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Ascend2 benchmarks the performance of marketing strategies, tactics and the technology that drives them with a standardized online questionnaire and a proprietary 3-Minute Survey format.

This survey was fielded to a panel of marketing professionals and marketing research subscribers.

**Primary Marketing Channel**
- B2B: 31%
- B2C: 46%
- B2B and B2C equally: 23%

**Number of Employees**
- More than 500: 17%
- 50 to 500: 26%
- Fewer than 50: 57%

**Primary role in company**
- Owner / Partner / C-Level: 52%
- Vice President / Director / Manager: 28%
- Non-Management Professional: 20%
ACCOUNT-BASED MARKETING INITIATIVES

As account-based marketing (ABM) initiatives become more widely used across businesses of different sizes and industries, marketers have had a chance to evolve and optimize their approach.

**But what are the strategies and tactics behind account-based initiatives today?**

To help answer this question, Ascend2 and our Research Partners fielded the Account-Based Marketing Initiatives Survey. We thank the 293 marketers who responded to this survey between May 17, 2021 and May 25, 2021.

This Survey Summary Report, titled *Account-Based Marketing Initiatives*, represents the opinions of all the market segments responding to the survey. Specific market segments from the survey are reported on separately and exclusively by our participating Research Partners.

*This research has been produced for your use.* Put it to work in your own marketing strategy. Clip the charts and write about them in your blog or post them on social media. Please share this research credited as published.
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Ultimately, an account-based marketing program should make it as streamlined and efficient as possible for sales to close deals. Over half (53%) of marketers agree that creating new opportunities for sales is a top priority for their ABM strategy to achieve. Another main focus is generating more revenue from existing customers according to 42% of those marketing professionals surveyed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Objective</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating new opportunities for sales</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generating more revenue from existing customers</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying new target accounts</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing the efficiency of marketing budget</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving marketing/sales alignment</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winning bigger deals</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributing marketing efforts to revenue</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving online personalization</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing sales cycle time</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABM SUCCESS

When asked to describe how successful an account-based program is at achieving strategic objectives, marketers paint an encouraging picture, but there is still room for improvement. While one-in-five (20%) marketers are finding best-in-class success with their ABM strategy, nearly three-quarters (73%) of those surveyed report experiencing just some success from their efforts.

WHICH BEST DESCRIBES THE SUCCESS OF YOUR (OR YOUR TYPICAL CLIENT’S) ABM STRATEGY AT ACHIEVING THESE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES?

- Unsatisfactory (7%)
- Very successful (20%)
- Somewhat successful (73%)
TOP CHALLENGES

Marketers are faced with a myriad of barriers to overcome when executing ABM initiatives. **Identifying target accounts** is a particularly challenging task for 36% of marketers. **Coordinating marketing and sales efforts** as well as **reaching specific contacts** also prove to be difficult elements of an overall strategy to execute according to 33% and 29% of marketing professionals, respectively.

### WHAT ARE THE TOP CHALLENGES FACED WHEN EXECUTING AN ABM PROGRAM?

- **Identifying Target Accounts**: 36%
- **Coordinating Marketing and Sales Efforts**: 33%
- **Reaching Specific Contacts**: 29%
- **Measuring the Impact of ABM**: 27%
- **Securing Appropriate Budget**: 26%
- **Managing Expectations of the Leadership Team**: 23%
- **Delivering a Personalized Experience**: 23%
- **Scoring/Prioritizing Target Accounts**: 20%
- **Data Quality Issues**: 19%
- **Managing Investment Across Campaigns**: 14%
- **Running Cross-Channel Programs**: 13%
Account-based marketing as a strategic approach might be new to some organizations, but it is likely the case that most marketers are already executing many activities that resemble ABM initiatives. Interestingly, targeted email campaigns is second only to social media on this list with 46% of marketers currently executing this activity. Another account-based activity that nearly one-third (31%) of marketers are taking part in is specific account targeting. Many who may not have a well-developed ABM strategy in place could still be taking part in activities reflective of an ABM
ABM PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

ABM strategies typically involve a number of departments including marketing and sales. So where are account-based efforts being managed and executed within an organization? 28% say ABM programs are managed by the **marketing department** with another 19% reporting that these initiatives are overseen by a **sales department or role**. Another 15% have defined an **ABM-specific role** to take on the task.

### Which most accurately describes how your ABM program is managed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managed by a digital marketing department or role</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managed by a sales department or role</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managed by an ABM-specific department or role</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managed ad hoc by whoever has bandwidth</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managed by a demand generation department or role</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managed by external specialists</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
KEY METRICS FOR MEASUREMENT

Measuring the success of an ABM strategy is critical to optimizing for success. Marketers are using revenue generated from target accounts as a key metric for measurement according to 56% of those surveyed. Target account engagement, Marketing Qualified Leads (MQLs) and win rate are also meaningful indicators used by 36%, 34% and 28% of marketers, respectively.

WHAT ARE THE KEY METRICS USED TO MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF YOUR ABM STRATEGY?

- Revenue generated from target accounts: 56%
- Target account engagement: 36%
- Marketing Qualified Leads (MQLs): 34%
- Win rate: 28%
- Average contract value: 24%
- Target account pipeline: 18%
- Meetings set: 17%
- Pipeline created: 16%
- Penetration within target accounts: 13%
ABM BUDGET TRENDS

Nearly half (48%) of marketers report expecting a moderate increase in budget dedicated to account-based initiatives in the year ahead but only 11% say they are going all in with a significant increase. While 37% of marketers report that their ABM budgets will remain the same in the coming months, only a mere 4% of those surveyed report a decrease to some extent.

HOW DO YOU EXPECT YOUR TOTAL BUDGET DEDICATED TO ACCOUNT-BASED INITIATIVES TO CHANGE IN THE YEAR AHEAD?
PAID DIGITAL CHANNELS

An account-based strategy can span many channels and areas of marketing, but which paid digital channels are marketers dedicating the most resources and budget to? Paid social media is a clear priority here as nearly two-thirds (64%) of marketers list this as a top investment channel. There is also a focus on paid search and email newsletter sponsorship according to 32% and 23% of marketers, respectively.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PAID DIGITAL ADVERTISING CHANNELS DO YOU INVEST IN THE MOST AS A PART OF YOUR ABM STRATEGY?

- Social Media: 64%
- Paid Search: 32%
- Email Newsletter Sponsorship: 23%
- Custom Content Sponsorship: 15%
- Direct Buy Display: 13%
- Paid Ecommerce Channel Search: 12%
- Paid Webinar: 11%
- Connected TV: 9%
- Programmatic Display: 7%
- Content Syndication: 6%
- Podcast Sponsorship: 6%
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