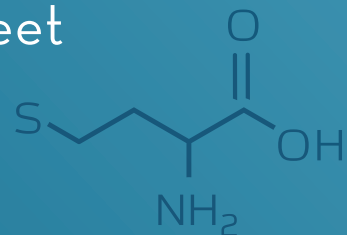


THE 6TH ANNUAL  
**B2B MARKETING**  
DATA REPORT

Unlocking the New Formula  
for Sales and Marketing Success

dun & bradstreet

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## INTRODUCTION

# Data Is the Catalyst to Accelerate Growth

B2B organizations are turning to data and analytics to accelerate the buying journey and achieve meaningful growth. That should come as no surprise.

Over the past few years, Dun & Bradstreet has routinely taken the pulse of B2B sales and marketing professionals and discovered that data was at the heart of their go-to-market activities. Spoiler alert: This year is no different. Data is unanimously viewed as being the catalyst for driving an effective sales and marketing strategy, and improving business performance overall.

What does come as a surprise is how a lack of confidence in B2B data is impacting the way in which businesses leverage (or don't leverage) even the most fundamental sales and marketing initiatives. As you'll see in this year's report, some of the most buzzworthy sales and marketing strategies, such as account-based marketing (ABM) and content personalization, may not be as prevalent as one might think.

After surveying more than 250 B2B professionals in businesses of all sizes across numerous industries, we uncovered some key insights shaping the B2B sales and marketing landscape, including:




**Data Quality is Critical**

**89%** believe data quality drives the right B2B sales and marketing campaigns

**But Confidence in Data Is Shaky**

**50%** Half of B2B firms are not confident in the quality of their data



**Resulting in Slower Adoption of Key Initiatives**

**88%** believe data is crucial for ABM, but only one-third of firms are executing it

## TOP INDUSTRIES REPRESENTED

MANUFACTURING



BUSINESS SERVICES



WHOLESALE TRADE



FINANCE



ENGINEERING



COMMUNICATIONS



TRANSPORTATION



The good news is that most B2B organizations recognize that the right formula to execute multichannel marketing activities, surface new opportunities, and ultimately grow revenue is a combination of the right data, access to actionable insights, and better alignment between sales and marketing. So, how do you measure up?

We hope this year's report will lead to a better understanding of the most common obstacles you'll need to overcome as you formulate your own sales and marketing strategy.

Welcome to the 6th Annual B2B Marketing Data Report.

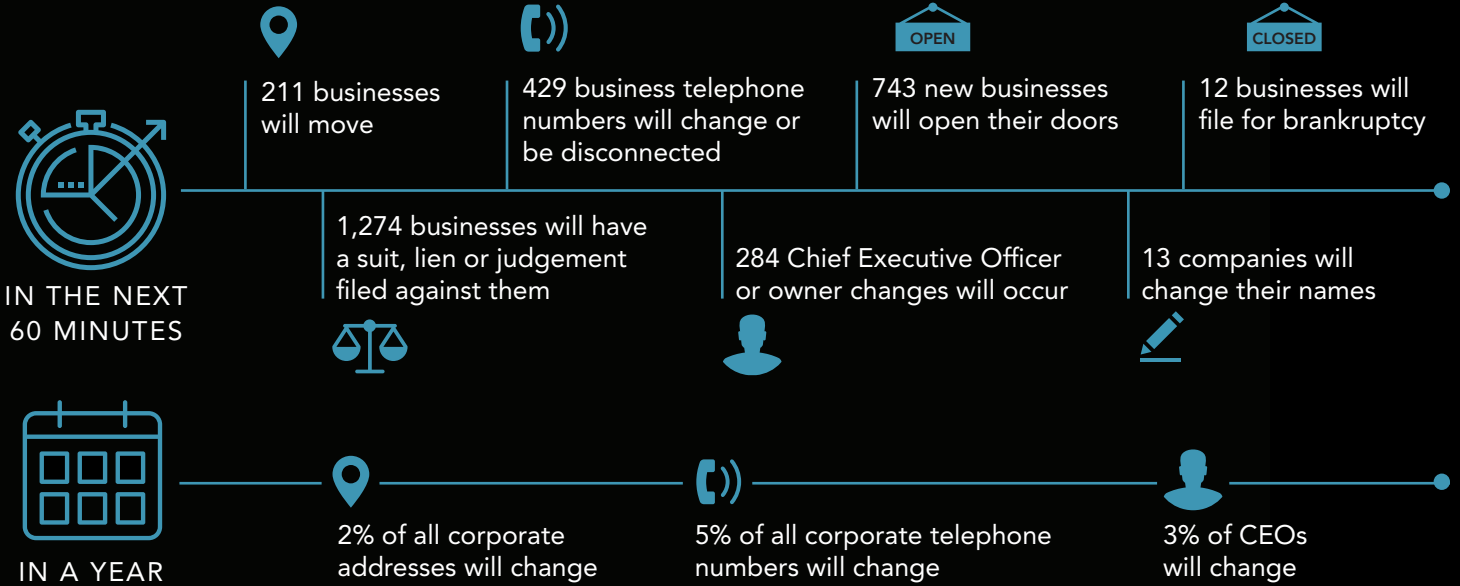
# Data Is Constantly in Flux

Consistently Capturing Accurate Information Is a Challenge

The challenge is establishing a process which rationalizes and keeps massive amounts of data current, while leveraging new data sources to create a real competitive advantage. That competitive edge comes from turning data into trustworthy insight that can drive actions to improve business performance.

Truth be told, nearly all B2B organizations struggle to make sense out of the mounting data within the enterprise. The harsh reality is we're awash in data, and the overwhelming availability of this information is constantly changing. More often than not, the volume, variety, and velocity of data creates chaos instead of opportunity. Just think about the data that's sitting in your own databases. It's often made up of years-old contacts and archaic records. You don't even have to go that far back to discover outdated information.

Just think about the inherent pace of change in business today.



Figures based on 8 hour business work day

The challenge is rationalizing and keeping current massive amounts of data while leveraging new data sources to create a real competitive advantage – an advantage that results from turning data into trustworthy insight that can drive actions to improve business performance.

For many organizations, that process requires lots of manual effort and heavy lifting, making it hard to achieve intelligence you can trust. Poor data quality is one of the biggest problems in the B2B arena today – and often, by the time organizations are ready to execute, revenue opportunities are lost. It's a common theme we see throughout the report.

# Data Quality Is a Key Component of the Revenue Equation

The Need for Better Data Is Becoming Increasingly Important

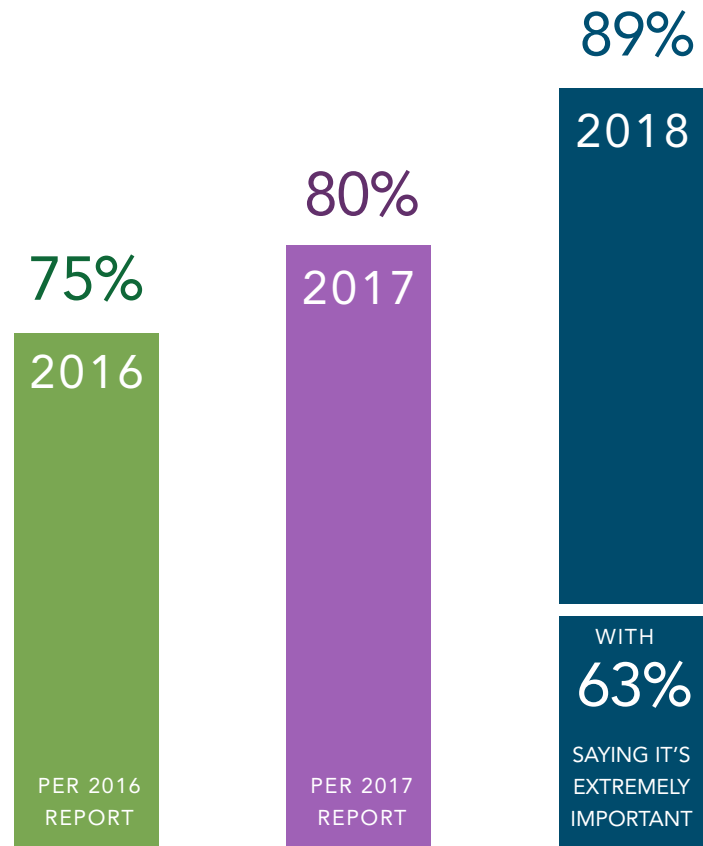
For the sales and marketing professionals tasked with formulating their organizations' best strategies for improving performance, data quality is paramount.

Data quality itself is a multi-factored equation for today's B2B organizations. It equates to having and leveraging precise insights that can move your business forward – the pace is defined by the quality of the insight. In the sales and marketing realms, account identity and intelligence insights are critical.

B2B marketers agree that quality data empowers them to deliver the right message to customers at just the right time. It allows marketers to know what customers want, when they want it, and how customers have interacted with the company in the past. To achieve this, it is essential to get the fundamentals right to build a foundation that generates actionable insights which will make a difference in the marketplace. Exceed expectations, and customers will shout your praise from the social media rooftops. Flub it, and the bad experience can spread across the digital landscape like wildfire.



The pressure is on. As such, B2B firms recognize the importance of data quality in guiding their sales and marketing decisions. And it's becoming increasingly significant year over year.



DATA QUALITY IS INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT TO THE SALES AND MARKETING ORGANIZATION



WITH THE IMPORTANCE OF DATA QUALITY REACHING NEW HEIGHTS, IT'S IMPORTANT WE TAKE A STEP BACK AND DISCUSS WHAT THAT MEANS AND HOW TO BEST ACHIEVE IT.

# Implementing a Successful Equation for Better Data

$$\frac{[\text{Completeness} + \text{Accuracy} \times \text{Depth} + \text{Breadth}]}{\text{Standardization} + \text{Compliance} + \text{Latency}} = \text{RESULTS}$$

## BRINGING QUALITY DATA INTO YOUR CRM

Working across platforms and teams, you want to make sure your CRM creates:

### A SINGLE VIEW

It brings together all your data, so you can see each customer and access data from every perspective.

### A COMPLETE VIEW

It taps into global sources beyond your own transactional data sets, so you gain a fuller, more comprehensive picture of your customers and prospects.

Large quantities of data will rarely, if ever, be 100 percent perfect for every possible use case. But that doesn't mean it can't be valuable for a specific use case. Companies often confuse perfection with the quality needed for the job at hand. Data quality is a perception or an assessment of data's fitness to serve its purpose in a given context. The illusion of having some magic barometer to measure the perfection of data often distracts us from more carefully considering the gap between our data and its intended use, and then constructing a pragmatic approach to close that gap. Therefore, it's important to keep that in mind when experimenting with formulas to improve your own data quality. Leveraging the steps below will help you get close, but you mustn't expect perfection.

Data Quality starts with record completeness, where your systems are populated with the necessary data and information required to support your go-to-market strategies. Next comes accuracy. That is a measurement of the factual veracity of your record information, which we see from the survey results continues to be a challenge. The next dimension of data quality is breadth of data and the depth of insight you can generate. Is there enough information and context around a particular entity that would allow you to take meaningful action? You have to be able to understand the needs of that customer or prospect. With good first-and third-party data, the focus can be on turning intelligence into action.

However, if organizations don't have the right processes in place to ensure continuous rigor around those initial factors, improved performance will remain elusive. Standardization allows data to be easily shared across systems, ensuring a consistent (and accurate) flow of information between sales and marketing. Additionally, failure to comply with key regulations and permissions will only hurt your efforts, as will long latency between updates. The farther away from compliance and timeliness you get, the more damage you can do to your efforts and performance.

B2B marketers need the right mix of all these factors to deliver the identity and intelligence that leads to good decisions.

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## AN ACTIONABLE VIEW

It ties data directly to the business challenges facing your company so you can improve decision-making and gain real business value from your data. And it keeps that view continually updated so you can react quickly to relevant changes.

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## A FLEXIBLE VIEW

It organizes and structures data so that every business unit across your enterprise is working from the same set of insights and then customizing processes according to roles.

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# Confidence in Data Has Reached a New Low

Poor Data Quality Has Negative Consequences

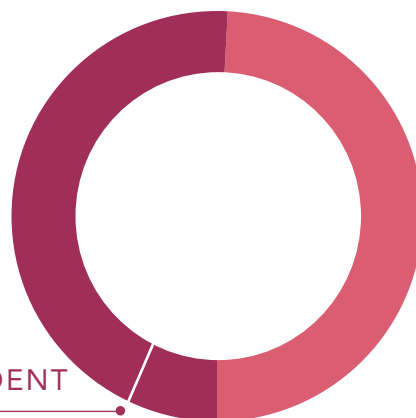
As we've seen, B2B marketers unanimously agree that data quality is a critical success factor for B2B sales and marketing. However, only half of respondents expressed confidence in the quality of their data – with only 11 percent expressing extreme confidence.



Rate your confidence in the current quality of your sales and marketing data:

**51%**  
CONFIDENT

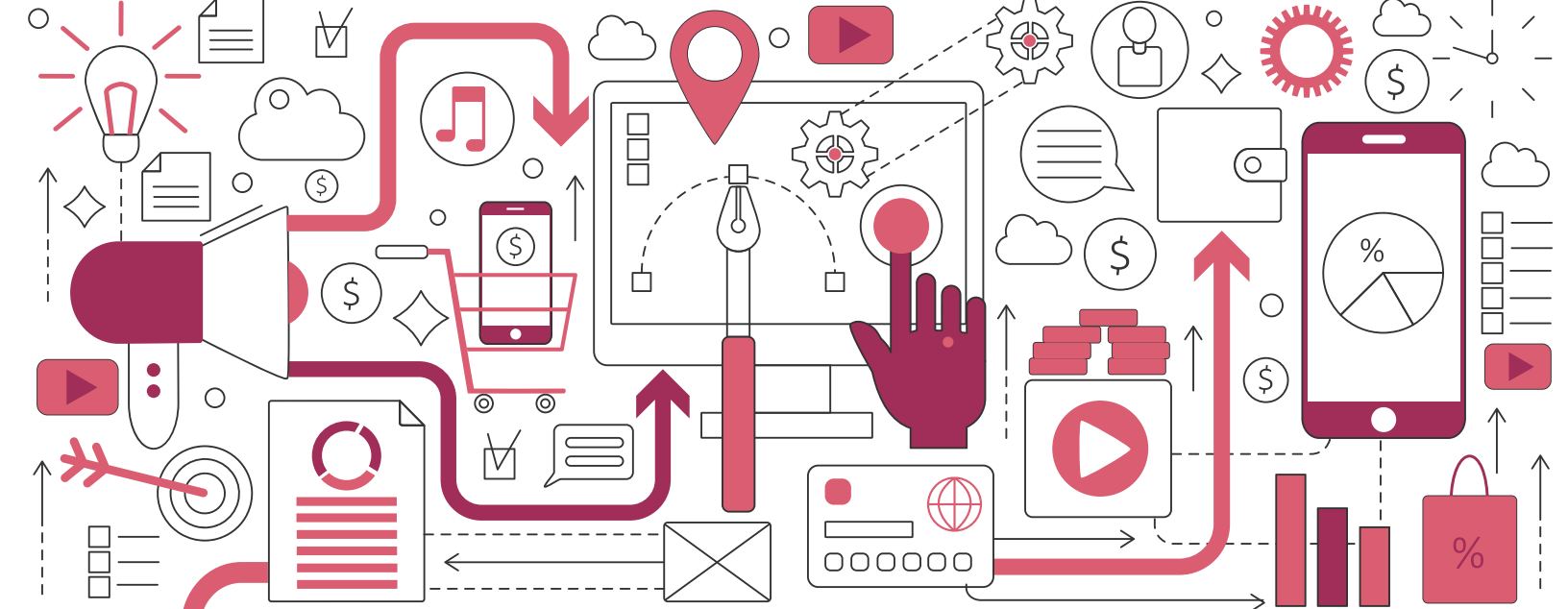
**49%**  
NOT CONFIDENT



ONLY 11% EXTREMELY CONFIDENT

While it's certainly encouraging to see at least half of B2B companies expressing optimism about the data they are working with, that number is actually lower than the previous year, when 75 percent of survey respondents expressed confidence in the quality of their data. The big dip in this year's confidence assessment seems to have impacted other areas of sales and marketing, as we'll see throughout the report.

For B2B organizations to truly succeed, there must be a thoughtful plan and concerted effort to improve data quality. It's certainly not easy, but making that commitment is the first step in achieving what we hope will be skyrocketing confidence in data by the time we conduct next year's B2B Marketing Data Report.



# A Lack of Confidence Is Hindering Many Data-Driven Strategies

ABM Requires Quality Data with Sales and Marketing Alignment to Succeed

Many industry reports peg ABM as being one of the most popular B2B tactics, as it's said to yield higher returns than any other marketing investment. However, only just over a third of our respondents said ABM was currently part of their go-to-market strategy.

**Just 38%**

of those surveyed said ABM is part of their go-to-market strategy

The reality is that a lot of organizations are still behind on this evolution in marketing. This is partly because a move to ABM is rooted in more than a change in technology.

First, it requires quality data – specifically strong firmographic and demographic data – to identify key accounts and targets, reach them across a variety of channels, and deliver relevant content that accelerates their buyers journey.

It also requires a shift from leads-based/MQL (marketing qualified leads) thinking to a narrower engagement of key accounts. Your sales team will need to understand that their pipeline is going to be reduced – sometimes significantly – depending on the scope of the ABM program. This means a change in resourcing, measurement, and compensation. At the end of the day, while ABM can produce huge numbers, it can also require a significant restructuring of how sales and marketing teams interact and work together to achieve this common goal.

That's why it comes as little surprise, given the challenges B2B organizations already say they have with their data and resources, that ABM is not currently being embraced and employed by a majority of those surveyed.

## What are your future plans related to making account-based marketing (ABM) a part of your go-to-market strategy?



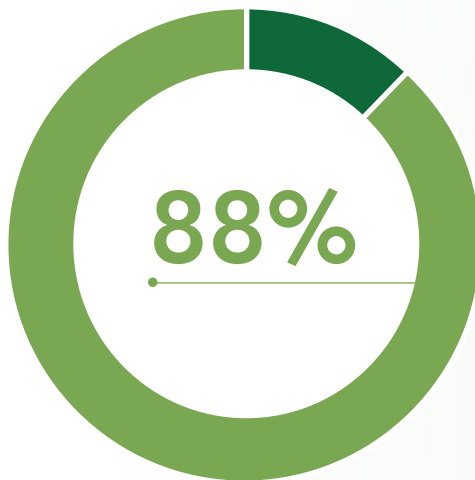
**6%**  
Within  
the next  
six months

**12%**  
Within  
the next  
12 months

**41%**  
No plans  
within the  
next year

**41%**  
Not  
sure

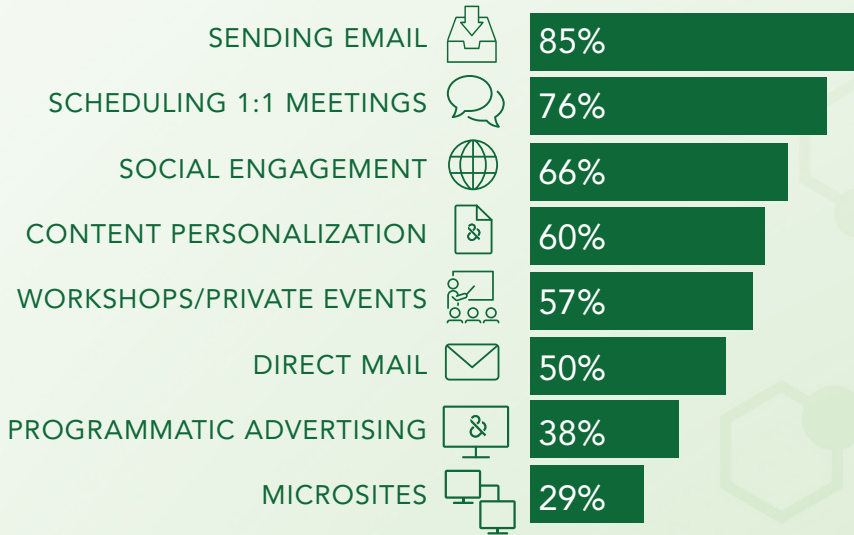
Although ABM is an exciting prospect for many B2B companies, it seems most respondents need to get their data in order before they can commit to executing such a massive shift in their go-to-market strategy and in how they measure success. ABM is not easy. Targeting specific accounts and decision-makers requires a coordinated, synchronized effort across multiple channels. It requires the right data and measurement systems – and alignment at the executive level between sales and marketing. An overwhelming number of B2B organizations clearly recognize this and are therefore somewhat cautious in their adoption of this strategy.



OF B2B MARKETERS  
BELIEVE DATA QUALITY  
IS IMPORTANT  
TO EXECUTING  
AN ABM STRATEGY

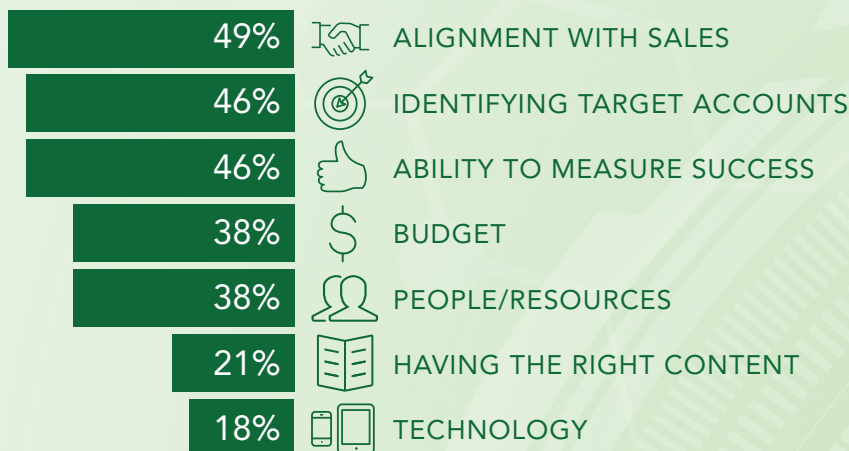
For the B2B companies confidently executing ABM, data seemingly plays a role in all the related tactics that make up the strategy. From conversing with customers online to meeting them face to face, data guides every step of the outreach and planning from start to finish.

## Top Tactics Used to Drive ABM



And while data is certainly one of the most critical factors for companies looking to succeed with ABM, other elements are equally important in shaping it. ABM is not solely a digital strategy, nor is it something that can be served by a single technology platform. Thus, it's no wonder technology came in at the bottom when we asked respondents to list the most critical factors in realizing success from their ABM campaigns.

## Most Critical Factors in Driving ABM Success



On the other hand, just about half of respondents noted the importance of aligning sales and marketing to achieve success with ABM. This couldn't be truer. In fact, we need to stop focusing on the "M" in ABM; it really needs to be called account-based sales and marketing. Because when it's done well, you shouldn't be able to tell where marketing ends and sales begins. To create that synergy between teams, you must have shared processes, shared data and insights across technology platforms, and shared measurements. Only by having teams work together, frequently sharing and communicating, will B2B companies see success from ABM.

# Data Must Fuel Your Revenue Operations

## Data Is the Cornerstone of Delivering the Best B2B Customer Experience

The power of data goes well beyond ABM. It's especially effective for sales and marketing teams who can use it to deliver a nearly flawless experience for the B2B customer at every stage of the buying process. That means executing a seamless campaign strategy that engages audiences with personalized and relevant messaging to help turn prospects into customers.

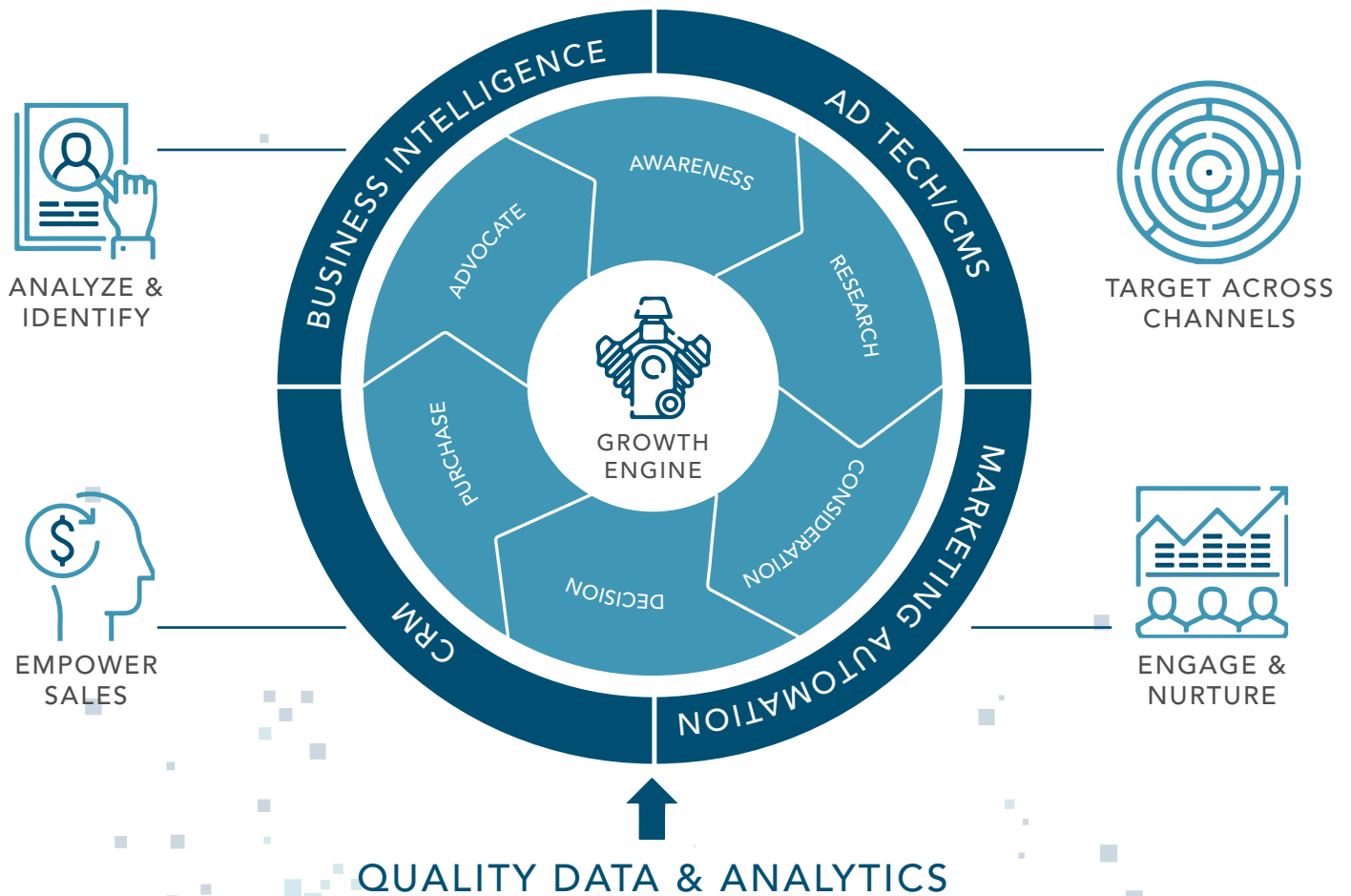
Based on responses from this year's survey, B2B marketers understand that data plays a crucial role in enabling all the moving parts of the sales marketing strategy, from beginning to end.

### TOP 5 ACTIVITIES POSITIVELY IMPACTED BY QUALITY DATA

-  **Campaign execution**
-  **Personalized content and messaging**
-  **Sales prospecting and closing**
-  **Generating customer insights with analytics**
-  **Lead qualification and scoring**



All of these steps come together to create a 360-degree sales and marketing approach that uses data to identify new opportunities, home in on the right audience with the right message, arm sellers with the right intelligence, and provide learnings that enable them to continually improve their strategy. It's a perpetual cycle that fuels revenue operations – the strategic function that aligns marketing, sales, and customer success activities to pinpoint and expose revenue opportunities. When done right, this is the winning formula that turns more personalized, efficient, and impactful marketing tactics into accelerated sales – at scale.



**DATA PLAYS A ROLE  
IN EVERY STAGE OF YOUR  
REVENUE OPERATIONS**

# Targeting and Segmentation Are Still the Backbone of B2B Marketing

Data and Analytics Help Determine Success

## PROJECT:



## MISSION:



Generally, B2B marketers master digital targeting and segmentation only when they reach full maturity in the way they use data. Are they using targeting and segmentation to turn data into information, information into knowledge, and knowledge into insight? Naturally, it's predicated on good data. But despite the struggles B2B marketers appear to have with their data quality, they are a little more confident when it comes to engaging audiences.



Roughly six out of 10 (62%) of those surveyed expressed confidence in the ability to create a list for a campaign that accurately reflects their target audience, while half said they are confident in the ability to segment that list.



With the right arsenal of data, B2B organizations have the ability to cast a wide net and reel in audiences with valuable connection-building marketing opportunities.

## TOP WAYS B2B SELLERS ARE TARGETING B2B BUYERS

71%



GEOGRAPHY

59%



INDUSTRY/  
VERTICAL

50%



ACCOUNT-  
SPECIFIC

48%



ONLINE  
ACTIVITY

41%



COMPANY  
SIZE



When you start to categorize your audience based on different targeting segments, certain behavior patterns begin to emerge. That information can open the door to new audience opportunities. Analytics can provide further evidence of new opportunities beyond the traditional view of your target audience.

## Analytics Is the Hidden Piece of the Formula

As customers move from channel to channel, they leave a wide digital footprint in their wake. Organizations that can follow the data trail – and have the means to interpret the data – can uncover abundant customer insights.

Enter analytics.

By gathering, analyzing, and acting on the insights from customers' activities across all channels, marketing and sales teams can gain a much clearer picture of each customer, including their requirements, preferences, behaviors, and even their motivations for making a purchase. This intelligence enables sales and marketing teams to craft customized targeting and segmentation strategies to develop more personalized and relevant messages, which can lead to higher levels of engagement, increased loyalty, and greater customer lifetime value. Analytics can also help accelerate sales by eliminating the wasted time spent on unlikely prospects.

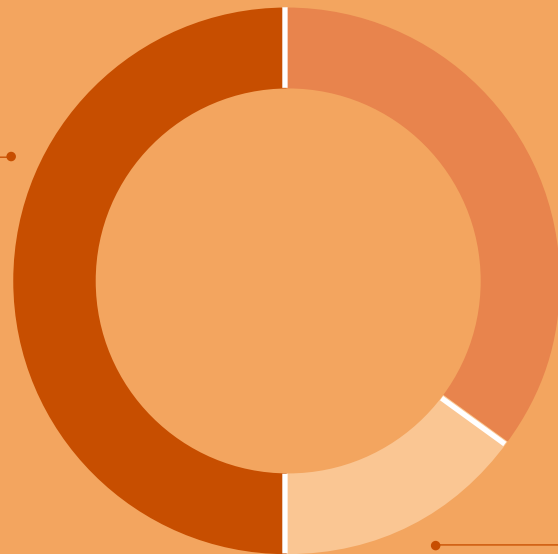
However, just half of respondents said they are currently using analytics to drive market prioritization and identification. Last year, we saw that number reach 70 percent.



## Are you currently using analytics to drive market prioritization and identification?

**50%**

YES



**35%**

NO

**15%**

NOT SURE

Like ABM, analytics has been a much-ballyhooed tool in recent years, one that marketers have expressed great excitement about adopting. But like ABM, it's not easy to execute. And it requires data you can trust. Perhaps that's why we're seeing a bit less emphasis on analytics this year.

It stands to reason that B2B firms recognize the need for quality data in everything they do, but they also realize that they need to get that squared away before they can use that intelligence to drive their sales and marketing initiatives.

# Bringing It All Together

## The Road to Success Is Paved With Challenges

The fact that most B2B organizations recognize how and where data comes into play to help them move forward their sales and marketing campaigns is an encouraging sign. It shows they're maturing when it comes to leveraging data and insights to improve their performance. However, they continue to struggle with capturing and managing data in their systems, one of the primary pain points they'll have to remedy to succeed with data.

For many, CRMs are the epicenter for data collection that fuels revenue operations. And despite the massive investments companies have been making in these platforms over the past decade, nearly two-thirds of responders claim to be novice or intermediate at integrating data with their CRM. A mere 13 percent claimed to be advanced.

### How well do you integrate your data with your CRM system?

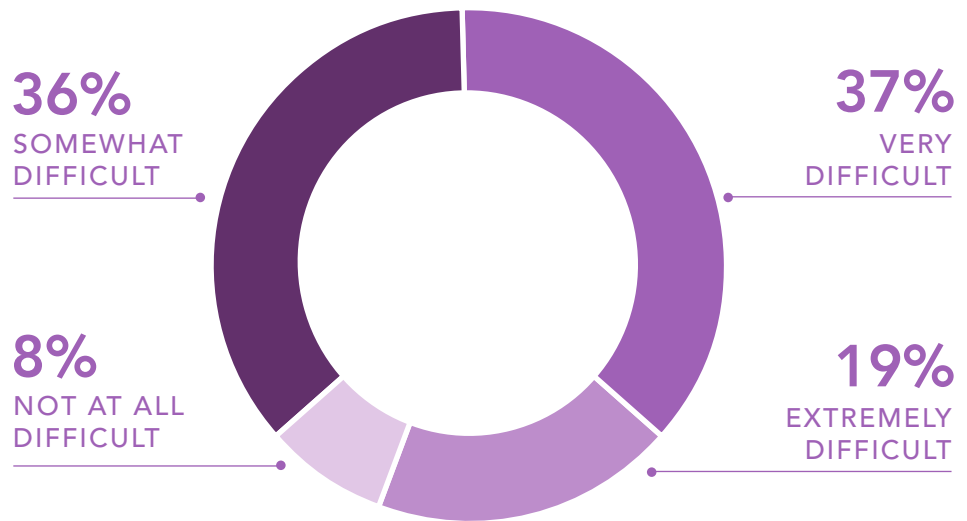


Sales teams typically have their preferred CRM or sales force automation (SFA) system to manage data, while marketing may prefer another platform (or multiple platforms) that leverages customer data differently. Instead of getting a complete and accurate view of customers or prospects, companies enact strategies that are often informed by contradictory, misleading, or altogether wrong information. This siloed nature of enterprise-wide data management can often foul up operations and decision-making; so much so, that data is not always trusted to be the guiding factor in key business decisions. In fact, according to [a recent Forrester study](#), only half of B2B marketing and sales decisions are made using data.

This divide is causing challenges when it comes to execution. More than half of respondents said it's very to extremely difficult to align sales and marketing data about companies and contacts when executing programs across multiple channels.



## Rate the difficulty of aligning sales and marketing data about companies and contacts when executing programs across multiple channels.



Similar to the challenges raised with ABM, sales and marketing need tighter alignment. Good sales and marketing chemistry is about increasing transparency and improving communication. The better (and faster) the sales team understands what marketing has done to acquire and nurture new leads, the easier (and faster) it will be for them to close them. Most importantly, marketers must remember that customer information and insight don't just come from digital footprints. Insights also come from the interactions sales reps have directly with their customers. The more sales sees marketing embrace and incorporate sales insights, the more receptive sales will be to input data in the CRM about their interactions.



While better alignment would help alleviate some of the issues facing B2B organizations, respondents noted other critical challenges when it comes to ensuring their database can support their go-to-market activities.

## MOST SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES



**Data accuracy and completeness**



**Budget allocation toward data management**



**Organizational support to make improvements**



**Data quantity and acquisition**



**Data visualization/activation technology**

Naturally, we see data quality top the list of most significant challenges. But interestingly, we see people and resources rounding out the top three. While cleaning data can be an arduous process, getting buy-in and support should not be such a grave challenge. Everyone understands the role data has within the organization, so now it's time to prove it.

A good approach to take is to build a business case that clearly quantifies the business value data will deliver against specific goals. If you can tie everything back to ROI, you will have the ears of the right executives. It's important to make investments in all these areas: from the right team to the right leaders. Your team and organization should be the last thing stopping you from executing a data-driven strategy. It's as much an art as it is a science.

## CONCLUSION

# The New Business Model for the Data Age

Data is constantly evolving, and the volume and variety of data we can access today is much richer and more informative than the simple firmographics of the past.

Modern sales and marketing is predicated on not only gathering data, but deriving insights and using this information intelligently, in real time, across systems and teams such that the right people get the insight, understand it, and take action on it at the perfect moment. The ability to understand everything about a potential buyer – their needs, their challenges, and their industry – begins and ends with data. Leveraging data and insights help sales and marketing teams improve their performance.

### This is the new formula for sales and marketing success.

As we've learned from this year's report, B2B organizations recognize that data is the cornerstone of their revenue operations. From helping to align cross-functional teams to optimizing campaigns in real time, taking a "data-informed" approach to sales and marketing is much like a science experiment – it's an evidence-based process that relies on repeatable empirical testing to learn the truth. But you don't need to be a mad scientist to concoct a winning formula to dominate your business. You need accurate and reliable data you can trust.

But, therein lies the challenge.

The lack of confidence B2B organizations have in their data is hindering the ability to deploy key sales and marketing initiatives. Instead of creating opportunity it's creating chaos.

### ABM is Not as Easy as ABC

Despite being one of the industry's biggest buzzwords, ABM may not be as prevalent as everyone believes. We see hesitation to move forward with ABM due to an inability to derive the right data to execute ABM programs, as well as an inability to effectively align sales and marketing resources.



## Engaging the Right B2B Buyer is Not a Perfect Science

Targeting and segmentation remains a tried and true B2B tactic and is the foundation for many marketing activities, but it is only as good as the data that guides it. Consequently, identification of target audiences remains a challenge and is impacting strategies like ABM and content personalization.

## There's Room for Maturity

For many, CRMs are the epicenter for data collection that fuels all sales and marketing activities. And despite the investments companies have been making in their CRMs over the past decade, a majority of B2B organizations are still inexperienced at integrating data with their CRMs.

## Sales and Marketing Must Function as One

Many companies work in silos, often utilizing different platforms and CRMs, and it's causing challenges when it comes to execution. Most respondents said it's very difficult to align sales and marketing data about companies and contacts when executing programs across multiple channels.

Making smart business decisions based on data and analytics to improve sales and marketing outcomes is a complex undertaking. B2B marketing and sales leaders must fight through that complexity to remain competitive. To do so they must take iterative, effective steps to implement the technology, processes, and best practices for turning data into a trusted source of intelligence. It won't be easy, but at least there's a common acknowledgement that this is imperative to improve business performance, and accelerate growth and profitability.

# What's Next?

## Assess the health of your data

1

Start with a complimentary Data HealthScan at [DNB.com/Data-HealthScan](https://www.dnb.com/Data-HealthScan) or contact us today at 1-888-826-4877 to arrange your assessment.

## Understand your online reach

2

Ready to increase your online reach and improve your Account-Based Marketing? Get your free Online Reach Report at: [DNB.com/marketing/media/online-reach-offer.html](https://www.dnb.com/marketing/media/online-reach-offer.html)

## Evolve your data

3

Growth is the mantra for your sales and marketing teams. Find out how Dun & Bradstreet can help fuel your revenue engine by providing the strongest identity and intelligence on your prospect and customer universe to help improve marketing ROI, drive ABM strategies, accelerate the buyer journey and increase sales efficiency. Visit [DNB.com/sales-marketing](https://www.dnb.com/sales-marketing)



## About Dun & Bradstreet

Dun & Bradstreet helps companies around the world improve their business performance. The global leader in commercial data and analytics, we glean insight from data to enable our customers to connect with the prospects, suppliers, clients and partners that matter most. Since 1841, companies of every size rely on Dun & Bradstreet to help them manage risk and reveal opportunity.