

THE MARKETER'S
GUIDE TO

Account-Based Marketing

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leadfeeder

Introduction



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The traditional inbound marketing approach has served us B2B marketers well for many years and it continues to do so. But the battle to grow traffic and generate more leads is intense.

Over [60% of companies](#) seem to think there is another way – and they plan to launch [account based marketing campaigns](#) in the next year.

So just what is account based marketing, why should you be doing it and how do you get started?

We'll answer all those questions – with practical examples – as we cover **exactly what account based marketing is** and how its different to inbound marketing, how to **start your strategy**, and what **tried-and-tested tactics** you should be using.

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What is ABM?

Before we dive into the details, let's iron out exactly what "account based marketing" means.

Account based marketing takes an uber-personalized approach to marketing and sales. Often abbreviated to ABM, you focus on a handful of high-quality accounts (or companies), and deliver messages that are personalized to them – rather than creating more generic messages that attract large numbers of individuals and thereafter begin targeting your ideal customers.

So why bother with this kind of strategy? Dalton Kane of [Small Shops](#) explains:

*Companies don't buy services and products, **people** at companies do. It isn't about mass blasting contacts, but knowing how to solve specific problems for specific companies and then delivering that value proposition to a person in a context that matters to them.*

Account based marketing influences multiple stakeholders with your targeting – which could be crucial, especially when the average B2B buying process [involves 6.8 people](#) (compared to 5.4 people in 2014).

The company that carried out that original study predicts the number of people involved in the buying process could now be [as much as 10.2](#) individuals.

You're not just speaking to one person at one company: you're using ABM tactics to influence several people working at the same business.

ABM also helps [align sales and marketing](#) teams. The two departments are working together, trying to educate and nurture the same account—rather than marketing teams attracting new leads, and passing them directly onto the sales reps to nurture.

This could help you drive the 36% higher customer retention and 38% higher sales win rates that companies with [“smarketing” teams](#) see.

This is the main reason why [87% of B2B marketers](#) think account based marketing delivers a higher ROI than other marketing activities.

ABM vs. Inbound

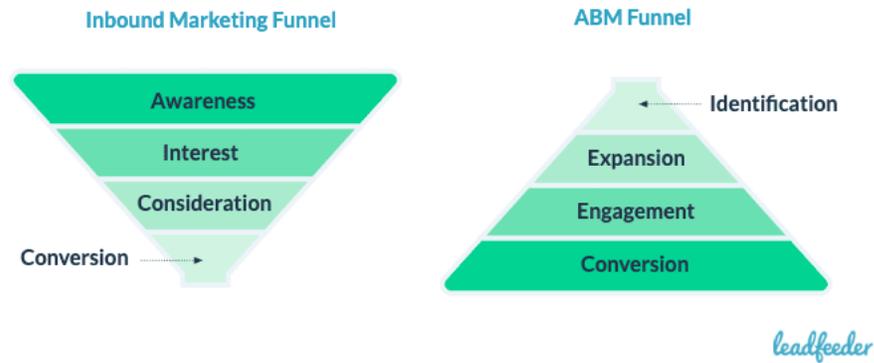
It's tricky to understand how account based marketing slots within the existing funnels you're already using.

There's a difference between the two that could make the switch easier: inbound marketing and lead generation focus on getting high volumes of individuals to your website and hoping the right ones find their own way through your funnel.

(That could be through content optimized for organic search, for example, whereby you're hoping to attract anyone searching for information related to your product, service, or industry through Google.)

The aim may be to get them to download a piece of gated content so you can nurture them through email or retargeted advertising. Then, once the lead is at the bottom of the funnel, you'll have enough data to determine whether they're a MQL – and begin identifying your target customers.

Account based marketing flips this funnel on its head. You work on identifying the right companies beforehand, expanding your target list by pinpointing key contacts in the business and engaging them with content and campaigns.



That being said, you can use inbound and ABM in harmony. Inbound can build awareness by driving lots of traffic to your website—visitors you can identify with [website visitor identification software](#), then run ABM campaigns to the target accounts you find.

This hybrid strategy means you'll be able to automatically identify high-value, ideal accounts after they enter the early stages of your inbound funnel. You won't need to hope your generic lead nurturing emails do that.

Instead, you're delivering a personalized approach — something that [59% of customers](#) say influences their purchase decision.

How To Start

Here's the six-step process (that we use ourselves) you'll need to follow to put together winning campaigns:

1. Focus your team
2. Identify target accounts
3. Find your accounts
4. Determine your points of contact
5. Create content for your target
6. Determine how to deliver it

Step 1: Focus your Team

Earlier, we mentioned sales and marketing teams can benefit from ABM. But that's not possible if everyone isn't on the same page.

(After all, when you're running an account based marketing campaign, multiple people are communicating with the same account several times throughout the sales funnel.)

For that reason, kick off your new strategy by holding a group meeting. You should explain:

- The benefits of ABM
- Why your team should be using it
- The strategy you plan to use

This meeting should help to refocus your entire team. They'll know which accounts to prioritize, and the techniques they can use to personalize sales and marketing content for each target account.

Tempted to skip this stage? You could cause more harm than good. Your ABM campaigns will be all over the place if your target account is in contact with several people—each of which give mixed messages. That can be confusing and off-putting for your client.

However, a central CRM that stores information about your target account (such as their personal names and last contact) could prevent those mixed messages resulting in a lost deal. A system that [integrates this information with your CRM](#) will be a big help.

Step 2: Identify target accounts

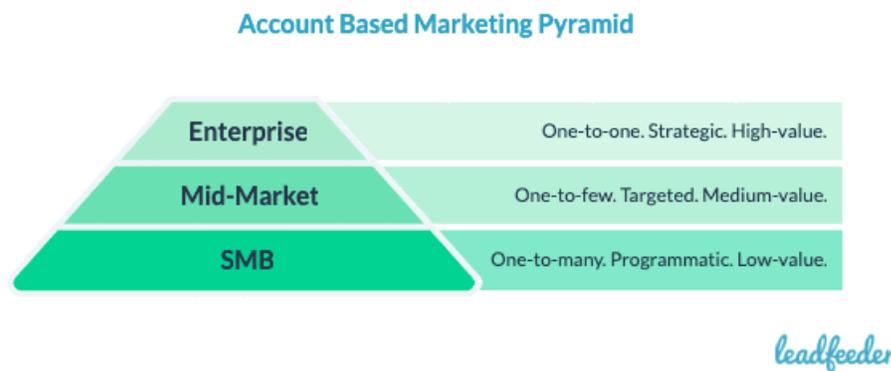
Buyer personas are documents that explain the traits, behaviors, and preferences that your target customers share. You can create similar documents to identify your target accounts—specifically by using [firmographic data](#) to build a list of companies to target. That might include:

- Industry
- Location
- Ownership
- Company turnover
- Employee count

- Pain points of stakeholders

It's important to build these accurately by looking through previous customer data, running rounds of [user testing](#), sending customer surveys, or conducting industry research. Target account lists based on guesswork aren't accurate—and could see you focusing on accounts that won't convert.

The level of personalization that your ABM campaigns need depends on the volume of accounts on your target list.



If your target account list is short, but each account has a high potential value, personalization will likely be one-to-one. It makes sense to invest time into these personal, one-to-one discussions if the account will make a significant impact to your revenue.

But if your list of target accounts is larger and the accounts are of lower value, the content you send will likely focus on things like industry, country, company size or turnover. You likely won't have time to invest into researching, or creating content for each individual account.

In this case, you could use a [programmatic approach to ABM](#): using tools like LinkedIn and Leadfeeder to automate the process and take more of a hands-off approach.

Programmatic ABM presents a fantastic opportunity for SMBs to get started with account based marketing at scale and compete with larger rivals.

Step 3: Find your accounts

Once you've identified the target accounts you want to convert, it's time to get out there and find them. There are two methods you could use to do this:

Search for them manually

Your firmographic data should give you a list of companies that fit your ideal account profile. Certain data points—such as company size, industry, or turnover—can be used to find companies that match your description.

For example: Let's say you're targeting up-and-coming startup healthcare companies with a HQ in the United States, who have just received their first round of funding. Head over to [AngelList's company directory](#) and filter the results by:

- Type (Startup)
- Location (United States)

- Market (Healthcare)
- Stage (Seed)

The companies on that list will fit within your ideal target account profile.

290 Companies								
Company	Signal	Joined	Location	Market	Website	Employees	Stage	Total Raised
 DrChrono On a mission to create the medical ...		Feb '11	Sunnyvale	Mobile Health	drchrono.com	51-200	Seed	\$6,725,000
 BitGym Transforming cardio-exercise into an ...		Aug '12	San Francisco Bay Area	Fitness	bitgym.com	1-10	Seed	-
 Medlert Patient Logistics Made Easy		May '12	San Francisco	Mobile Health	medlert.com	1-10	Seed	\$1,275,400
 Docphin The Bloomberg for Doctors		Oct '11	New York City	Mobile Health	docphin.com	1-10	Seed	\$1,605,000
 Sickweather Waze for sickness.		Nov '11	Baltimore	Mobile Health	sickweather.com	1-10	Seed	\$870,000
 DermLink Cloud-based ERP for physicians an...		Mar '12	Menlo Park	Enterprise Resource Planning	aestheticlink.com	11-50	Seed	-

See who's already browsing your website

A common problem with finding new accounts to target is that involves a lot of manual work and they probably haven't heard of you before. There's no established trust there, nor existing interest in your product, service, or industry.

You're starting right from the beginning of the marketing funnel—and will likely need to work harder at convincing them to buy, as a result.

However, identifying the companies already browsing your website empowers you to align your inbound and ABM funnel, and [scale your account based marketing](#) plan quickly.

You can use a tool like [Leadfeeder](#) to view:

- Companies visiting your website
- Pages they're visiting
- How often they visit
- Key decision-makers who work there

Create [custom feeds](#) based on a variety of firmographic or web analytic data to filter the companies visiting your website and automatically send the ones that match your target account list to your CRM.

Step 4: Determine your contact points

By this point, you should have a list of companies you want to bring onto your customer list. But instead of diving feet-first with a cold email, you want the person to visit your website before sending them any form of sales pitch.

The best approach for this depends on whether they've visited your website beforehand.

If the account hasn't visited your website, you'll have to manually find your best contact on a platform such as LinkedIn. Start by [connecting with them on social media](#) and get on their radar before diving into their inbox. This could be anything from a comment on LinkedIn posts or a response to a tweet.

With website visitor identification software you'll know whether they've visited your website before. If they have, use the enriched data already provided to [find your best contact](#): If you sell content marketing services, for example, that would be a marketing manager.

You'll also be able to see what pages that company has visited on your website, which will help you determine their pain point. This will help you when reaching out to them on social or creating campaigns to target them.

5. Create content for your target

Once you're on your target account's radar, you'll need to send them free, non-promotional content to get them into the [know, like, trust cycle](#).

Remember: The more trust you build, the easier it will be to get someone to buy from your brand.

The kind of content you create depends on what type of approach you're taking to account based marketing: one-to-one or one-to-many.

- One-to-one: If your list of target accounts is short but each has lots of potential value, take the one-on-one approach and create content created specifically for your contact. For example, a web design company trying to engage a large online retailer could send a personalized 10 minute video with a review of the retailer's website product page and ideas for improvement.
- One-to-many: If your target list is longer and each account has less potential value, you need to create content that's going to have a larger appeal. For example, the same web design company looking to engage software companies could create a blog detailing 10 ways to improve a SaaS pricing page.

Create different types of content for people as they flow through various parts of the funnel.

For example: Podcasts might be a great way to get on your account's radar; in-depth playbooks could keep them engaged; and [product-by-product comparison posts](#) of your brand and your competition could encourage conversions.

The content you're sending needs to match their stage in the funnel. If they're not ready to buy yet, there's no use directing them to your pricing page.

6. Determine how to deliver it to them

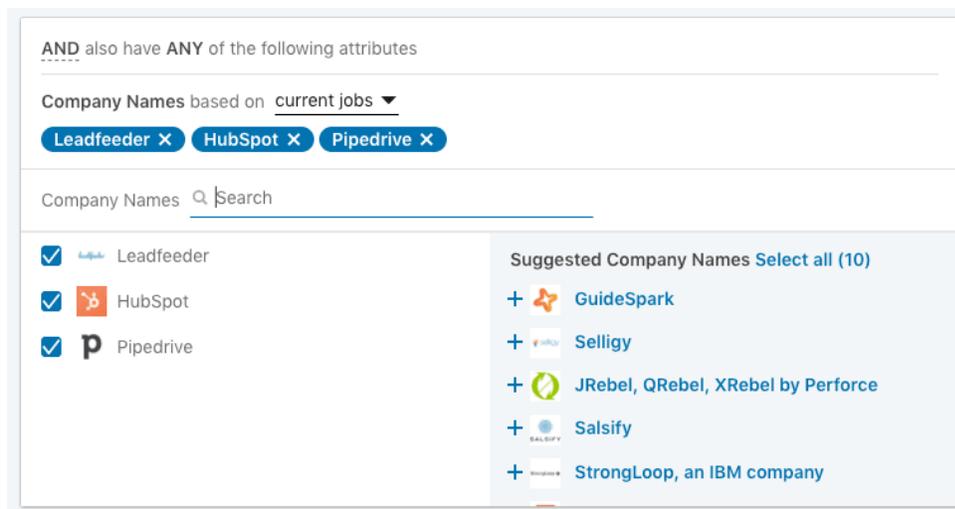
You've got a collection of interesting content your target account is likely to be interested in, and you're on their radar. Sure, you could reach out to them directly via email—but [60% of people](#) think a generic sales pitch is irritating.

Instead of emailing with your product pitch, determine which channels are most effective to serve that content to each account.

[LinkedIn advertising](#) is a great option if you're [targeting B2B buyers](#).

You've got the ability to reach people when they've got their "business brain" switched on, and you can specifically pick the company you want to target through advertising.

Simply write your content, create an eye-catching advertisement for it, and add the target account's company name in the [audience targeting field](#):



AND also have ANY of the following attributes

Company Names based on current jobs ▼

Leadfeeder X HubSpot X Pipedrive X

Company Names 🔍 Search

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  Leadfeeder	Suggested Company Names Select all (10)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  HubSpot	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  Pipedrive	
<input type="checkbox"/>  GuideSpark	
<input type="checkbox"/>  Selligy	
<input type="checkbox"/>  JRebel, QRebel, XRebel by Perforce	
<input type="checkbox"/>  Salsify	
<input type="checkbox"/>  StrongLoop, an IBM company	

LinkedIn will then serve your content to your target account, rather than anyone that fits a certain quality. This allows you to customize and personalize your ad copy, making it a great option if you're focusing on high-value accounts with a one-to-one strategy.

If you're targeting high-volume accounts with less potential value, you could deliver this content by using [LinkedIn ads, paired with custom feeds on Leadfeeder](#).

This helps you scale your ABM strategy, and display relevant ads to a larger number of target accounts—without having to create individual advertising campaigns.

Case Studies

It's all well and good to rave about the potential results you could get from account based marketing. But you want real examples of companies who've implemented a strategy and seen success, right?

Take a look at these three ABM case studies for some inspiration.

***Beck Technology's* customer retention**

Beck Technology sells a combination of software and services to construction companies to help them with complex building projects. Their customers tend to have buying processes that go against the norm, with the majority of customers continuing to repurchase several times.

They wanted to increase this long-term usage of their software and services. So, they:

1. Compiled a list of [accounts they'd love to retain using Leadfeeder](#)
2. "Gut checked" the list by getting to know the company, and analyzing whether they'd need (or use) the software/services they sell
3. Ran marketing campaigns to prime their target account

4. Passed their target account through to their customer success team once they'd converted—with sales and marketing teams still having some involvement at this stage.

As a result, they managed to improve the long-term partnerships they had with their target customers. No more running around trying to find new companies to generate revenue—they used ABM to build a list of customers that will stick with them for years.

O2 Gained an ROI of 118:1

We all know O2 as a consumer telecommunications company.

But they wanted to close more sales on the **B2B side of their business**, so their sales team used ABM to learn more about target accounts. They used the information they'd found to personalize their sales approach.

The result?

O2 won [325% of their target business](#), with an overall ROI of 118:1 for their ABM campaign.

SAP created a \$27 million pipeline

SAP is a technology company with several services and target personas. Starting an ABM strategy on that scale would've been overwhelming, so they originally started with five accounts. (Accounts were picked depending on growth, contacts, and expected co-operation).

Their sales and marketing teams aimed to learn as much as they could about each—using their findings in conversations they had with each account.

The result?

In just two years, SAP's sales pipeline had over [\\$27 million in new opportunities](#).

Tactics that Work

You might be tempted to dive feet-first with your account based marketing strategy, and start personalizing each account on your dream customers list.

But before you get started, here are three important things you'll need to consider.

1. Get to know your target accounts

There's no one-size-fits-all solution or advice when it comes to account based marketing, as everyone has different target accounts. So the most important thing you can do is get to know your company's targets.

Compile and gather as much information as you have about your target accounts, such as:

- Their pain points
- The problems they're trying to solve
- The decision-making process at their company

All this means you can find the most appropriate approach to take. (One that results in a purchase.)

For example: A small target account with a short decision-making process that involves two people (a CEO and a department manager) likely wouldn't need as strategic approach as a Fortune 500 company with seven department heads having an input.

So, make an effort to understand the feelings, emotions, and challenges each account has—on an individual basis.

The more you know about the journey your customers go through before converting, the better you can personalize your ABM campaigns to convince them.

2. Always check who's visiting your website

Earlier, we mentioned how there are two ways to find target accounts:

- Actively searching for companies who match the firmographic data of your target account list
- Looking at the [companies already visiting your website](#), and assessing whether they have the same qualities

The first is a great starting point if you don't have a huge influx of visitors browsing your website. In this case, you can't sit back and wait for them to come to you. You need to get out there and find accounts that fit your "dream customer" mould.

However, if you do have a substantial amount of website traffic, don't neglect it. You might already have a list of target accounts that you're testing account based marketing with, but remember website visitors are already further along in the sales process.

These people should be higher on your priority list than target accounts who don't have a clue who you are.

3. Never stop testing

Just like any type of sales or marketing activity, you need to analyze what's working—and change what isn't.

Look at key metrics, such as:

- Whether accounts are engaging with your content
- Which type of content gets a response
- The best performing channels when delivering that content
- Conversion rate per type of account (or customer persona)

It's worth checking these figures regularly and building reports that help visualise and track long-term results ([Google Data Studio](#) is a great option for this). That way, you've got enough data to accurately measure success, and you can quickly spot (and correct) any issues before they become a major problem.

Further Learning

As you can see, building an account based marketing strategy can be worth its weight in gold when you're converting accounts on your list of dream customers.

Remember to start by refocusing your team, prioritizing big accounts, and gauging interest based on the activity already happening on your website. Then once you're going, never stop testing and improving. Do it correctly and there's no reason why you couldn't see a huge sales pipeline ready for you to convert.

For more information on account based strategies, read the following blogs:

- [47 account based marketing tools](#)
- [A guide to account based retargeting](#)
- [Account based selling best practices](#)
- [The missing link in your account based marketing strategy](#)
- [How Beck Technology uses ABM to drive more sales](#)