2023 STATE OF ACCOUNT-BASED STRATEGIES:

Marketers Lean Into Intent Insights, AI & Hyper-Personalization To Deliver Cutting-Edge Campaigns

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INTRODUCTION

Two decades have passed since ABM emerged on the B2B scene and revolutionized the way organizations plan, execute and measure their marketing campaigns. First coined by **ITSMA** in 2003, ABM has grown to become a staple tactic among modern marketers' toolboxes. In fact, *Demand Gen Report's* "**2023 ABM Benchmark Survey**" found that 67% of marketers rely on ABM strategies today, and among those that haven't made the switch yet, 81% plan to do so in the next year.

But the bitter truth is that ABM strategies are only as good as the tools, technology and teams they are built on: Haphazard programs that run on outdated data and departmental silos will only deliver subpar results. True ABM success requires a commitment to cross-departmental alignment from the get-go, gathering in-depth insights to fuel multichannel campaigns and continually measuring which strategies are working or not.

"ABM is most successful when sales and marketing teams are aligned on their goals and strategies — but that's easier said than done," said Jiawen Shi, State and Local Government Marketing Sector Lead for **T-Mobile**. "Total alignment can be difficult to achieve, especially in large organizations."

This report will examine the current state of account-based strategies, including:

- The top obstacles modern marketing teams are struggling with;

- The role of hyper-personalization in the quest to engage and convert top accounts;

- The types of data B2B teams are using to fuel their ABM strategies and the best KPIs for benchmarking success; and

- How AI could usher in a new age of the ABM evolution.

B2B ORGS STILL STRUGGLE WITH ALIGNMENT

Only **26% of marketers** believe their ABM campaigns are currently exceeding or greatly exceeding expectations, with less than half (44%) indicating that the programs are meeting expectations and one-third (30%) saying that the programs are underperforming or greatly underperforming. When asked about the top factors impacting performance, 46% of practitioners pointed to a lack of marketing and sales alignment.

Shi recommended that organizations start the alignment process as early as the ideation stage, which gives both marketing and sales a sense of ownership over the ABM strategy, as "no one likes to be looped in after the fact," she said.

To ensure teams remain aligned throughout the process, Courtney Beasley, CEO and Co-founder of **the cobe agency**, added that creating a detailed action plan that clearly outlines the respective tasks marketing and sales will be responsible for and the specific areas where they will collaborate.

She noted that Gartner's definition of ABM hinges on cross-functional support from both sales and marketing as crucial to success. To that end, it's key to establish a continuous feedback loop and schedule joint planning sessions on a regular, weekly basis.
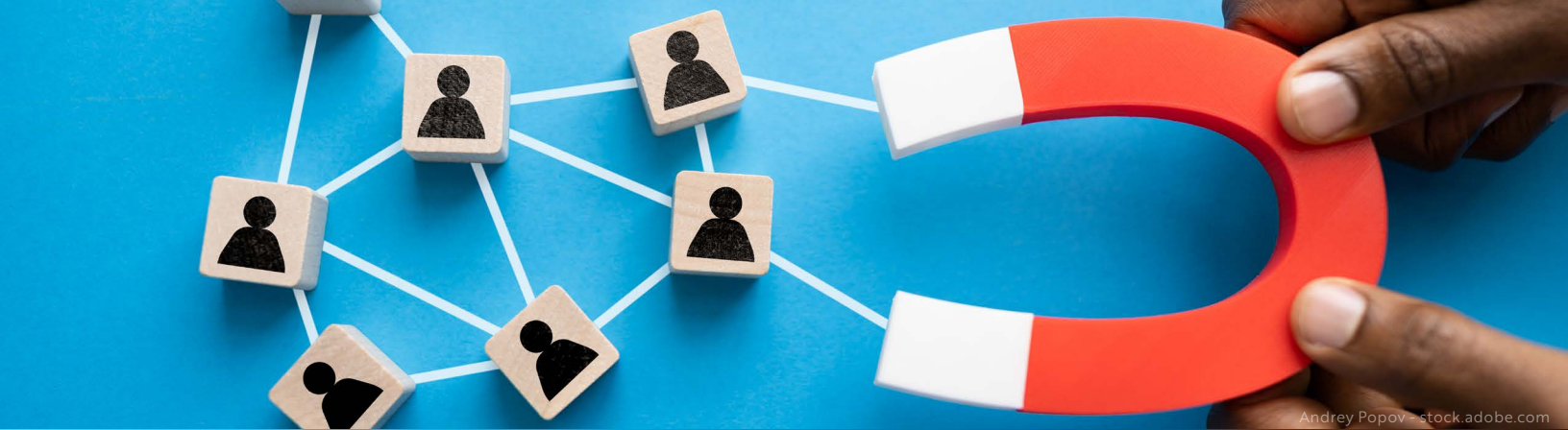
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HOW TIDE ROCK CAPTURED HIGH-QUALITY LEADS IN LESS THAN 48 HOURS WITH ZOOMINFO

Tide Rock Holdings is an unlevered buyout firm that acquires companies with strong free cash flow and grows them to scale while distributing high quarterly yield to its investors. It owns a portfolio of B2B companies in the micro lower market, specifically in the manufacturing, distribution and services industries.

The Challenge

When Tide Rock acquired **Interconnect Solutions Company** (ISC), a company that designs and manufactures custom and complex interconnect solutions, it took inventory of ways to accelerate ISC's growth potential and achieve their strategic objectives.

"It's our responsibility to identify roadblocks and ensure the companies we invest in have all the resources needed to successfully expand their customer base and run a profitable business," explained Jack Parcell, Digital Marketing Specialist at Tide Rock. "When there is a lack of communication between leadership and the technologies each team leverages, it can be difficult to create sustainable growth. We saw similar challenges when we acquired ISC. Since we're a solution-oriented firm, we saw an opportunity to drive alignment by arming them with a tech stack that could help both support sales and marketing efforts."

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The Solution

With go-to-market (GTM) software provider **ZoomInfo's SalesOs** and **MarketingOS** now supporting ISC's GTM teams, ISC has eliminated internal silos and doubled down on its growth goals. Rather than continuing with a "spray-and-pray" approach, ZoomInfo enabled ISC to launch more strategic and targeted marketing campaigns.

"MarketingOS has been influential in allowing us to laser focus our marketing initiatives," said Eric Shumway, SVP of Sales and Business Development at ISC. "We no longer have to cast a wide net and hope we catch something good; we're crafting messages that are unique to each audience and the results are telling."

ISC's leadership team also benefitted from working with a singular data set, while gaining greater visibility into what's happening on both the sales and marketing teams.

"We've successfully eliminated friction between the two teams," continued Shumway. "Now, by the time a rep starts talking with a prospect, they know that a contact has already seen or engaged with one of our campaigns. Sellers feel more confident going into conversations knowing they are connecting with prospects who are familiar with our offerings and in the market for a solution like ours."

The Results

While hard numbers are still in the making, it no longer takes ISC six months to generate a qualified lead.

"MarketingOS gives us actionable insights that enable us to execute effective campaigns," said Shumway. "It used to take us months to generate value from our marketing efforts but now, we're capturing high-quality leads in less than 48 hours from launching a campaign. The ability to reach decision makers at a faster rate while aligning our messaging to potential buyers has led to greater return on ad spend."

As ISC continues to expand its campaign efforts and identify new target markets, ZoomInfo will continue to remain an integral part of reaching helping ISC reach their full revenue potential.

"The greatest value ZoomInfo has brought us is the opportunity for alignment," said Parcell. "We're all working off one data set, our goals are aligned and our efforts are housed in one ecosystem. This has made a significant impact."

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HIGH-PERFORMING TEAMS DOUBLE DOWN ON MULTICHANNEL, HYPER-PERSONALIZED CONTENT

At its core, ABM is a response to dull batch-and-blast campaigns that fail to connect with and convert leads. Alternatively, the ABM movement calls for creating focused, full-funnel strategies that are tailor-made to address each target account. The golden rule of ABM is to identify your top accounts and treat them as such — meaning every step along the buyer's journey and all content that accompanies it should be hyper personalized.

"If content is not relevant to the audience, they will not consume it — period," said Shi. "It goes beyond just addressing the account by name. It's about having a deep understanding of each target account's pain points, challenges and the individual buyer personas within the account."

But it's not enough for marketing to just personalize the messaging; they must also be prepared to deliver content via buyers' preferred channels. It's best practice to use a multichannel approach that mixes traditional and new-wave platforms.

For example, **Workiva**, a platform for financial planning, ESG, auditing and risk, partnered with demand generation platform **DemandWorks Media** to use its content syndication network of services. Through the partnership, Workiva executed and managed multiple campaigns at once, sometimes targeting as many as 10 different segments simultaneously. As a result, Workiva has implemented more than 50 demand generation campaigns, and in the past year alone saw a 62% increase in sales accepted leads and a 500% surge in closed-won opportunities.

TEAMS PRIORITIZING MULTICHANNEL APPROACHES & PERSONALIZATION

With Mat Phillips, DemandWorks Media

The current state of account-based strategies is dominated by AI, intent data analysis and hyper-personalization. However, the value of these innovations depends on their deployment and utilization. Data plays a crucial role in ABM strategies, enabling marketers to identify, target and engage high-value accounts effectively. To learn more about the role of data in ABM orchestration, the *Demand Gen Report* team sat down with Mat Phillips, Co-founder of B2B Demand Gen Vendor, **DemandWorks Media**.

Demand Gen Report: **In your opinion, what's the current state of account-based strategies? What are some of the latest trends?**

Mat Phillips: The current trends are clear: Artificial intelligence (AI), intent data analysis and the pinnacle of personalized outreach — hyper-personalization. The allure of these trends is undeniable. However, beneath the surface a fundamental query persists — what is the concrete, discernible value that these resounding "buzzwords" offer to the practitioner? In essence, these innovations are tools, but their actualized potential is contingent upon deployment and utilization.

Data plays a pivotal role in ABM strategies. It serves as the foundation upon which the entire ABM framework is built, enabling marketers to identify, target and engage high-value accounts effectively.

DGR: **What criteria do you use to prioritize and score target accounts for personalized outreach? How can marketers narrow down their target audience?**

Phillips: DemandWorks goes above and beyond traditional account scoring by homing in on the key contacts and influential buying committees responsible for igniting demand. Our approach involves assessing contacts through a dynamic combination of their proactive actions, enriched with robust firmographic data, including tech installs and recent funding rounds.

In ABM, your target account list (TAL) is the roadmap to success. A well-crafted TAL is not just a static document; it is a dynamic list that aligns your marketing and sales teams toward a common goal: Winning high-value accounts. The cornerstone of a great TAL is a strong understanding of your ideal customer profile (ICP).

Your ICP is not a real customer but rather a combination of attributes that make up your perfect customer. To build your ICP you should identify common traits among your most successful accounts while also considering factors such as industry, company size, revenue, geographic location and technology usage.

DGR: *How can marketers tailor their campaign nurtures to include materials relevant to an account's stage in the buying journey?*

Phillips: This is a great question and one DemandWorks ultimately tries to answer by furnishing our clients with bespoke dashboards and robust analytics. Our clients can effortlessly track content consumption, gauge the stage of the buying journey and swiftly fine-tune their nurture strategies to optimize the conversion of opportunities into closed-won deals.

From the initial spark of interest to the final commitment, numerous opportunities arise to captivate, inform, and influence with targeted content. To align nurture campaigns with an account's buying journey, tailor content to each phase. Start with attention-grabbing material that piques interest, then provide educational content like white papers and webinars to address pain points. As they move closer to purchase, personalize the approach with tailored demos and discussions. Post-purchase, focus on onboarding support and brand loyalty to affirm their decision.

DGR: *What sort of content and messaging do you find resonates most strongly with buyers across all stages of their journey? How can practitioners work to personalize and tailor this content?*

Phillips: Undoubtedly, one of the most sizzling forms of content, universally resonating across all stages, is the "Vendor Comparison Guide." As individuals, we relish the opportunity to conduct our own research, placing immense value on user reviews and expert opinions. These guides empower buyers to compare various systems, features and pricing structures more efficiently and seamlessly. Furthermore, even after a purchase has been made, the inherent desire to affirm the right decision and validate one's choice continues to be a universal sentiment among consumers.

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TAPPING INTO DATA ANALYTICS, INTENT INSIGHTS

Updated, high-quality data is the fuel that keeps ABM programs running smoothly and on track. Gathering information to see which accounts are in-market, what their specific needs/pain points are and where they are in the buying journey is crucial to identifying, segmenting and targeting potential buyers.

"Buyers are more self-sufficient these days and are doing a lot of research on their own before engaging with vendors," said Alex Bauer, Digital Marketing Director for DemandWorks Media. "If you can identify accounts that are actively researching your products or services, you can reach them as early as possible in the research process."

Not only does this help increase the likelihood of conversion by ensuring prospects are considering the brand from the get-go, but behavioral data can also help the marketing team better customize their content and campaigns throughout the funnel. It's not surprising, then, that T-Mobile's Shi noted that intent insights are going to be a "huge focus" for designing and implementing her ABM programs going forward.

Additionally, Bauer advised that MQLs, opportunities and pipeline should be assessed monthly to help teams keep a close eye on campaign performance and make adjustments as necessary.

"Account-based marketing isn't just for generating net-new opportunities," said Bauer. "A well performing ABM program continues after the purchase and builds brand loyalty and advocacy."

Bauer also stressed the importance of trial and error when it comes to ABM — and the necessity of using data to inform which strategies are or are not working. He urged marketers to be agile and experiment with different tactics and messaging. After all, "in the digital age, it's much easier to pump the brakes on something that's not producing the results you expected and do a full 180," he explained.

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CONCLUSION

The ABM movement has been steadily gaining traction over the past two decades and is now a must-have strategy for B2B teams looking to maintain a competitive edge in the crowded digital landscape. But it's not enough to simply slap an ABM logo over campaigns — organizations must dedicate the time and resources to properly aligning their teams around a joint strategy, using real-time intent insights to fuel personalized, results-driven campaigns and regularly assessing success.

"At the end of the day, it comes down to value: Do your clients value your product? Do they feel like a valued customer? Do you provide value to foster their success?" asked Bauer. "It's about what you can see and touch, like products and services, but also the stuff you feel, like trust and support. Put all that together and you've got a recipe for success and long-term partnerships."

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Accelerate your growth with ZoomInfo, an Inc. 5000 company. ZoomInfo's Growth Acceleration Platform offers the most accurate and actionable B2B contact and company intelligence to help organizations accelerate growth and profitability. The continuously updated database enables sales and marketing teams to execute more effective marketing campaigns and improve sales prospecting efforts with access to on demand direct dial phone numbers, email addresses, and background information.

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Here at DemandWorks, we're gathering real-time data around preferences, technology, and research, and then acting on that data to drive superior conversion. DemandWorks' unique demand generation programs enable you to deliver your content, to the right buyer, at the right time, on any device. With personalized user experience, dynamic content, intent-based targeting, and custom 'pay for performance' pricing, you can be sure of 'guaranteed response' with some of the best conversion rates in the industry. From start to finish our highly skilled team provides world-class customer service, full-funnel solutions, masterful ABM and step-by-step nurturing that will take your ROI to new heights.

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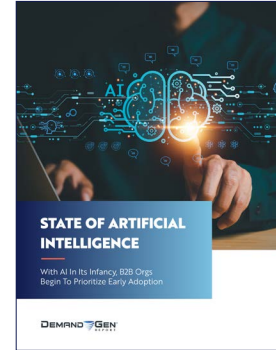**INFO@DWMEDIA.COM**

What's Working In
Personalization

2023 ABM Benchmark
Survey

State Of Artificial
Intelligence

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 multichannel demand generation efforts.

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