

How to Become Fluent in ABM

A Pocket Guide to ABM Terms and Strategies



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INTRODUCTION

[87%](#) of B2B marketers have agreed account-based marketing (ABM) delivers a higher ROI than other marketing activities. But only [19%](#) of companies pursuing ABM say they are confident in their ability to execute it properly.

Even with the rapid adoption of ABM, a lot of marketers are still unsure of exactly how to implement this potentially game-changing strategy.

Adopting an ABM strategy gets particularly complicated when you begin evaluating ABM vendors. Trying to figure out all the new terms and jargon can be pretty daunting, so to help you navigate the language of ABM, we've put together this short pocket guide of terms and strategies.

You'll not only learn what the most common ABM terms mean, but you'll also understand the key ABM concepts and metrics that mean the most to your business.



As you become more fluent with ABM terms and concepts, the process of setting up an account-based strategy will seem a lot less complicated and a lot more approachable.

TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Account-based marketing (ABM)

Account-based marketing (ABM) is a targeted and personalized marketing strategy focused on engaging and progressing accounts toward purchasing your product or service.

Outbound marketing

Outbound marketing is the process of proactively getting your marketing message in front of a potential customer before they've exhibited interest in your product or service. Account-based marketing is often referred to as outbound marketing because you're actively going out to find your customers rather than waiting for them to find you—a practice typically referred to as inbound marketing.



While outbound used to have a negative connotation back when marketers blasted their messaging anywhere across the internet, new advances in targeting and technology have allowed outbound to become a very smart and strategic tactic. Using the tools of account-based marketing described in this guide, marketers can now go to their customer with thoughtful messaging that they specifically tailor to that customer's needs rather than waiting for the customers to come to them—or worse, blasting everyone with their messaging.

Target account list (TAL)

A list of companies that you've identified as being a good fit for your product or service. This list should be well researched, but more importantly, it should be supported by data.

We recommend starting with a smaller target account list at first and putting it to the test by targeting a couple of channels, such as display ads or direct mail. Testing and iterating your list is the best way to learn which companies are best influenced by your ABM campaigns.

To determine your first target account list, you should tap into your sales team. Since your sales team works day to day with the customers you want to engage, they are a perfect resource to identify patterns and build your target account list.

Once you have your initial list, you can also look into your past closed deals and look for any common patterns. Similar company sizes, revenue numbers, tech used, and industries are some of the most common patterns marketers find—but they certainly aren't the only ones.

Tiering

While you should be running ABM for all target customers, you shouldn't necessarily be using the same account-based plays/tactics for each. It's important to tier your target account list. This will help ensure you spend the appropriate amount of marketing effort based on the returns you expect from each prospect.



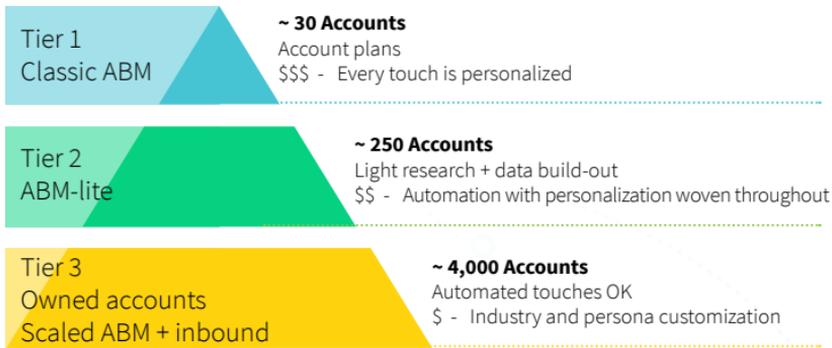
Tier 1 targets are typically referred to as your “whale accounts.” These are usually enterprise or high-spending customer opportunities who can make a huge impact on your revenue. These customers can take 6, 12, or even 24 months to close.



Tier 2 targets are medium-to-large customers who contribute a sizable amount to your revenue. These accounts are the sweet spot to start with for your first ABM efforts.



Tier 3 accounts are companies that contribute a smaller amount of revenue to your bottom line. They are still worth going after, but they usually don't bring in enough revenue to merit a full ABM campaign. However, they may still warrant an automated ABM approach.



Tier 2 is a great place to start with your first ABM campaigns for two reasons. First, ABM campaigns take more resources to execute, so starting with Tier 3 probably won't bring in enough revenue to justify a large spend. Second, Tier 2 accounts won't take as long to close as your Tier 1 accounts, giving you the opportunity to get insights and learn more quickly.

Total addressable market (TAM)

Your total addressable market is the complete universe of companies that could benefit from your product or service. A common mistake that marketers make is taking an account-based approach to their entire TAM.

Because ABM takes more time and effort than traditional demand-gen marketing, it's important to be selective with which accounts or types of accounts you choose from your TAM to be in your ABM program.

Owned accounts

An owned account is any account that has been assigned to your sales team to work. Since all accounts in an ABM program should be owned accounts, most marketers refer to them simply as accounts.

Named accounts

A named account is an owned account that you specifically select. These hand-selected named accounts are companies that you already know you want to secure and can be thought of like guests on a VIP list to a party. For example, if someone fills out a lead-gen form and is routed to your sales team, they become an owned account. But they aren't a named account because they came to you; you didn't go to them. The terms "named accounts" and "target accounts" are often used interchangeably.

Buyer persona

Nearly all B2B deals involve multiple stakeholders to make a purchase. These stakeholders can usually be split into decision makers and influencers. Most B2B sales reps spend the majority of their time targeting the decision maker, but what they don't realize is that there's an entire team around the decision maker that is influencing the purchasing decision.

One of the biggest strengths of ABM is that you can target both the decision maker and the influencers in order to win over the full team and accelerate the time to close. Using account and contact-level targeting, you can deliver different marketing messages to each persona that appeal to their individual needs. To learn more about persona-marketing, you can view our webinar: [Intro to Persona-marketing](#).

Demand unit

A demand unit is a term popularized by SiriusDecisions that simply refers to the buying committee within an account. SiriusDecisions defines a Demand Unit as "a buying group that has been organized to address a need the organization is challenged with." There can be multiple Demand Units (buying committees) within a single account. For example, if you sell productivity software, your product is suitable for the IT department, the marketing department, and the sales department within a company, so you might need to sell to multiple Demand Units within that one company.



IDEAL CUSTOMER PROFILE (ICP)

An ideal customer profile (ICP) is sometimes confused with a persona. An ICP in a B2B context should refer to the type of company that's the best fit for your product or service. Personas, on the other hand, should refer to the people on the buying committee of that company.

Lead quality

While a conventional marketing strategy would deem generating 1,000 leads as success, in an ABM program, the number of leads is less important. What is more critical is the engagement you are having with each lead and with the account as a whole.

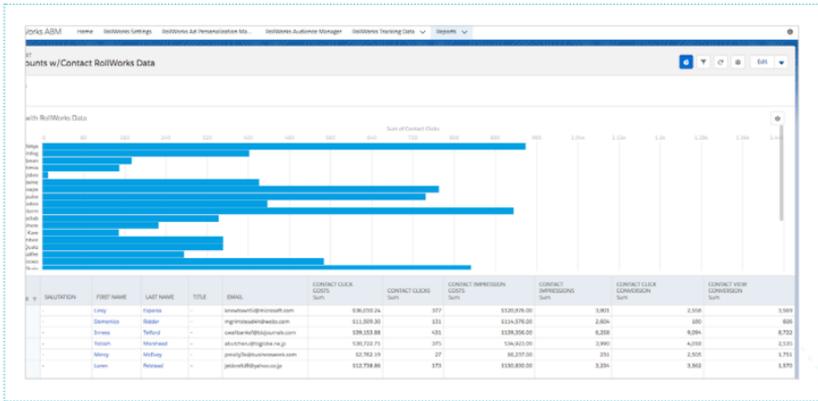
Usually, lead quality is measured based on the time spent interacting with your company and the lead's similarity to your buyer persona and ICP. The longer the time, the more engaged an account is. Here are other metrics to evaluate lead quality:

ENGAGEMENT METRICS	ICP-MATCHING METRICS
Pages visited	Size of company
Ad impressions	Number of employees
Email open rates	Revenue
Time on site	Tech used
Number of downloads	Industry
Number of signups	Size of team

Lead-to-account matching

Lead-to-account matching is when you associate a given lead to an account. This is an incredibly important step in running an effective ABM campaign. By matching leads to accounts, you are able to fill out who is on the buying committee that you need to target to make the sale. Taking some time to work with your marketing ops team to get your data tagged and routed properly is a crucial step that is often overlooked and undervalued.

In addition, if your ABM vendor can record data into your CRM at the contact level, you'll be able to track each lead and how much they're engaging with your content. Having a view of engagement at both the account level and the contact level can be hugely helpful to both your marketing and sales teams.



Intent vs. fit

Intent and fit are closely related to the table above. Intent refers to the actions of a company (i.e., its engagement level), whereas fit refers to the attributes of the company (i.e., its ICP match).

A high-intent account gives off engagement signals that tell you they are interested in your product. Maybe they've visited all your website pages and opened all your emails. A high-fit account, on the other hand, would be one that hits all your ICP attributes but may not have interacted with your company at all.

Keep in mind that you shouldn't just consider high-intent, high-fit accounts. Sometimes, companies that you would deem low fit might be exhibiting high intent.

An example of this would be if a small startup of 50 employees is interacting with all of your content. They are reading your whitepapers, attending your webinars, talking with you at events, requesting a demo of your product, etc. At first glance, you may deem them low fit because they are part of a small company, but after seeing this engagement and digging deeper, you may find that they have \$100 million in funding and are growing exponentially month after month.

You can use fit as your initial criteria for choosing accounts, but it's important to keep an open mind and also evaluate accounts based on their engagement and intent. Sometimes your customers will raise their hands for you, and it's up to you to pay attention so you can serve them when they do.

Pipeline acceleration

Pipeline acceleration refers to the speed with which leads move through your funnel to become closed-won deals. One of the most important benefits of ABM is not that it necessarily brings in more deals but, rather, that it closes deals faster. ABM works by concentrating your marketing across multiple channels so that your marketing makes a bigger impression more quickly than a traditional campaign.



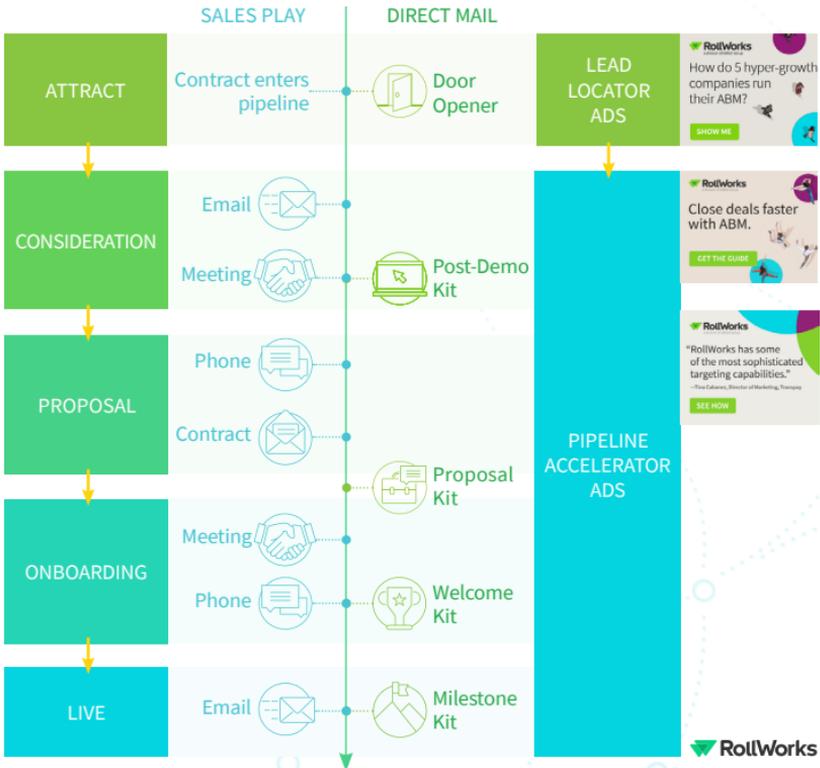
For example, in [our own ABM campaign](#), we combined display advertising, direct mail, and email outreach. We coordinated all three of these channels to reach our target accounts at the same time to make a big impression and stand out from the crowd.

Once we booked a meeting with the prospect, the ABM campaign didn't stop, though. We continued to use display ads, direct mail, and email to supplement the sales team's efforts as they moved the prospect through the pipeline.

You can [read more about this approach](#) in the strategies section of this guide.

Orchestration

In order to effectively execute an ABM campaign like the one described above, we needed to coordinate multiple marketing channels to reach a prospect at precise times throughout the sales funnel. Orchestration is the act of coordinating these channels and is essential to ABM working effectively. Here is an example of how we orchestrate our ads, direct mail, and sales touches across the lifecycle:



DIGITAL MARKETING ABM TERMS

Match rate

TOTAL MATCH RATE

Definition: the total number of cookies found for the email addresses uploaded into your ABM platform.

Your total match rate can best be thought of as your total reach. Once you've uploaded your list of email addresses (i.e., contacts) into your ABM platform, the platform will tell you the total number of devices (i.e., cookies) it has found in its data set that correspond to those email addresses.

This metric is useful to get a general idea of how many devices you'll be reaching, but it doesn't tell the whole story.

For example, if you input 10 email addresses and the ABM platform says it has found 15 cookies, what does that mean?

Intuition would tell you that you've found matches for all 10 email addresses, right?

Wrong.

As is often the case, people nowadays have multiple devices that they log in to with the same email addresses. So, for the example above, the ABM platform might tell you that it's found 15 cookies (i.e., devices) for the 10 email addresses, but that could correspond to three people who have five devices each. Meaning seven of those email addresses didn't match any cookies at all.



Note: Cookies also apply to browsers. So if someone uses both Chrome and Firefox, they'll have two separate cookies associated with their email addresses, even though they're just one person using the same computer.

TRUE MATCH RATE

Definition: the number of contacts that were matched to at least one cookie.

True match rate is a much more accurate representation of how strong an ABM vendor's data set is. True match rate will tell you the total number of people you can target based on the email addresses you've entered.

True match rate isn't based on the number of devices one can target; it's based on the number of people one can target.

For example, if this were a game and we gave a point for each time you found a person, it wouldn't matter if you found a person with one device or a person with five devices. Both matches would only earn you one point.

This is a very useful metric because, at the end of the day, you probably care more about how many people you'll be reaching with your ads than how many devices you reach.

Combining total match rate and true match rate is a great way to understand how strong an ABM vendor is in terms of their data sets. If they score high on both, it means they can match your contacts to both a lot of people and a lot of devices.

Cookie-based targeting

Cookie-based ABM providers target based on the cookies on a person's device. This means that cookie-based providers can target a person both at the office and at home, on desktop and mobile, and on multiple browsers.

Cookie-based targeting also allows a marketer to provide different messaging to each person within an account. Cookie-based targeting is limited to the size of the ABM provider's data set of cookies.

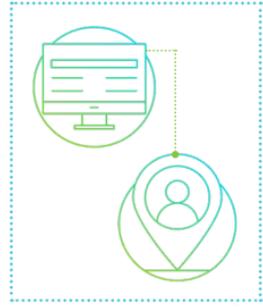


COOKIE

A cookie is a small piece of code that is placed on your browser to associate you with that particular device. For example, the reason you don't have to log in to certain websites each time you visit is because the website identifies you using the cookie it has placed on your browser. Advertisers can also use these cookies to serve more relevant ads.

IP-based targeting

IP-based ABM providers target based on the physical address of a company's office. They do this by targeting the internet address of the physical office building that the company uses. However, this limits them to only targeting people in that office. This means they cannot target people working remotely. Also, if multiple companies are located inside the same building, there is a chance that the marketer's message might be delivered to the wrong person.



IP-based targeting doesn't give insight into who you're targeting at that company, so you don't know whether you're targeting the CMO, the marketing manager, an intern, or an admin.

Account coverage

Also referred to as "account penetration," account coverage refers to the number of stakeholders you are able to reach within a given account. On average, it takes [6.8](#) people to close a B2B deal. This is important because it will determine which accounts you go after. For example, even if you can reach an account as a whole, if you can't reach enough stakeholders within the account, it might not be worth going after. That's because it will be more difficult to influence the 6.8 people you need in order to close the deal.

ACCOUNT-BASED MARKETING STRATEGIES

The inbound-to-ABM strategy

One way to get started with ABM is by converting part of your inbound marketing program into an account-based marketing strategy.

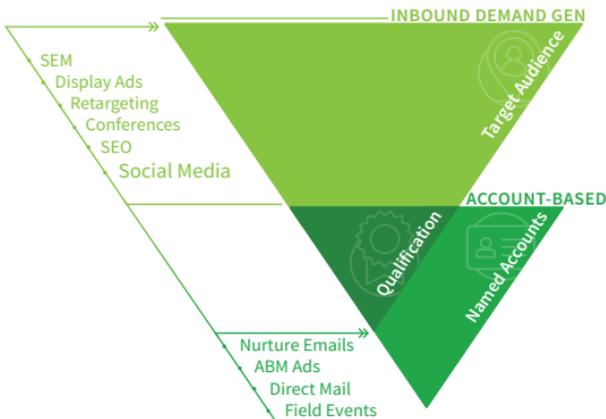
A metaphor we use for this is that it's like throwing a party. You put together a theme, get some snacks and beverages (i.e., your content), you invite the people you know, they invite people they know and, eventually, you have a nice gathering.

This is what inbound marketing typically looks like. You create something that people want, and then they come over to your business to check it out. But what happens if someone way above average, maybe Elon Musk or Oprah, walks through the door?

Would you treat them the same way as everyone else?

Of course not.

Chances are, you'll take notice and you'll want to provide them with a VIP experience. Moving some of your guests into the VIP experience is like moving someone from your inbound funnel into your ABM funnel. We call this the Double Funnel:



RollWorks
a division of RollUp Group

Creating an ABM program like this basically means creating a high-end set of marketing touches. You can do this by creating personalized pieces of content, such as adding a personalized intro to one of your guides or whitepapers. Or you can create a direct mail sequence of gifts.

Regardless of what you choose, you want to make your VIP feel special. A big part of account-based marketing is simply showing your prospect that they're important to you and that you've noticed them.

The ABM-lite strategy

Another way to get started with a more ABM approach is by adding targeting and personalization to your current marketing efforts.

Rather than spraying your marketing all over the internet and then praying you've reached your prospects (i.e., a spray-and-pray approach), you want to ratchet down your targeting and ratchet up your personalization.



You can still do account-based marketing without a target account list by using firmographic targeting. Firmographic targeting is based on certain company attributes such as revenue, industry, tech used, team size, etc. In a sense, by setting up these parameters, you're selecting accounts without necessarily choosing them by name but, rather, by fit.

Once you've chosen your firmographic attributes, the next step to move toward ABM is to add personalization, such as personalized ads, landing pages, or chatbots.

A simple way to personalize your ads, for instance, is by adding the company name or industry to your ad. To the right is an example of how we created a simple, personalized ad for RollWorks.

When we tested this ad vs. the same ad that didn't have personalization, we found that **our cost per lead (CPL) went down by 42%**.



Although you're not working off a set target account list, you're still taking a more precise approach to your marketing efforts. What's more, once you know the name of the company you're targeting, you can pair it with a retargeting campaign and build a fully compelling ad strategy.

It now takes [52%](#) more marketing touches to close a B2B deal, so it's understandable that using a one-and-done strategy won't bring strong results. That's why using firmographic targeting and a retargeting campaign is a one-two punch that works better than the sum of its parts.

The multichannel ABM strategy

The multichannel ABM strategy is based on coordinating multiple touchpoints within a short time period to break through the noise.

The idea behind this strategy is that rather than slowly dripping your marketing and sales touches to your prospect, you open the tap and coordinate your messages across multiple channels all at once. A common response marketers get to this approach is "I see you guys everywhere!"

The following three pages are a few examples of coordinated display, direct mail, and email outreach strategies we used to make a big impression on prospects within a short period of time.

“Air cover” ads and direct mail

The first step in this approach is what’s usually called “air cover.” This involves a series of ads that introduce your company to the prospect. While these ads are being served, you would also send direct mail with matching messaging. For example, in one of our campaigns, we sent leads freshly roasted coffee so that we could “connect over coffee.”



Persona ads and content

Once we've established a connection with the prospect, we try to tailor our messaging to them specifically. One way to tailor these ads is based on persona. You can see the messaging is similar but has small word changes to speak to each persona the ad is targeting:

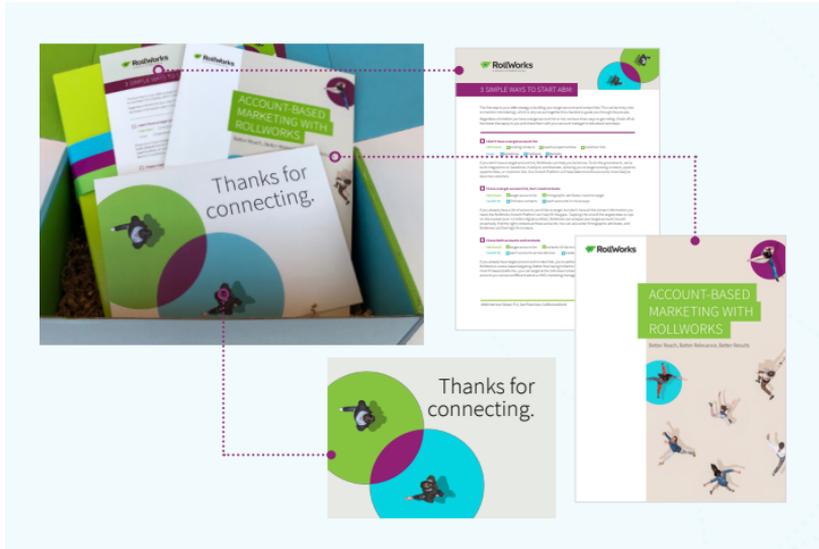
The image displays three RollWorks advertisements, each with a corresponding persona icon and label. The ads are arranged vertically and connected to their respective personas by dotted lines. Each ad features the RollWorks logo and a 'SHOW ME' button.

- CMO Persona:** The ad asks, "How do 5 hyper-growth companies run their ABM?" The icon shows a person in a suit and tie.
- Marketing Persona:** The ad asks, "How did 5 marketers show their worth with ABM?" The icon shows a person wearing a headset.
- Sales Persona:** The ad asks, "See how 5 teams closed more deals with ABM." The icon shows a person in a simple business suit.

Note: you can only run persona ads if you're using a cookie-based ABM vendor. Be sure to check with your ABM vendor to see whether they allow for this level of customization.

As these ads are running, we also coordinate with our sales team to have them send an email and direct mail package thanking the prospect for meeting with us. This package contains a notebook, a printed guide, a checklist, and a handwritten note saying thank you:

“Thanks for connecting with me. Check out our guides for some ABM inspiration, and I’ll be in touch to discuss how you can start making some meaningful connections of your own.”



The guide and checklist we send via direct mail matches the content ads we send via our display campaigns.

Using a multichannel and multi-touch approach like this stands out from the one-off direct mail or ad campaigns that everyone else is doing. Getting a prospect to say “Wow, you really want this!” should be the goal of this type of ABM campaign.

CONCLUSION AND TAKEAWAYS

With more than [60%](#) of companies planning on investing in ABM technology, it's clear that B2B marketing and ABM are becoming synonymous. How you implement ABM, however, can mean the difference between great and lackluster results.

As you consider introducing or improving upon an account-based strategy, be sure to ask your tech providers plenty of questions. Tenured account managers who know the ABM landscape inside and out will be happy to provide clear answers.

If you'd like to see how other companies have implemented ABM, be sure to read the [Big Book of ABM Campaigns](#). In it, we share examples of ABM campaigns from Bizible, Datanyze, LiveRamp, and Radius.



