



eBook

The Hidden Costs of Doing Nothing: Why B2B Enterprises Need an ABM Platform

An account-based approach can help prove and improve the value of marketing, boost your ROI, and earn more budget—all while nurturing a healthy pipeline for your enterprise.



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Introduction

Account-based marketing (ABM) is built upon the premise that not all accounts are created equal, meaning that **some accounts** should be prioritized and targeted based on their revenue-generating potential.

“When organizations identify which accounts [their] growth is most likely to come from, they can begin to support their growth goals.” - [Forrester](#).

In fact, a [Forrester 2022 Total Economic Impact™ Study](#) found that customers adopting ABM and using a platform purpose-built to provide an account-first context for all data and engagement efforts had **a return-on-investment of 367 percent in three years and a payback period of less than six months.**

How? Because ABM:

- Improves revenue and better sales productivity
- Enhances cross-functional collaboration, especially between sales and marketing
- Has the capacity to measure and optimize value creation
- Fosters better program visibility and planning

About this eBook

This eBook is intended to make enterprise buyers aware of:

1. Why account-first approaches supported by an ABM platform can drive more revenue and efficiency
2. The “lost opportunity costs” of attempting ABM without a platform that offers an account-first context.

When you finish reading this eBook, you’ll understand:

- Why your lead-first approaches aren’t actually leading to more efficiency and revenues, and how an account-first approach can.
- Why your existing marketing automation platform and tools, designed with a lead-first mindset, aren’t enough.
- How adopting a single platform for ABM can help your enterprise prove and improve the value of marketing.



Focusing on Your Best Accounts

Your go-to-market (GTM) approach can be a spectrum of styles based on deal size, ranging from product-led growth (PLG) and high-velocity lead gen for low price points, to targeted demand gen, to 1:many ABM, to 1:few, and to bespoke 1:1 ABM for your 7+ figure deals — but no matter your specific approach, your GTM will always benefit from being more focused on accounts with the highest likelihood to buy from you.

For many, ABM has felt like a massive undertaking that you need to be “ready” for. We want to help you understand that you don’t need to wait in order to be “ready” for ABM — if you are in B2B, [you are already all ready!](#)

Account-based best practices can be applied to your current approach to begin driving more value and revenue. And when your GTM is supported by the right tech stack that gives you insights, including account-based measurements and agile playbooks for sales and marketing, you’ll be enabled to:

- 1. Target your biggest accounts via an account-based strategy.**
- 2. Drive more growth with less money.**
- 3. Accelerate deals and sell more.**



B2B is Different: From Lead-First to Account-First

Being account-based means bringing **more focus to how you allocate resources** to generate revenue. High-quality, account-based engagement supports a higher average selling price (ASP), lower customer churn, and increased expansion revenue. You shift from a quantity (lead-first) focus to a quality (account-first) focus that drives ROI.

Marketers have traditionally dealt with leads, while sales talked to accounts. Marketing automation platforms and other martech tools are designed for lead-first approaches.

Only some of this makes sense. In B2C, for example, lead-first approaches are typically more effective because consumers engage with brands and make purchases as individual buyers.

But B2B is fundamentally different: buying groups are more prevalent and the buying process is much more complicated and time-consuming, with many more touchpoints. As Demandbase CMO Jon Miller [explains](#):

In every complex B2B deal, there are many buyers involved: the decision maker, the end user, the influencer, the CFO, the procurement department, and so on. LinkedIn research found an average of 6.8 people in the B2B buying committee and a Clari study found that deals over \$100K require 19 meetings

with 14 different stakeholders. Put simply, while in B2C, individuals or leads make the purchases, in B2B, companies or accounts do.

ABM is also different from lead-based approaches because it offers a shared view where sales and marketing are both looking at the same data and aligning around accounts. Data-driven insights at the account level empower timely orchestration (of marketing, sales, and even post-sales teams) around account signals, enabling timely, targeted outreach that converts.

Meanwhile, “traditional” lead generation sees marketing tossing leads over to sales, and when no coordination and low conversion rates ensue, the blame game often begins:

“Your leads were dead ends,” complains sales.

“You dropped the ball on the follow-up,” bemoans marketing.

Rinse and repeat, until everyone runs out of fingers to point. This handoff approach does NOT reflect the complexities of the modern B2B buying journey, where coordination and shared data are crucial components of success.

Your Marketing Automation Platform is NOT Enough

Don't try to "[MacGyver](#)" your way to ABM.

And by that we mean: don't deploy marketing technology and tools that were purpose-built for "lead-first" approaches and repurpose them for an account-first strategy.

Instead, you need a platform purpose-built for ABM that is natively integrated with your marketing automation, your CRM, and your website.

As Demandbase CMO Jon Miller, who co-founded a leading marketing automation platform (MAP), explained in his book [Unspam Your Brand](#):

It's pretty much guaranteed that your existing marketing technology is holding you back [because it was] not built to handle what's needed today:

- *Navigating across accounts and people*
- *Tracking intent behaviors across the web to identify in-market accounts*
- *Expanding existing customer relationships by cross-selling additional products*

- *Managing sophisticated digital advertising programs*
- *Supporting a dynamic, synchronized process where Marketing and Sales work as a team.*

You simply won't be able to deliver on a B2B go-to-market strategy today (and for the next decade) using technology that was built more than a decade ago.

Trying to do so results in: problems creating enough pipeline, poor marketing and sales alignment, difficulty moving upmarket, and sluggish expansion revenue. On the flipside, a purpose-built platform brings all your data together and provides that necessary account context so that all of your other martech tools can do their job more efficiently.

[This Forrester 2022 TEI Study](#) reinforces the need for a single platform designed to create an account context:

"Long gone are the days of disconnected, distinct platforms designed to carry out one specific part of the demand or ABM process. Now the core capabilities marketers require are integrated into a single platform. This converged infrastructure delivers far-ranging benefits from cost efficiencies, greater integration, enhanced functionality, and increased potential usage across the enterprise." - [Forrester](#).

Account-Centricity: How Data and Technology Enable Success

If a marketing automation platform (MAP) can't recognize that a lead is a member of a buying committee or group, and can't match the lead to a specific account in order to create that necessary account context, you're going to have multiple problems with account engagement and measurement.

Your engagement approach will inevitably be fragmented and incoherent, hurting your ability to convert the account because you're reaching out to, say, the eight members of a buying group in eight completely different ways.

Not good.

(Not to mention your metrics and reporting will be equally scattered and nonsensical.)

The answer? Make every technology you use smarter by adding data and Account Intelligence.

There's a lot to say about data. If you want to deep dive into the topic, we recommend taking a look at our [Smarter Go-To-Market™ Powered By Account Intelligence eBook](#) (starting on page 4).

Want to get through this eBook first? Here's a crash course on the basics of data and Account Intelligence to get you up to speed:

- There are two main categories of data: first-party (you have it) and third-party (you need to source it).
- First-party data includes information in your CRM, MAP, corporate email and calendar, website data, and advertising metrics.
- Third-party data encompasses company information, hierarchy (and grouping), news and events, technographics, contacts, social insights, connections, intent, and account identification.
- Data needs to be validated, cleansed, matched, enriched, deduplicated, and regularly updated to have data integrity (meaning it's accurate, reliable, and rich).
- [Account Intelligence](#) is aggregation of B2B first and third-party data, transformed by artificial intelligence into insights.

Account-Centricity: How Data and Technology Enable Success

And Smart B2B marketers are using Account Intelligence to:

- Make better decisions when it matters most.
- Spot opportunities earlier and progress them faster.
- Turn spammy interactions into relevant engagements.

Let's see what this looks like in motion.

In sharp contrast to the past, today's B2B marketers might complain that they have too much data — too many signals from too many disparate systems that make it hard to separate the signal from the noise — but they still don't have actionable insight. Excessive data causes distraction for demand and account-based marketers. Instead of focusing on the things that matter most, like delivering exceptional buying experiences and intelligent growth, marketers focus on a leads-first, acquisition-only, sourcing-matters strategy.

“A sophisticated buyer with abundant product information and a complex sales process screams out for an orchestrated approach to prospect engagement — data-driven, omnichannel, and personalized,” says Mark Smith, president at Kitewheel, in his [The Future of B2B Marketing](#) webinar. “It's all about guiding the buyers through a successful purchase journey, not simply using them for email target practice.”

A platform purpose-built for ABM will take all your data and augment it with third-party insights to create Account Intelligence that drives more conversion, revenue, and cross-functional coordination on behalf of your target accounts. And an [always-on database management solution](#) can clean and standardize all your data, ensuring data quality as a foundation for all your account-based efforts.



5 Ways to Get Started with ABM, Fast

You don't need to “boil the ocean” all at once. Instead, start small, move quickly, and think big. Here are five ways you can make a quick impact by adopting account-based technology and best practices to accelerate revenue generation:

1. Website deanonymization tells you what accounts are on site, even if they haven't identified themselves. In a typical lead-based marketing process, sales would have to wait for a “hand raise” by a contact at their account before they knew one of their assigned accounts was showing interest. But with an ABM platform that deanonymizes website traffic, sales can take passive research signals such as visiting high-value content pages and turn that intent into an opportunity to follow up with key contacts in the account.

For one of our Enterprise customers, deanonymizing web traffic turned into a closed deal in 10 days. The account visited their website and the account rep was notified. The contact at the account didn't fill out a form, but the rep was able to gain insights into what pages the account contact was visiting

in order to inform the rep's outreach — and armed with this history along with insights from the recent site activity, the rep was able to successfully engage the account and accelerate the deal.

You can do the same in three simple steps:

1. Use technology like Demandbase to turn anonymous web traffic into recognized visitors from identified companies.
2. Equip sales with these insights through web reports or push notifications to your reps in tools they live in, like Slack, so they can keep track of account activity and intent.
3. Demonstrate value by consulting rather than selling while accounts are in the early consideration stages and push that conversation along in a way that feels natural, not forced.



5 Ways to Get Started with ABM, Fast

2. [Web personalization](#) Nothing beats a personalized experience to turn website visits into engagement — and website personalization is key to differentiating your brand and increasing sales in today's always-on marketplace. Using web personalization technology, you can customize a website experience to a visitor's needs and interests. For example, you can identify the company and industry that a visitor belongs to, then serve up images, case studies, and offers tailored to that account or industry. Web personalization also allows you to create multiple web page experiences aligned with different stages of the buying journey.

Web personalization can also be done in minutes. Here are a few ways you can start right away by personalizing a high-traffic or high-value page (like your homepage or a popular landing page) for one of your target segments:

1. Identify an industry and add a tagline such as "Trusted by customers of [insert the industry of your choosing]."
2. Go beyond the headline and personalize the blurbs on the page to sprinkle in the industry and change generic terms to terms of trade for that audience.
3. Think about how you might change default messaging for segments such as customers, company size, or regions.

3. [Account-based advertising](#) is one of the easiest and fastest ways to get started with account-based marketing and make a real impact. With account-based advertising, you focus 100% of your budget on the accounts that matter. You can quickly drive engagement and improve your qualified web traffic by serving up personalized ads to your ideal customer profile (ICP). Think about it – if you want to send an email or direct mail package, you need to have the person's contact information in your database. But account-based ads let you reach people you don't yet know, but want to know. This is particularly useful in reaching large B2B buying committees.

However, most ad tech is built for the individual consumer (B2C) — designed for reach, clicks, high volume/low consideration e-commerce transactions. B2B is different. To meet the needs of B2B, you need an account-based advertising solution that [leverages a demand-side-platform \(DSP\)](#) that is specifically built for B2B advertising needs. With the right account-based ad-tech, you can optimize your advertising effectiveness and efficiency by:

- Targeting high-potential accounts and buyers, not empty job titles.
- Tapping into real-time buyer intent signals, not off-the-shelf consumer data.

5 Ways to Get Started with ABM, Fast

- Customizing and personalizing messages to each account and member of the buying committee at every stage of the buying journey.

Simply put, with account-based ads you are able to hone in on the accounts and people that matter most, thus reducing wasted spend and improving results. Want an easy win with your sales team? Try out a “sales acceleration play”:

1. Meet with a few sales reps to identify a segment of accounts they’re having a hard time engaging.
2. Work with the sales reps to create personalized messaging that you can then use to turn on an advertising campaign for those accounts (bonus points if you use web personalization to optimize the ad landing page).
3. Watch your metrics like impressions, accounts reached, account lift, and new accounts on site take off.

Pro tip: Communicate results and metrics with the sales reps on a regular cadence and keep an open line of communication at all times so you can make changes to the campaigns and messaging as the deals progress.

4. [Intent data](#) to improve marketing segmentation, sales prioritization, and more efficient advertising. Intent data delivers insight about the otherwise anonymous content consumption behaviors that illustrate an account’s interest, current needs, and ultimately, what and when they’re in market to buy. This data helps your organization make important account segmentation and prioritization decisions, especially when combining it with what you already know about an account.

Here are three ways to leverage intent to make a quick impact:

1. Use intent data to prioritize sales outreach to accounts showing trending intent signals. Sales can improve productivity by reaching out to accounts that are showing interest and are in-market for your products and solutions. One of our sales team’s [top use cases for intent](#) follows this sequence:
 - > Use intent keywords to find hot accounts
 - > Identify the right people to reach out to within the account by typing trending intent terms into LinkedIn Sales Navigator to find titles that match the term
 - > Focus their outreach on those people within the account.

5 Ways to Get Started with ABM, Fast

2. Build more relevant marketing campaign audiences by identifying accounts in-market for a product, solution, or topic that is related to your campaign. This is a great way to identify and target accounts showing interest in different product lines and business units — and a solution to move beyond the pseudo-personalization of persona-based segmentation (which marketers typically resort to when identifying audiences for campaigns for different product lines by relying on personas alone).
3. Improve campaign messaging and sales outreach by tailoring content to intent signals. This is a fast track to better response rates — tie top intent terms into your subject line and email copy to grab attention and align with what the account cares about.

5. Daily Sales email digests, Slack alerts, and insights in CRM to help your sales team prioritize accounts showing increased intent or engagement. With sales intelligence tools, sellers are not only equipped with when to reach out, but also who to contact and what to say based on account activity, current news, and social insights. No need to go fish for relevance, as [these insights can be delivered right to sales reps' inbox](#).

With the right ABM platform in place, sales teams can easily set up a digest that gets delivered to their email inbox daily or weekly. This report could include insights like accounts that are showing trending intent; lost opportunities that are re-engaging; people at the account that are actively engaging with marketing programs; and target accounts visiting critical web pages. Email digests are a great, automated way for sales to get insights to help prioritize their accounts.

Many ABM platforms also integrate with CRM tools which provides another easy way for sellers to easily get insights where they work. Those insights can include company news, intent, complementary technologies, campaign responses, and common connections, in addition to industry challenges and trends. As sellers are looking at an account record, they can use these insights to help them identify contacts, learn more about the company, and view account engagement. Getting insights where they work — like email, Slack, or in their CRM — greatly improves their productivity so they can keep selling.

Scaling up quick wins. If you're looking to build a more holistic and systematic plan, you can scale up these quick wins and begin ABM across your organization with a phased [crawl-walk-run approach](#) to guide your longer-term vision.

Measuring What Matters

Metrics can measure almost anything, but they **should** measure what matters most.

Marketers have traditionally had metrics that are, at best, tenuously connected to revenue generation. Unless you track the right metrics, you can't connect specific investments and tactics to impacts on revenues. You can't prove and improve what you do.

Your company's board is looking at accounts, how many new logos you added, what your bookings are, what's your revenue, what's your retention rate. Sales is looking at accounts too because it's their territory. ***The obvious question then becomes: why is marketing the only group in the entire organization whose metrics don't focus on accounts?*** It makes no sense, but it's nonetheless the legacy mindset within marketing.

With an account-first approach, you're not reporting on metrics like click-thru rates, form fills, downloads, email opens and clicks, or even marketing-qualified leads (MQLs) as you do with lead-first approaches.

Instead, an account-centric platform enables you to measure account engagement, account lift, marketing qualified

accounts (MQAs), as well as pipeline metrics, including new meetings booked, lead-opportunity conversions, win rates, and more.

The ability to measure ABM's impact on pipeline allows you to prove and improve the value of marketing, boosting your ROI, growing your credibility within the organization, and earning more budget. And with metrics like account engagement (which are imperative since lead-based marketing looks only at a single person), you can show how you drove buyer committee interest — which is a must in B2B deals.

An example of lead-funnel measurement failure

If you look at your lead funnel and see four MQLs, one converted to SQL, and it becomes an opportunity, somebody will say, 'How can we increase our conversion rate from MQL to SQL to more than 25%?' What marketing inevitably ends up doing is taking marketing funds and investing them in optimizing the funnel. But that money is addressing an issue that isn't an actual issue.

Measuring What Matters

What if those four MQLs are actually one buying committee? So it's really a 100 percent conversion to the account. Then you don't need to fix that funnel, because it's not broken. It's actually working really, really efficiently.

Changing your thinking about metrics

You can transition from lead-first to account-first metrics through a phased approach, allowing you to keep all your operational metrics (program optimization and tactical metrics like ad clicks, emails opens, downloads, etc) within marketing, as you did before.

But your executive team doesn't really care about those operational metrics and instead wants to see overall engagement, meaning what percentage of the universe they care about is engaged with you right now. "How many qualified accounts have we created, how many meetings have we gotten within those accounts, how many sales qualified accounts, and what's our open pipeline?" In this model, accounts are the denominator for executive reporting.

*Pssst! If you need help selling ABM to your boss or leadership, **we can help!***

This account-first approach to metrics isn't about giving credit to marketing or sales, because marketing and sales are two sides of the same coin, which is revenue generation.

The metrics that matter most are account engagement, lift, MQAs, pipeline creation, and winning deals.

If any of those metrics are off, you can quickly identify the issue and focus on resolving it. For example, if you're light on SQLs and on setting up meetings (and you know you're sending over a lot of qualified accounts), you also know where you need to focus efforts to address the problem, rather than sifting through an executive dashboard of website visit sessions, leads, and generated net new names. A complete ABM solution provides all the account insights you need to target, coordinate, and accurately measure your outreach efforts, as well as their revenue impact.

Getting from Here to There

Since fear and the pull of legacy martech are so strong, you can run both lead-first and account-first metrics side-by-side. The results will enable you to talk to your executive team and stakeholders about how different data enables you to do different things, and how the decisions you make are ultimately based on the data you have.

If all you showed leadership was an MQL report, they're going to say "we need more MQLs," and that won't solve the problem, because you're not identifying and measuring the right things.

When you move to account-based metrics and mindsets, you might see the number of MQLs drop significantly, but you may also see the SQLs increase over the same time. Think about how much more efficient your SDR team becomes **if you don't have to create as many leads to get the same outcome.**

You reduce your overall costs **and** increase efficiency at the same time, a big win-win.

During an economic downturn when companies need to "do more with less," ROI and the cost for opportunities become top priorities. If you can prove and improve efficiency, which an account-first approach enables, that can bring you the money you need to maintain budgets and keep growing revenue.

With a purpose-built platform that pulls everything together into an account-first context, you can prioritize investments in places where the most revenue can be generated (i.e., on the accounts with the highest propensity to purchase from you), getting the most bang for your buck and closing the biggest deals.

Conclusion

We hope this eBook has helped you better understand why enterprises need a single, purpose-built platform to drive ABM success, not a “MacGyvered” martech approach that aggregates multiple tools that weren’t designed to deliver an account context and that don’t even integrate well.

A purpose-built platform pulling everything into an account-first context makes everything simple. You have visibility into the account and the funnel stage. You don’t need to deal with problems creating enough pipeline, poor marketing and sales alignment, difficulty moving upmarket, and sluggish expansion revenue, etc. any more.

When you have a prospect showing intent signals in real-time, you know what team does what specific tactic(s) in order to impact what metric.

You can take coordinated, relevant action and see the needle move on pipeline and revenues — which is what account-first success looks like.

Ready to show your boss why you need ABM? [We got you covered.](#)



Demandbase is Smarter GTM™ for B2B brands. We help marketing and sales teams spot the juiciest opportunities earlier and progress them faster by injecting Account Intelligence into every step of the buyer journey and orchestrating every action. For more information about Demandbase, visit www.demandbase.com.

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