

- Improved **ROI**
- Understanding the company's **target audience**
- A more **personalized experience** for the consumer
- Easy tracking and measuring campaign **success**



# The ABM Strategy - What does the flipped funnel entail?

## Research and Identify Target Accounts

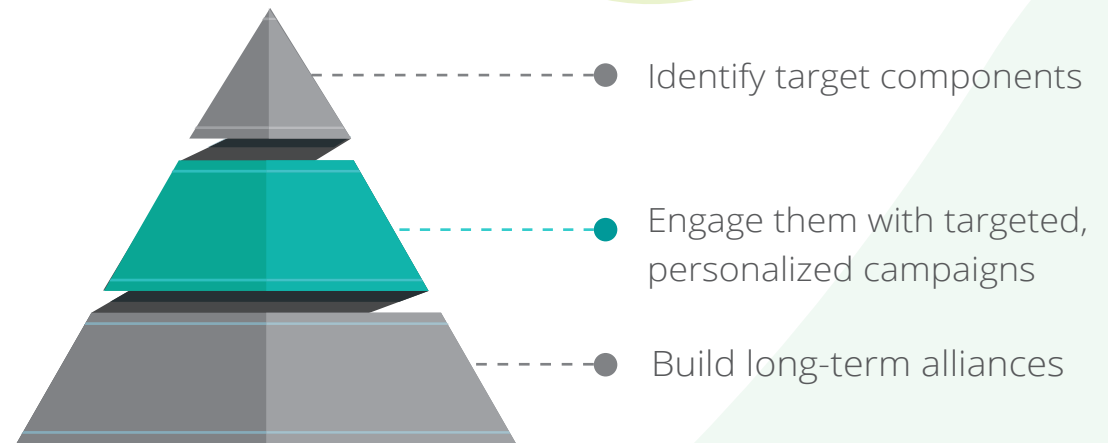


We are currently living in an era of data, where businesses prefer to base their decisions on insights. Now, even when it comes to marketing, specifically ABM, data is its lifeblood. With the help of insights and statistics, the first step in any ABM campaign involves identifying and prioritizing high-value, high-opportunity accounts. Additionally, client behaviour is studied; something which ABM heavily depends on. This data is commonly known as 'intent data' and can be used to identify key accounts. These accounts are chosen based on factors such as potential deal size, the likelihood that the account might become a repeat customer, and market position and influence.

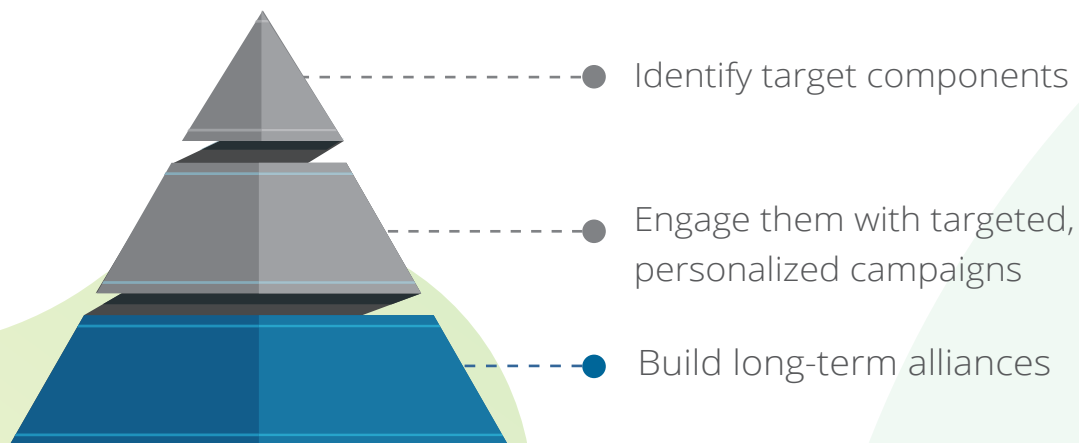


## Understand Customer Concerns and Build Personalized Campaigns

The next step in an ABM strategy involves engaging with the targeted components and trying to understand their current issues and obstacles. This gives marketers a fair idea on what the ABM campaign should include in order to resonate with the audience. Lead nurturing is also of grave importance at this stage.



## Recommend the Right Fit and Build Long-Term Alliances



ABM is not about the quick-fix. Rather, it is a strategy that puts a lot of emphasis on researching consumer pain points and requirements before designing a campaign for a product that can bring value to the user. Apart from quality outreach, ABM also gives precedence to long-term relationship building. A common blunder that most companies make is showing overzealousness right from the get go. Instead of rushing into demonstrating the features of an offering, marketing teams must take some time to fully understand the target audience's requirements and the value of healing their current pain points.

# Introduction to Inbound Marketing

Inbound marketing is a technique in which customers are drawn to products and services with the help of effective content and social media marketing, search engine optimization and branding. It is a marketing approach that revolves around assisting people to find answers to their questions and consequently find specific products or services in the process.

## But does Inbound Marketing actually work? Yes, it does.




Consumer behaviour is such that they like to 'discover' products and services, as opposed to being actively pursued to try the same. This is where Inbound wins. By putting out smartly designed content that can intrigue and attract people to try the offering, inbound gives consumers the 'choice' to interact with a brand naturally. [Johnny Cheng](#), a Product Marketer at Gainsight, says that "Data clearly shows that people who choose to interact with your brand naturally, convert higher."



# When is it best to use **Inbound Marketing**?

Inbound marketing is largely a good fit for most businesses, irrespective of domain or size. However, it has been observed that Inbound tends to yield faster results in businesses with lower value products or services. A prime reason for this is the fact that unlike ABM, Inbound requires very little human interaction and constant follow-ups in order to see conversions. Hence traditionally, Inbound has been used in case of lower-value offerings.

However, this is a common practice and NOT a mandate. Inbound marketing is an extremely versatile approach with very few restrictions on who can use it. But how can you determine if inbound marketing is right for your company? In order to assess if inbound marketing is the right fit for a particular brand or business, it is important to analyze three factors - the **goal**, the **audience** and the **sales process**.

-  **Goal** - It is important to know what the objective of implementing the market strategy is; Is the organization looking to better their sales? Or is the focus placed on building a brand reputation?
-  **Audience** - Since inbound marketing depends heavily on the consumption of content on the internet, it is imperative that the audience in question is one that can do so.
-  **Sales Process** - Each customer is different. While some may need to be wooed into making a purchase, some customers may already be willing to make the investment. Either way, it is much required for marketing and sales personnel to customize their modus operandi based on the scenario, in order to see effective results.

Some of the business types that Inbound has the most impact on include, retail and eCommerce businesses, health service providers, manufacturers, insurance-based businesses and professional service providers, like accountants, lawyers, bookkeepers and more.

## Benefits of Inbound Marketing

The primary benefits of inbound marketing is that the ROI is higher than that in outbound or other traditional marketing approaches. One of the reasons for this is the shorter processing time from content generation to customer conversion. Since potential customers tend to reach out to brands especially when they need the product or service being offered, the sales closing rate is higher.

Additionally, inbound marketing enables businesses to generate leads at a lower cost than outbound marketing as the marketing cost in Inbound is significantly lower. According to a report by [Mashable](#), inbound marketing costs 62 percent less per lead than outbound marketing.

According to [Scripted](#), the benefits of inbound marketing are many. Some concrete statistics that show just how impactful inbound marketing can be, are:

- 79 percent of the best global marketing firms rank blogs as the most effective tactic for marketing.
- 15 percent of marketers say that SEO offers them above-average sales conversion rates.

# Primary Steps Involved in **Inbound Marketing**

## Defining Business Goals

The first step to creating an inbound marketing strategy is to define your business goals. Every strategy must begin by creating a road map that is listing the KPIs that the inbound marketing team must meet. Market and competitor research helps establish realistic and attainable goals. Additionally, businesses should involve their core teams in this exercise, in order to get a more holistic view on what the inbound marketing strategy should include.

## Analyze the Target Audience

Once the goals are established, it becomes important to know who your target audience is. One way to go about this is by understanding the buyer persona you wish to appeal to. Knowing your audience, their requirements and pain points, gives an insight into what type of content would resonate with them.



## Decide on What Type of Content to Create

One of the preferred content avenues for inbound is blogging. Blogging has been proven to establish awareness amongst the audience and consequently drive traffic to your website. In order to ensure that the right customers are being drawn, it is important to select content that addresses the requirements of your buyer personas. Also with blogging, the more frequent the content, the more visitors it will attract. Other content channels include educational pieces, newsletters, etc.

## Content Optimization

It is important that the content you create is discoverable on the internet. In order to ensure this, understanding how people are searching for content is required. This is where keyword research comes into play. Keyword research involves the estimated global and local search volume, ranking difficulty, and also predicts the cost of running paid campaigns. It helps you determine what terminology or phrases attract the right visitors to your website.

## Acquiring Leads

Once your content attracts attention, you can draw interested visitors into becoming potential customers, also known as 'leads'. One way to do this is by offering premium content on your website. Specifically, premium content offers unique, niche information that promises to add value to the target audience. In order to access it, the audience is required to fill out a form with their contact information and other details. Examples of premium content are eBooks, Webinars, Whitepapers, Case Studies, etc.

## Lead Nurturing

Lead nurturing, as the name suggests is the process of nurturing a relationship with potential customers at every stage of the buyer's journey, in order to convert this lead into a revenue generating account for the company. Lead nurturing is a multi-pronged concept that involves listening to the needs of prospective clients, providing the information and answers they need, timely follow-ups and personalization. Companies can also opt to implement automated workflows that will help move leads through the sales funnel in an efficient way.

## Convert Leads into Customers

The most crucial step in marketing, in general, is converting the accumulated website visitors and leads into revenue generating accounts, i.e. customers.

# Challenges of NOT Following an Integrated Approach

Conventional understanding may assume that when it comes to marketing, choosing one of the two approaches - ABM OR Inbound marketing - is sufficient. In fact, that is the way marketing teams historically have operated. But, in the current business climate, where competition is rife, with many an organization struggling to gain a firm footing in the market, choosing to follow just one marketing strategy may not be enough.

Let's see why - following **ABM** entails adopting a **1:1** or **1:Few** approaches to customer outreach. While this approach is great to target specific accounts with personalized content, it limits the possibility of reaching out to prospects who are actually in need.

Additionally, with ABM you always run the risk of missing out on new customers who are unable to find you or your brand on Google. Since not enough content has been created specific to your buyer personas, the ability to be discovered is greatly reduced.

On the flip side, Inbound Marketing on its own, may also not be the wisest choice. With little or no research on specific target audiences, Inbound lacks the **personalization of content**. And no matter how well-researched or well-written generic content is, it lacks the impact that specific, personalized content has on potential customers.

Another parameter to be taken into consideration is the **content delivery channel**. While both ABM and Inbound Marketing follow their own avenues to reach the intended audiences, such as email drip campaigns, blog posts, advertising channels etc., a cohesive multi-channel approach is rarely used. Another drawback is that social media channels are not leveraged enough. In order to deliver maximum impact, businesses must focus on adopting a multi-pronged marketing approach that harnesses multiple communication channels through social media while also retaining the more traditional avenues such as emails and blogs. This will help secure a solid brand-identity, while maximizing the impact of your content on the consumer.

## Aligning **ABM** with **Inbound Marketing**

Although ABM and Inbound marketing have traditionally been treated as polar opposites, it is not the case. And why not? Where ABM is designed to **target** marketing effort on the chosen audience, Inbound Marketing is designed to seamlessly lead people to your offering. While ABM is looked at as a strategy to boost sales, inbound is treated as marketing effort. But, the truth is that a fused ABM + Inbound marketing approach drives the most impact and maximizes marketing and sales ROI.

Let us consider the way potential customers or prospects are looked at. With a standalone approach, ABM would focus just on ideal customers while inbound would spread a generic net. But what if we could focus on attracting a wide pool of leads and then nurture them with **targeted and personalized content**? This approach of combining inbound with your ABM strategy offers many benefits.



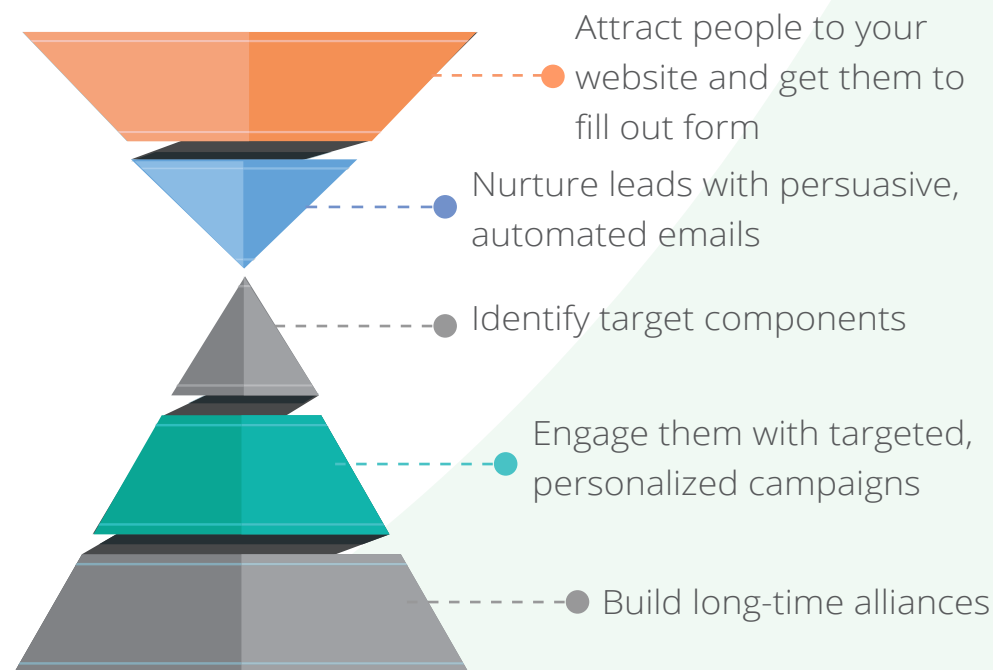
## Use Both the Funnels

While ABM is busy focusing on specific components, you might completely miss out on accounts that are not on your radar. On the other hand, a purely inbound approach will never find the ideal customers that are so crucial for long-term business. However, by adopting both approaches parallelly, businesses stand a better chance of attracting more leads while also finding high value, high opportunity accounts from the lead pool.

Another variation proposes combining both the funnels so that inbound marketing feeds the ABM funnel. With this approach, the effort ABM would have to put into researching and finding target components is drastically cut down as inbound marketing brings in new leads.

## Your Content is Twice as Effective


When you adopt ABM aligned with inbound marketing, the content that is created can be used to generate traffic to your website while also being used to educate your ABM audience. This maximizes the content development ROI. Everything that is created becomes highly useful both to the targeted accounts as well as attract and resonate with the people who use keyword search on an engine such as Google. This helps businesses identify potential customers that they weren't even aware of before.



# Conclusion

The ultimate goal of any marketing strategy is to gain trust with current customers while garnering more leads. With an integrated ABM and inbound marketing strategy as well, the goal is the same. An ABM and Inbound marketing strategy, in spite of being tricky to navigate, ensures a more holistic approach to quality lead generation. It should be designed keeping all the dynamics in mind, so that the marketing efforts are made the most of.

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