

2021 ABM BENCHMARK SURVEY

PERSONALIZATION & ENGAGEMENT DATA BECOMING TOP DRIVERS FOR ACCOUNT SELECTION, SEGMENTATION, MESSAGING & OTHER GTM KEY STRATEGIES

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Executive Summary

Spoiler alert: ABM strategies have shifted over the past year.

Dramatically.

While previous editions of *Demand Gen Report's (DGR) ABM Benchmark Survey* indicated sales and marketing alignment as the biggest ABM-related challenge, the 2021 version knocked alignment off its throne and crowned personalization at scale as the primary area marketers struggle with — it jumped 10 percentage points from the 2020 survey to catapult to the No. 1 spot.

The growing influence of personalization and more narrow targeting of ABM campaigns reflects an overall shift, as practitioners turn to campaign customization to better identify and meet accounts where they are to increase engagement. This trend also reflects increased adoption of ABM, as more than 98% of respondents indicated they currently utilize or plan to implement an ABM strategy. For the 2% of dissenters, they wrote in that they have too small of a company or haven't investigated it yet (implying it's nonetheless top of mind).

That 98% breaks down into two key groups: 63% who said they currently utilize ABM initiatives and 35% who noted they plan on implementing it. Of those 35%, 70% indicated they will implement ABM initiatives within the next year — reinforcing the popularity of this strategy.

Interestingly, most survey respondents are new to the ABM game, with 54% indicating their ABM campaigns are less than one year old. As ABM evolves with the times, new practitioners are poised to learn from seasoned vets in key areas, as they can adopt some of the newer, more advanced approaches.

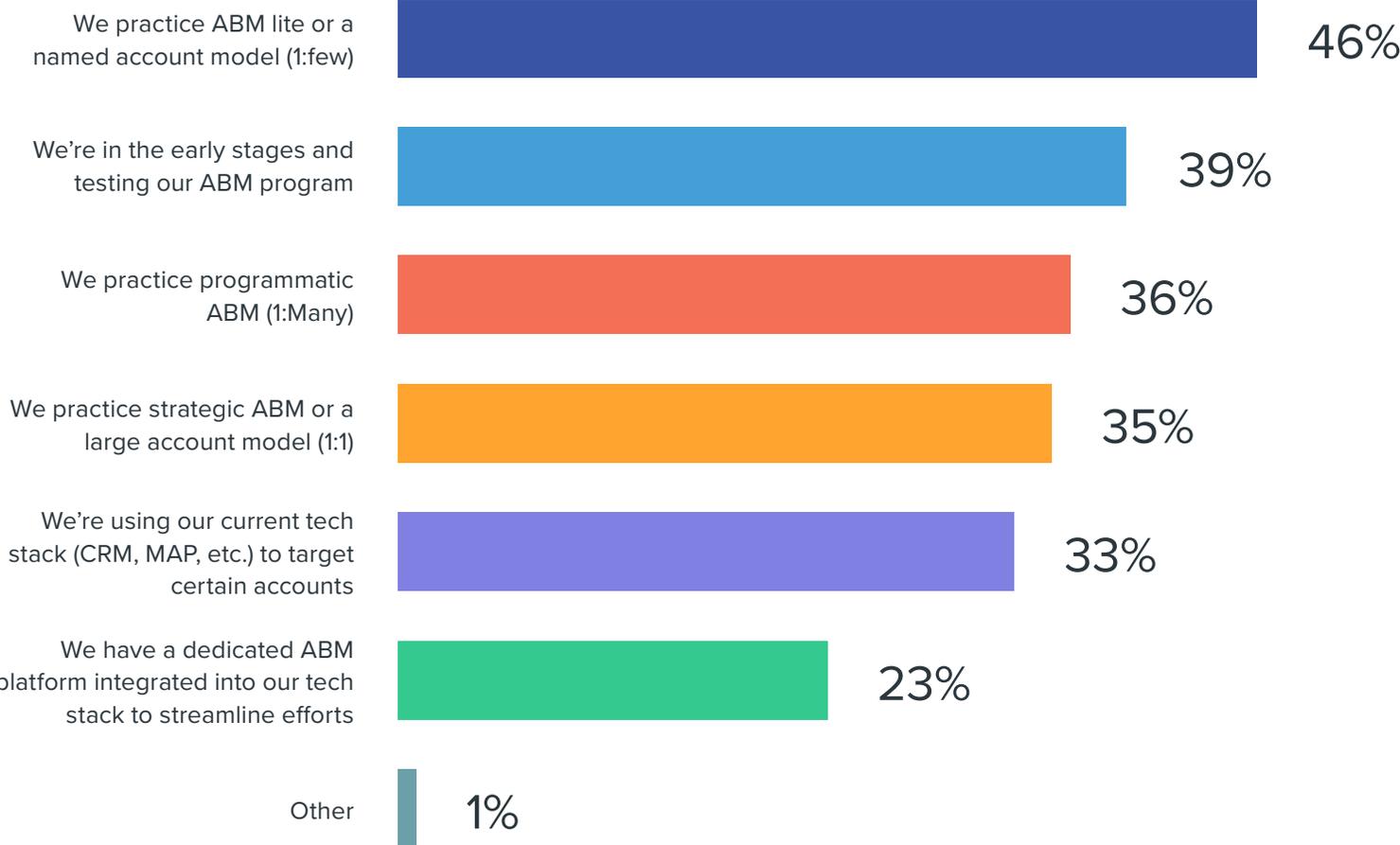


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Throughout this report, we will examine the advancements in ABM strategies through the lens of mature and emerging account-based strategies, with specific topics of discussion including:

- The factors influencing account selection;
- New challenges marketers are grappling with and what they can expect in the future;
- The most popular channels ABM practitioners are currently using and plan to use for targeting;
- New content assets and delivery forms; and
- The refined toolkits fueling data generation and action.

How would you describe your ABM initiatives?



Understanding Accounts & Identifying Key Technologies To Inform Campaigns

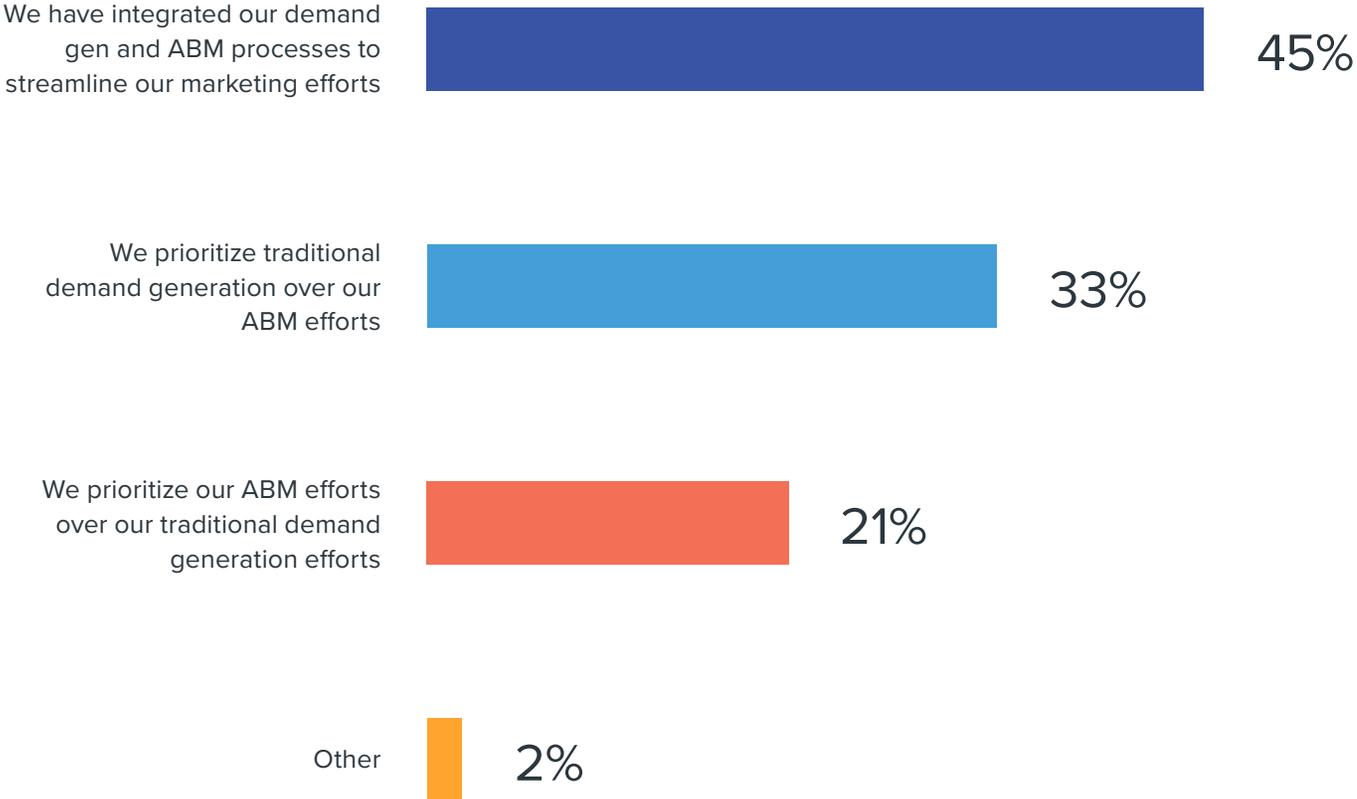
Before delving into the specifics of account selection, it's imperative to examine where practitioners are in their ABM initiatives. Overall, the majority of respondents (45%) indicated they're practicing "ABM Lite" or a 1:few model, but the breakdown of that statistic is interesting, as new and old ABM adopters have specific priorities.

For mature ABM initiatives, the biggest priority was the more advanced 1:many programmatic approach, while organizations just getting started (unsurprisingly) indicated they are still in the early and testing stages of their programs.

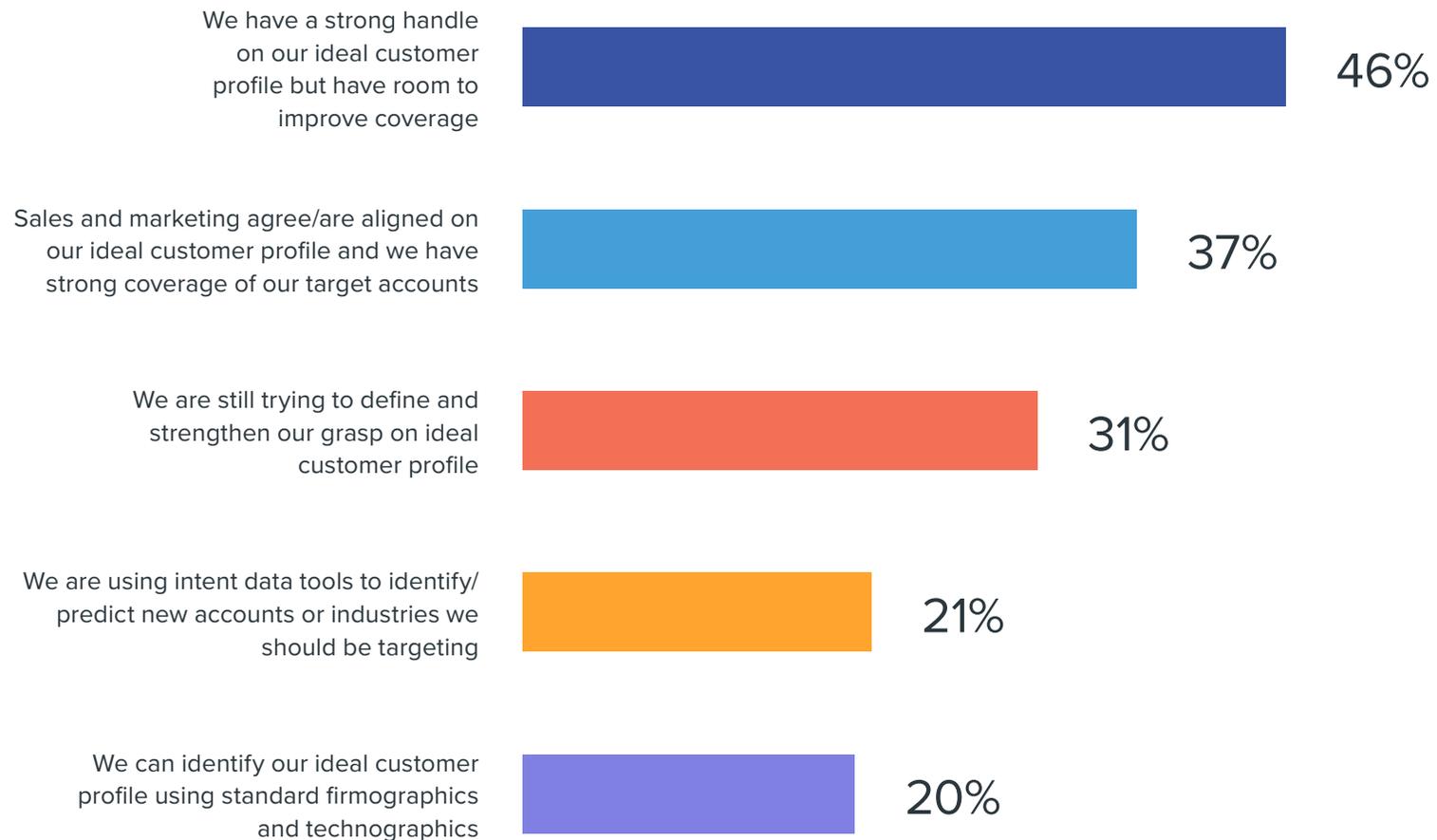
Across the board, all ABM practitioners agreed that the key component of their marketing operations is relying on a blend of demand generation and ABM tactics to inform their account-based campaigns. The writing for a demand gen/ABM combination has been on the wall, as it's been slowly trending up year-over-year.

The "sweet spot" — so to speak — of accounts targeted fell in the 101-500 range (25%), which remained consistent with last year's findings. When organizations are deciding their account structure, 46% indicated that have a strong handle on their ICP but have room to improve coverage, while 37% said sales and marketing agree/are aligned on their ICP and have strong coverage of target accounts.

Which best describes your current marketing operations?



When thinking about which accounts to include in your existing or potential ABM program:





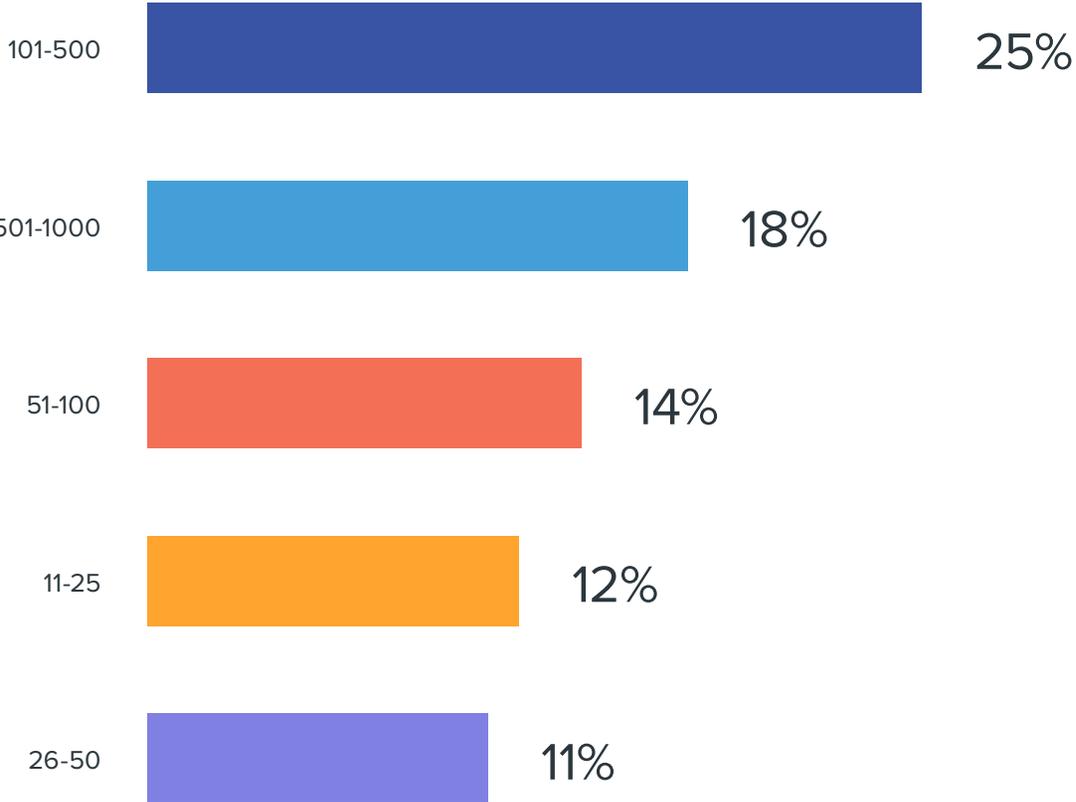
45% of marketers have integrated their demand gen and ABM processes to streamline their marketing efforts.

When it comes to the technology marketers use to target accounts, the two basic building blocks of toolkits continue to be CRMs and MAPs (81% and 71%, respectively), but other technologies growing in adoption include:

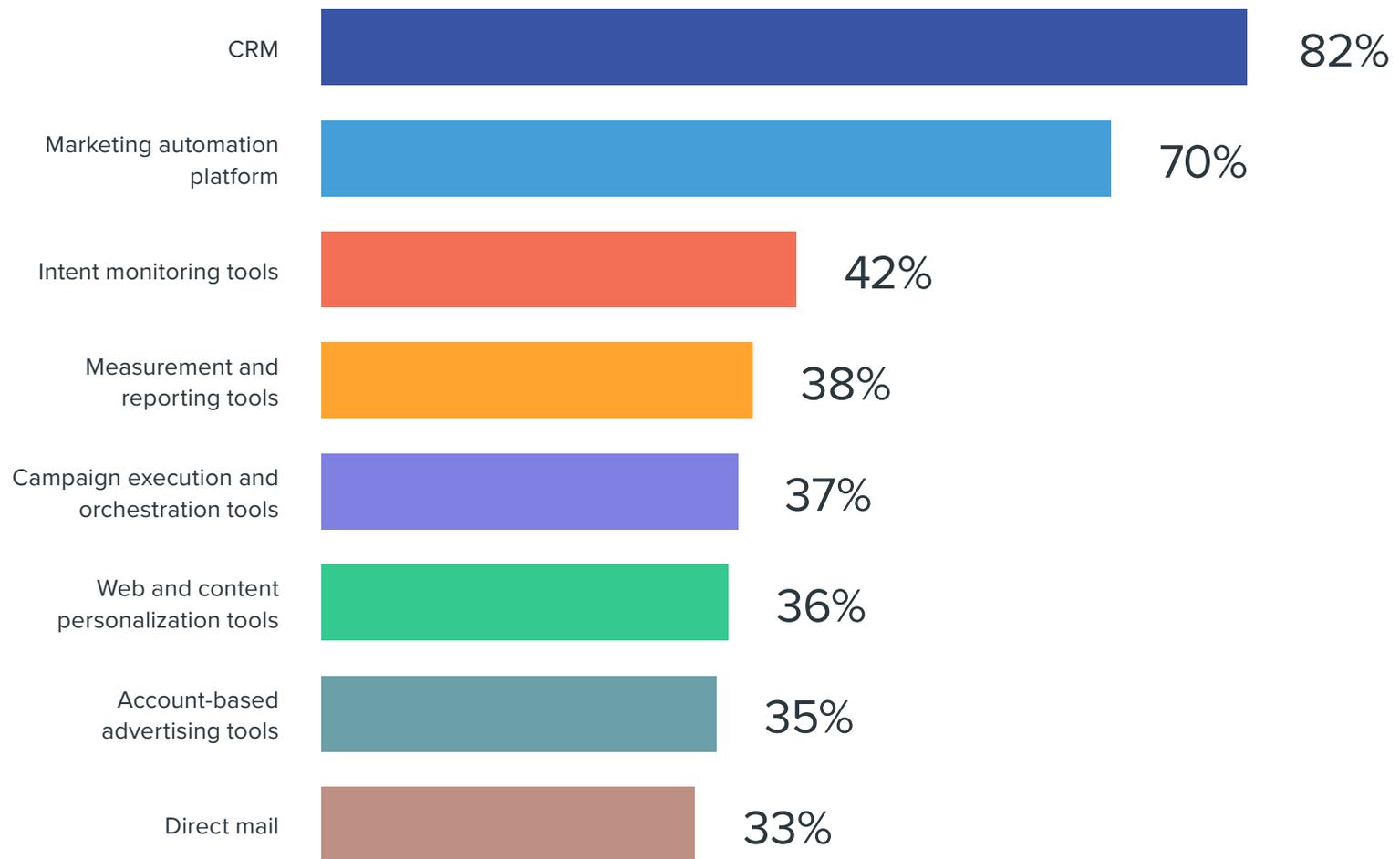
- Intent monitoring tools (42%);
- Measurement and reporting tools (38%);
- Campaign execution and orchestration tools (36%);
- Web and content personalization tools (36%); and
- Account-based advertising tools (34%).

Content syndication and direct mail fell out of the top five (or seven, including CRMs and MAPs) to make room for account-based advertising and web and content personalization tools, highlighting the shifting focus to more customized, data-driven campaigns designed to engage buyers.

How many accounts does your marketing team currently target with an ABM strategy?



Which technologies are you currently using to support your ABM strategy?



Focusing On A Data-Based Campaign Structure

As we spoiled earlier, the top 10 ABM challenges faced some interesting shifts over the past year. Personalization at scale emerged as the biggest difficulty for ABM practitioners of all experiences, followed closely by identifying ROI and attribution — which climbed to 44% from last year's 31%.

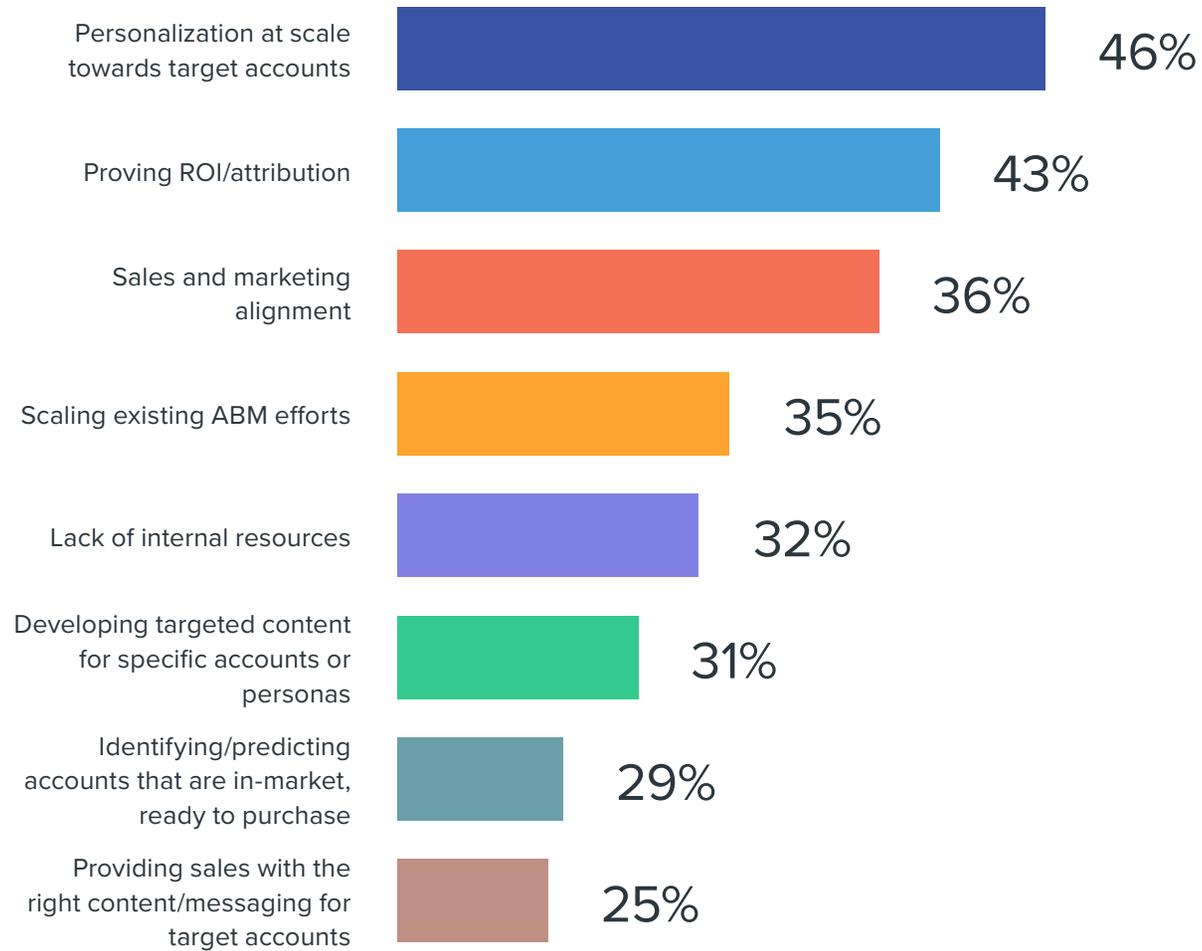
With personalization and ROI/attribution unseating sales and marketing alignment, does this mean organizations have finally unlocked seamless internal collaboration? Not quite, but they're close — and it's growing with maturity.

When filtered by ABM experience, “sales and marketing alignment” rounded out the top three for practitioners with less than one year of practice, while those with more than one year of experience rounded out their top three with “developing targeted content for specific accounts or persona.”

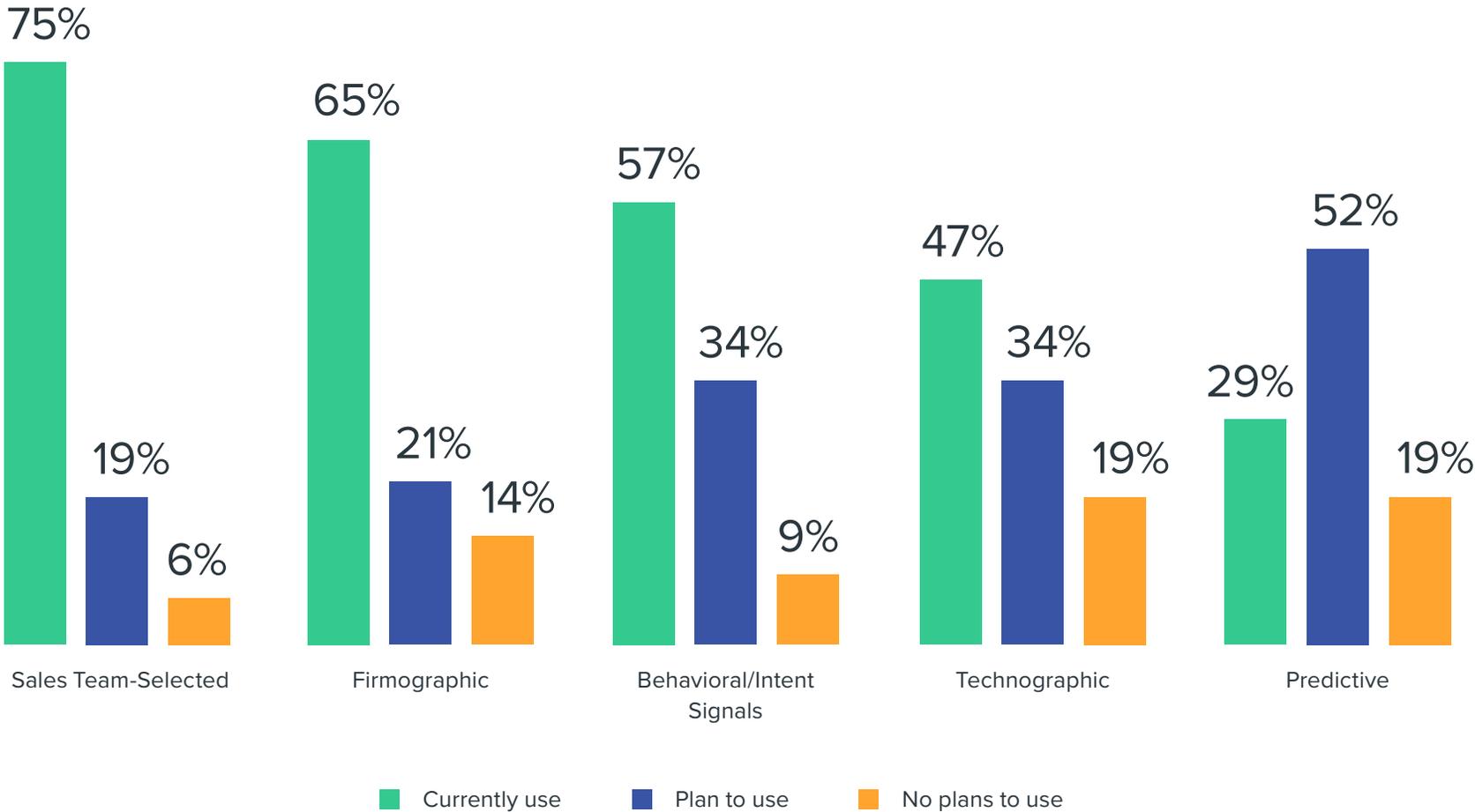
Holistically rounding out the top 10 challenges are:

- Scaling existing ABM efforts (35%);
- Lack of internal resources (32%);
- Developing specific content for targeted accounts/personas (31%);
- Identifying/predicting accounts that are in-market, ready to purchase (29%);
- Providing sales with the right content/messaging for target accounts (25%); and
- Determining how many accounts to target (23%).

What are your biggest ABM-related challenges?



What data do you use, or plan to use, to help build and formulate your targeted account list for ABM?





Targeting The “Right” Accounts A Pivotal First Step

When it came to account selection, the old-school method of sales team-selected accounts to target remained as the most popular account selection method (75%), but several new spotlight stealers emerged as serious contenders to upset sales-selected, such as:

- Behavioral/intent signals (57%);
- Firmographic data (65%); and
- Technographic data (47%).

This identifies a much more advanced approach to ABM, as companies are relying on datasets to realize in-market accounts and anticipate their needs, utilize key industry information and analyze what technologies and software prospects are already using. Continuing that theme of advanced technologies, 52% of respondents indicated that they plan to utilize predictive programming over the next year.

Once the target accounts are identified, marketers are diving deeper into the data generated to augment their account lists, optimize the reach of ABM campaigns and increase personalization through two key methods: Internal research (70%) and working with data providers to:

- Identify target roles and titles (58%); and
- Add richer fields/info on existing contacts (47%).

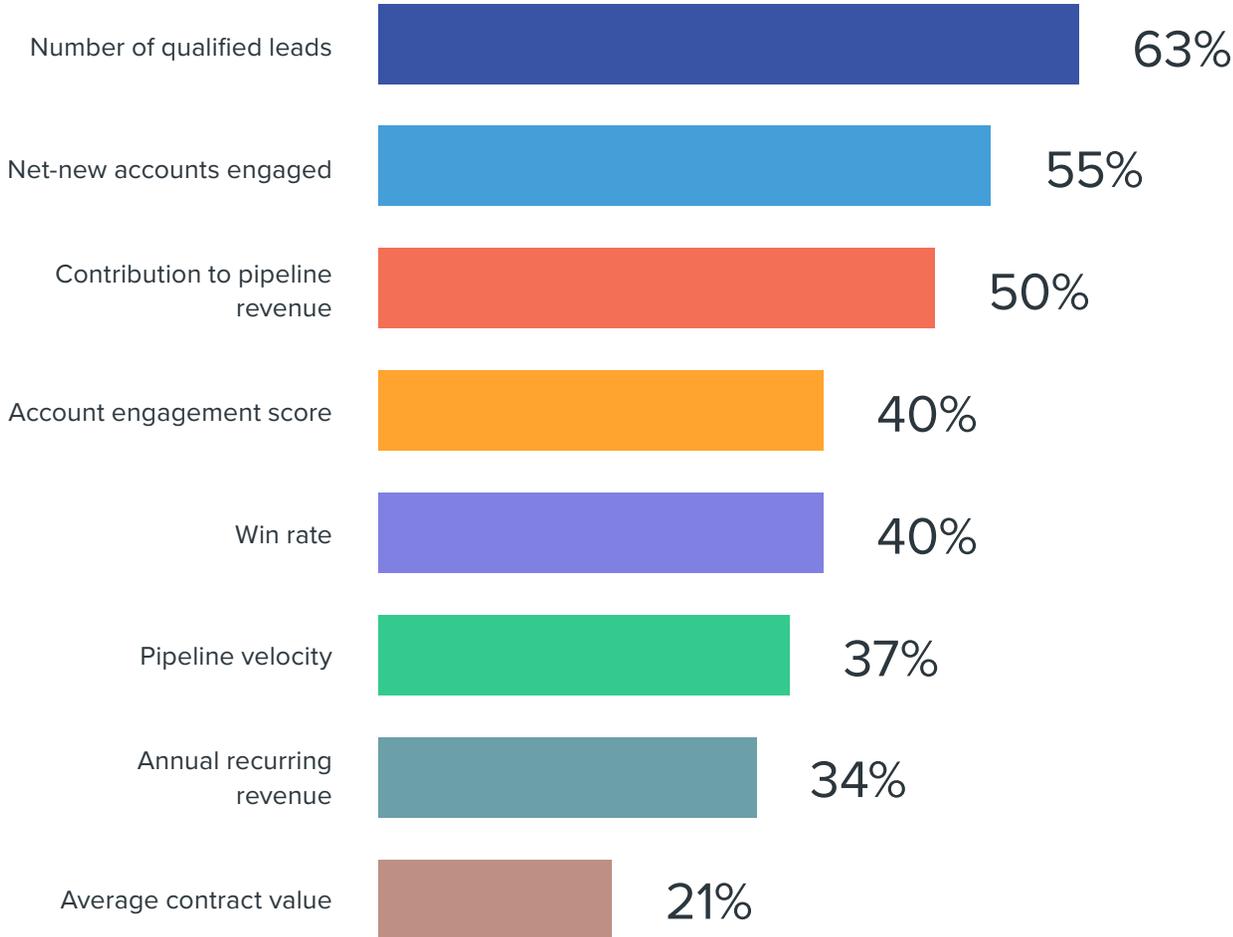


52% of respondents indicated that they plan to utilize predictive programming over the next year.

For those who aren't currently working with data providers, 50% plan to incorporate them over the next year. Additionally, 42% of respondents plan on working with a predictive analytics provider to build a list of likely buyers and 38% will turn to solution providers to add intelligence and insights on key contacts.

When it comes to reprioritizing and reviewing account lists, the majority of respondents said they conduct audits quarterly (40%) and monthly (30%). Confidence comes along with maturity here, as ABM programs that have been in practice for more than a year rely on quarterly analysis. Programs under the one-year mark utilize monthly reviews, indicating that comfortability in optimized account lists comes with age.

How do you measure your ABM efforts?





Creating Highly Personalized & Tailored Content To Promote Account Engagement

The “meat” of ABM campaigns revolves around relevant content that encourages engagement, with marketers tailoring assets to specific industries (61%), specific roles (55%) and account challenges and needs (51%). Those findings are complemented by the 45% of respondents who use templated versions of generic content with some personalization. Specifically, the most popular content formats include:

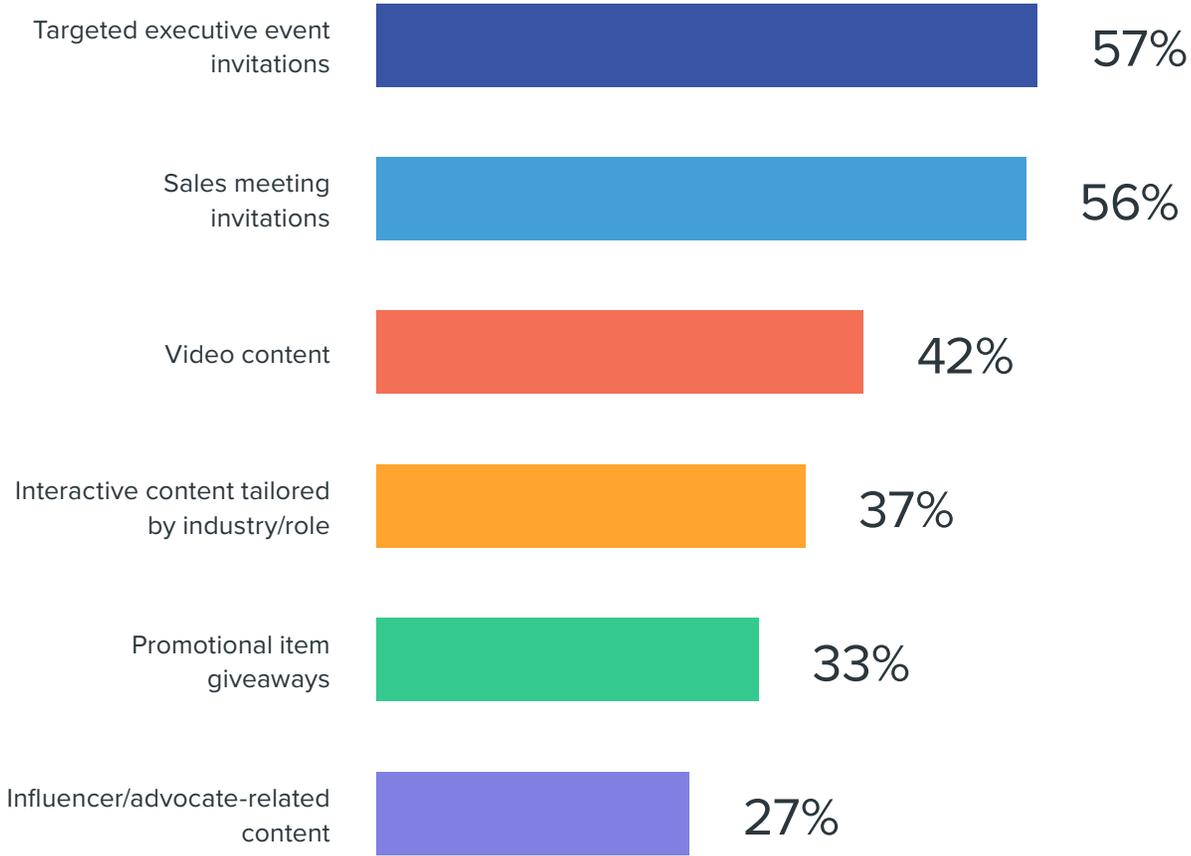
- Case studies (69%);
- Articles/blogs (65%);
- White Papers (61%);
- Guides/E-books (58%); and
- Research (50%).

Though it wasn't an option, several respondents wrote-in that webinars are becoming a primary content asset.

Case studies securing the top content format lends credibility to the emerging trend of demand for customer-voice-based content and targets' desire for actionable assets. Within those forms, marketers are refining their structure to include more interactivity and experiential content. Specifically, teams are relying on:

- Targeted executive event invitations (57%);
- Sales meeting invitations (55%);
- Video content (42%);
- Interactive content tailored by industry/role (38%); and
- Promotional item giveaways (33%).

What type of content or experiences are you offering as part of your ABM initiatives?





Email reigned supreme as the top delivery channel at 91%, followed by account-based advertising (66%).

Given that the ultimate goal of ABM is to get target accounts and executives engaged with sales teams, it seems that marketers are trending in the right direction with content delivery mechanisms and enhancements.

Now, how are marketers sending out those campaigns to reach buyers? Unsurprisingly, email reigned supreme as the top delivery channel at 91%, followed by:

- Account-based advertising (66%);
- In-person events (64%);
- Outbound tele-prospecting (53%);
- Direct mail (50%); and
- Personalized website content (46%).

Chatbots remained an emerging method of engagement as well, as 31% of respondents indicated they currently utilize them and another 31% plan to implement them.



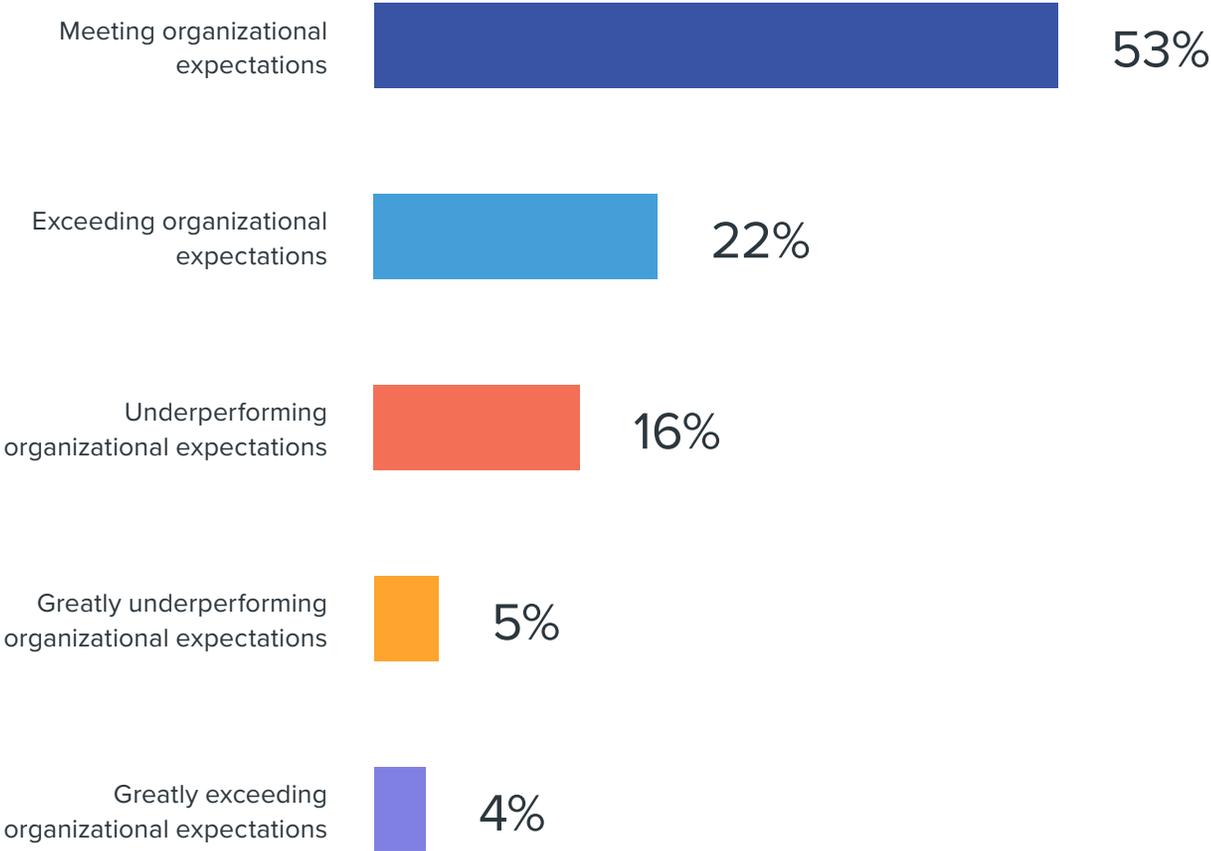
40% of respondents plan to create a centralized content hub that is targeted and personalized to specific accounts.

Another contender climbing the ranks are custom resource centers, with 40% of respondents indicating they plan to create a centralized content hub that is targeted and personalized to specific accounts.

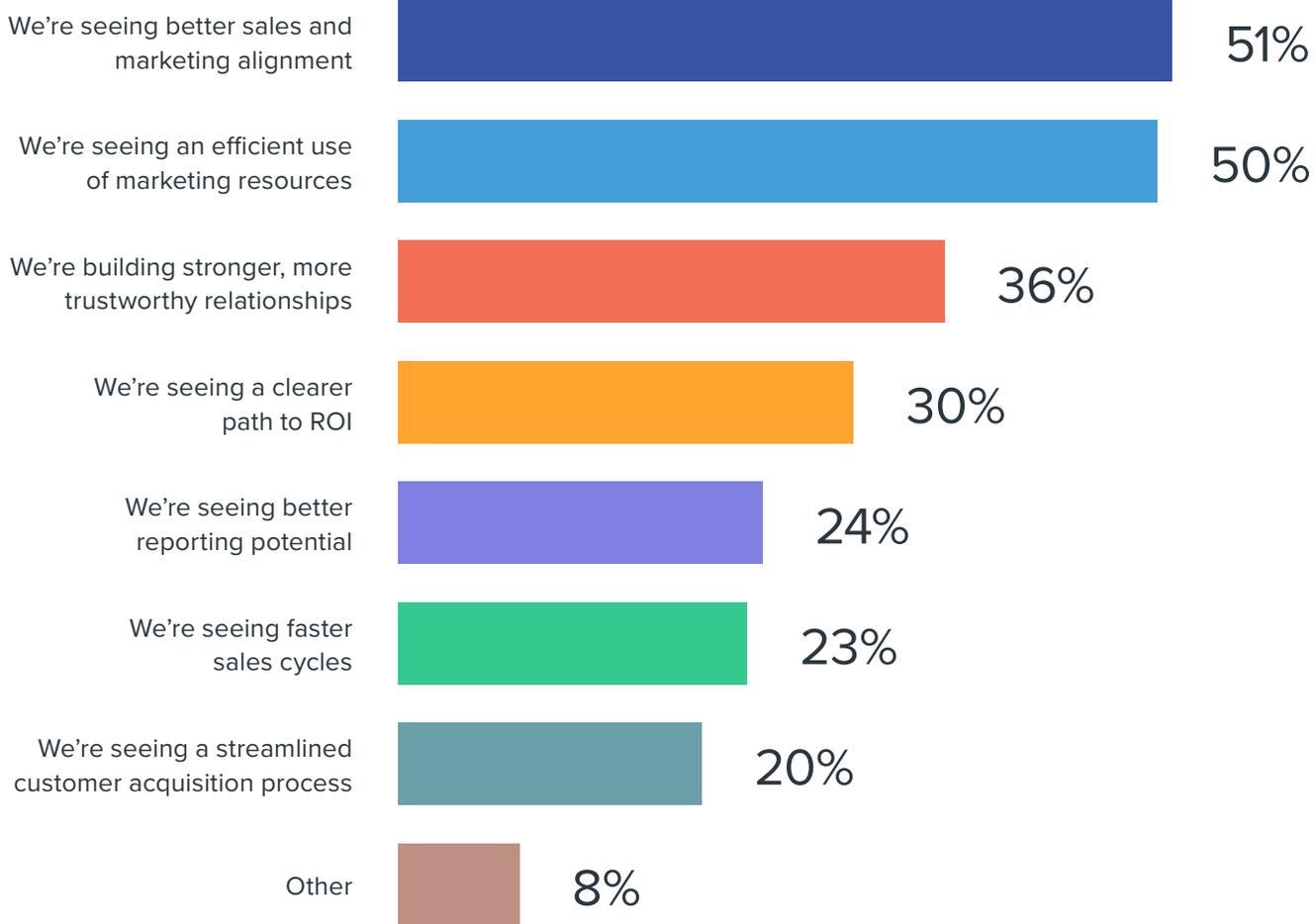
With so many advancements and responsibilities on ABM's plate, it's no surprise that 73% respondents indicated that they currently use or plan to use an agency partner to assist with key areas, including:

- Developing content assets (34%);
- Setting overall ABM strategy (31%);
- Overall ABM execution (30%);
- Designing creative/campaign themes (30%); and
- Account selection/prioritization and contact list development (28%).

How satisfied are you with the impact your ABM efforts are having for your organization?



How are your ABM initiatives positively impacting your business?





Conclusion: The Strongest ABM Campaigns Are Fueled By Personalization & Data

The targets are identified, the datasets refined and the content created — now it's time to measure. ABM practitioners want tangible results that demonstrate their campaigns' successes and contribution to revenue to share with the sales team. As such, the top ABM campaign measurement methods are:

- Number of qualified leads (63%);
- Net-new accounts engaged (55%);
- Contribution to pipeline revenue (49%);
- Account engagement score (40%); and
- Win rate (40%).

The goal of these methods is to identify the targets that spend the most time on a company's website, so they can be properly routed to sales to show real attraction and conversion processes. With that in mind, 79% of practitioners indicated their ABM is meeting, exceeding or greatly exceeding their expectations. Specific organizational impacts include:

- Better sales and marketing alignment (51%);
- Efficient use of marketing resources (49%); and
- Stronger, more trustworthy relationships (36%).

Whether ABM campaigns are just starting or well-established, the primary goals and processes are relatively aligned across maturity stages. This indicates the shift to research- and data-based campaigns that focus on personalization and interactivity as key aspects to successful ABM strategies.

About The Survey

Demand Gen Report surveyed 308 B2B marketing executives and professionals of various roles and within various industries throughout October 2021. The respondents of the 2021 ABM Benchmark Survey range from Director (36%), Manager (35%), Vice President (13%) and C-level (10%) roles.

Forty-one percent of this year's respondents work in the high-tech industry, with others working in professional services (14%), financial services (10%) and business services (7%). The respondents came from companies that generated a variety of annual revenue, with 31% working for companies generating less than \$25 million.

Other respondents came from companies that generate more than \$25 to \$50 million (16%), \$150 to \$500 million (15%) and \$100 to \$500 million (15%).



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Demand Gen Report is a targeted online publication that uncovers the strategies and solutions that help companies better align their sales and marketing organizations, and ultimately, drive growth. A key component of the publication's editorial coverage focuses on the sales and marketing automation tools that enable companies to better measure and manage their multi-channel demand generation efforts.

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RESOURCES



2021 State Of ABM



What's Working In Account-Based Marketing?



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