ABM in the age of disruption

The rise of the modern Account Based Experience

Realm

WELCOME CHANGE

Introduction

These are challenging times. We and our target customers now stand on shifting sands of constant transformation and change as we continue to navigate modern working cultures, customer expectations and digital supply chains. This rapid remodelling of our reality has fostered an environment where new ideas and creativity become the driving force across our industry.

Digital transformation is affecting every industry, and the world of B2B Marketing is no exception. ABM particularly has evolved rapidly over the last 18 months. This paper explores what is driving this ABM refocus in more depth, exploring how to think past the MQL and how to orchestrate a GTM in a data-driven but personal way.

We're excited to be at the front of this transformative wave in our industry, and we thrive on change. This is a time when our clients need an agency partner who can think on their feet, be accountable and act agile. We welcome the challenge.

The great ABM refocus

In these last years we have seen a fundamental shift in the core drivers for Account Based Marketing, we have seen a tipping point, pushing B2B marketers to adapt quickly to more focused ABM go-to-market strategies.

Modern ABM drivers

Post decimation of events during COVID, revenue is now more critical than top-funnel leads. Coming out of the second lockdown, brands are hyper-focused on shorter-term pipe with prospect accounts more likely to *convert into revenue*

New KPIs

Closer to Sales

Demand and Field teams are empowered to go after more niche segments with specific pain points against relevant products, and aligning use cases to High Value Targets.

A double down on existing customers, upsell & cross-sell... It's a lot easier to get money from contacts that you already have who need new adjacent services

Product Pivots

A combination of remote working and the dismissal of the 3rd party cookies underscores the critical need for well managed, clean, 1st party data

Identity Management

These challenges brought transformation to the building blocks of ABM, changing the way that accounts are profiled, reached and measured.

Buyer group challenges

We must consider how the individual prospects and buyers within accounts have also evolved. The macro-shift of more Millennials being in the driving seat is a backdrop to more nuanced and specific changes that have occurred in the way B2B decision makers think and buy.

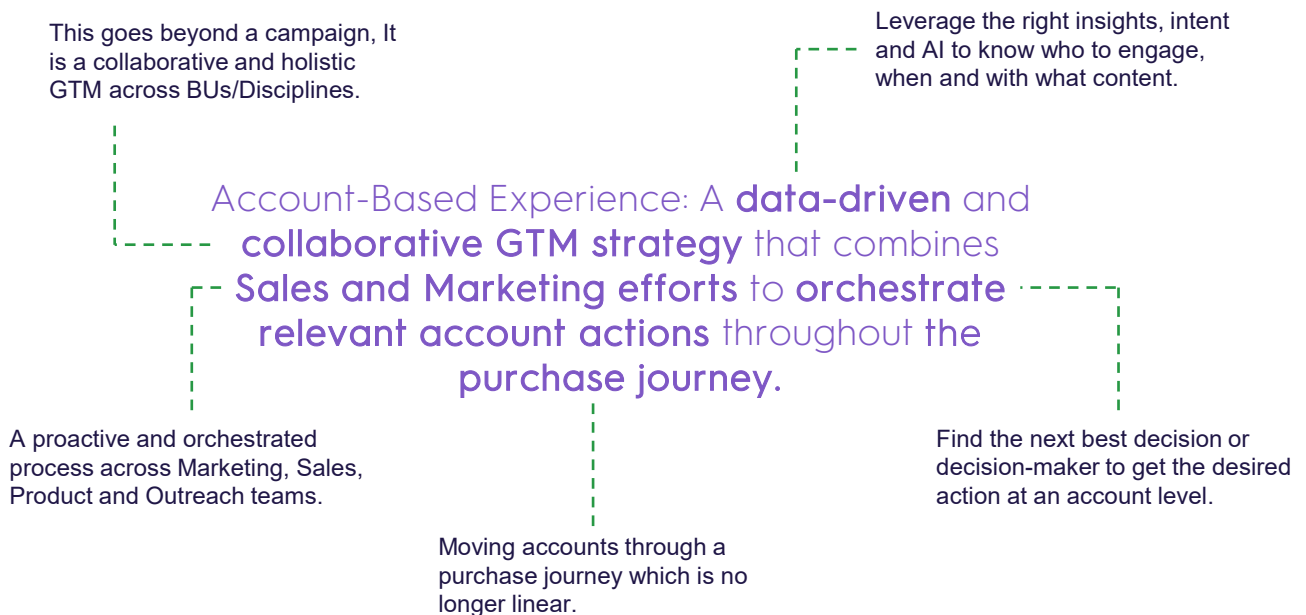| **Buyers are more time poor than ever**	They don't want to be sold to. When senior buyers are spammed by poor content they will unsubscribe and opt-out to avoid being contacted. Relevance and personalization are key.	Top 5 marketing tactics that buyers hate: 1. Receiving too many emails 2. Cold calling 3. Aggressive sales representatives 4. Uninformed sales pitches 5. Non-personalized communication *TrustRadius*
Buyers are harder to identify	Remote working has not just blended the work/life balance. It has also made identifying account level decision makers more complicated.	4 main routes to future-proofed ABM: 1. Close partnerships with B2B vendors that hold subscription IDs and intent 2. Account-based IP validated by VPN or MAIDs 3. Social channels with deep community information 4. Identity Graphs of 1P/Publisher data that is tied to a unique/universal identifier that is permanent and persistent.
They do their research before talking to Sales	Self-service matters more for B2B. According to McKinsey, suppliers that provide outstanding digital experiences are twice as likely to be chosen as a primary supplier.	B2B Buyers are typically **57%** of the way to a buying decision before actively engaging with Sales. **70%** of buyers fully define their needs on their own before engaging with a Sales representative, and **44% identify specific solutions** before reaching out to a seller. **67%** of the buyers journey is now done digitally *CEB, CSO Insights, Sirius Decisions*
Buying groups have exploded over the last 18 months	Most decisions are now made by business and technical resources working together. The pain points of different group members must be considered: e.g. 75% of senior people involved in tech buying decisions are not in IT.	The average complex technology purchase involves between 14 and 23 people. • Team size grows with the value of the purchase. • There is a smaller, "active" core buying team — occasional participation is logical, but occasional decision makers are a problem. *Gartner End User Buying Survey (n = 1468)*
Digital Transformation goes to the top of the food chain	Future proofing businesses through digital transformation is now front and centre for the CEO and his immediate team. Senior buy-in can be required at several stages of the buyer journey.	We have seen C-level interactions on mid-funnel campaigns increase by 94% since 2021.

The rise of ABX

This modern squeeze on the mental and physical availability of buyers limits our access to their time, and radically changes how they perceive brands. Agility becomes key.

Now, buyers look at the service providers that thrived in providing a constant and seamless standard of service during disruption, easing their shifting experiences of modern life. They now expect everyone to step up to that mark. Buyers have new standards of convenient access and timely response, and they desire a personalised experience. They want to be recognised and understood.

Account-based experiences (ABX) rise to meet this need. ABX doesn't replace ABM, it is an evolution of ABM.

ABX defined

This goes beyond a campaign, It is a collaborative and holistic GTM across BUs/Disciplines.

Leverage the right insights, intent and AI to know who to engage, when and with what content.

Account-Based Experience: A **data-driven** and **collaborative GTM strategy** that combines **Sales and Marketing efforts** to **orchestrate relevant account actions** throughout the **purchase journey.**

A proactive and orchestrated process across Marketing, Sales, Product and Outreach teams.

Find the next best decision or decision-maker to get the desired action at an account level.

Moving accounts through a purchase journey which is no longer linear.

This evolution is all about making ABM more customer-centric by identifying when an account wants to be marketed to, and which customers can drive an easier and more team friendly purchase decision. It's about engaging buyers with relevant communication when they need it, cutting through the noise and accessing their mental availability.
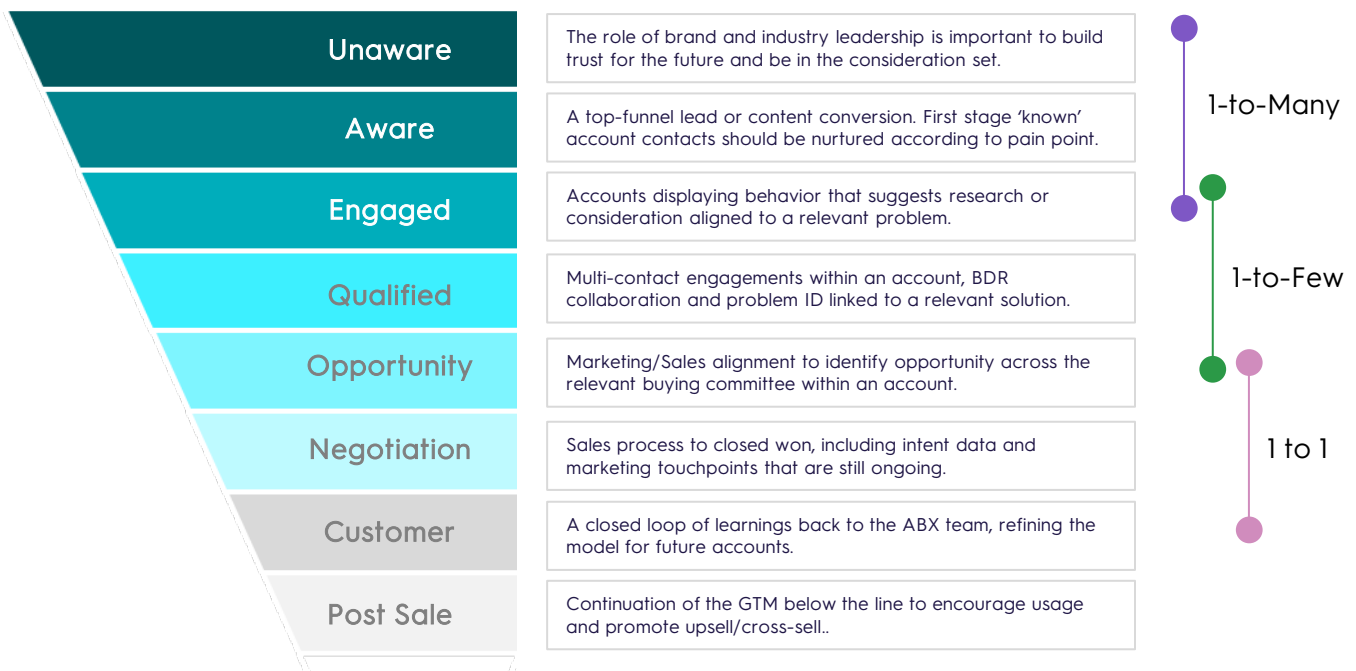
Ultimately, this is CX at an account level, and this is a vital part of our zeitgeist. It impacts the brand impression that prospects have as they move through the purchase journey, and it affects your revenue, retention and loyalty. According to Forrester, businesses that invest in creating great experiences grow revenue 40% faster, improve retention by 70%, and increase customer lifetime value 1.6 times more than other companies.

Beyond the MQL

As B2B Marketers navigate the purchase journey from Brand to Sale, traditional GTM plays are organized around the lead, or prospect level. We must remember that major buying decisions include varied decision makers, which explains why lead based strategies hit a wall at MQL.

ABX aligns your go-to-market to the account journey, providing a seller assisted experience. This starts with the intelligent selection of your target accounts. These are then profiled across a journey framework to ensure that the interactions are useful to them. This puts you in a good position to help them make a buying decision, not just consume content.

Align your GTM to an account journey

Stage	Description	Tier
Unaware	The role of brand and industry leadership is important to build trust for the future and be in the consideration set.	1-to-Many
Aware	A top-funnel lead or content conversion. First stage 'known' account contacts should be nurtured according to pain point.	
Engaged	Accounts displaying behavior that suggests research or consideration aligned to a relevant problem.	1-to-Few
Qualified	Multi-contact engagements within an account, BDR collaboration and problem ID linked to a relevant solution.	
Opportunity	Marketing/Sales alignment to identify opportunity across the relevant buying committee within an account.	1 to 1
Negotiation	Sales process to closed won, including intent data and marketing touchpoints that are still ongoing.	
Customer	A closed loop of learnings back to the ABX team, refining the model for future accounts.	
Post Sale	Continuation of the GTM below the line to encourage usage and promote upsell/cross-sell..	

GTM strategies to prospective accounts work best when they are prioritized into tiers according to their value.:

- 1-to-Many: Accounts which fit the ideal customer profile. Can be segmented by vertical or most viable solution. We recommend more than 700 accounts.
- 1-to-Few: Accounts demonstrating behavior that indicates they are more likely to buy, often mixed with high value targets from Sales. We recommend circa 100 accounts.
- 1-to-1: Accounts at the opportunity stage, or with an open RFP which need support to get over the line. Usually 5-10 accounts during a year, depending on the length of the sales cycle.
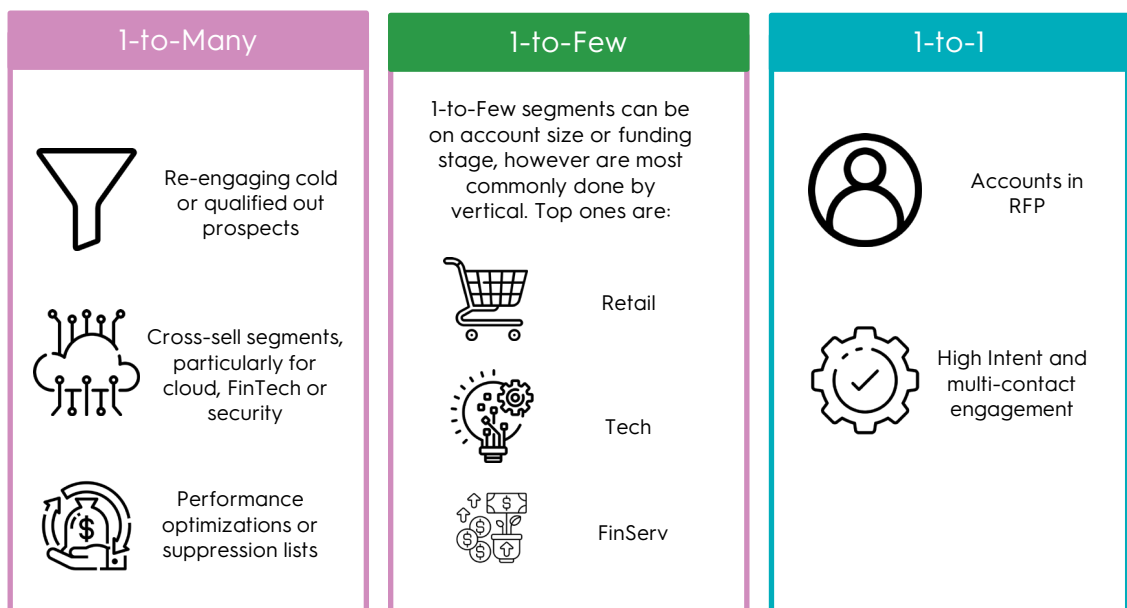
Driving agility

Getting to a sales driven TAL

ABX starts with your account list segmentation. This is the foundation of your go-to-market strategy. We know that it can be a challenge to educate Sales to prioritize accounts in a way that aligns to Marketing support, with different KPIs often muddying the water. Indeed most Sales teams will say all of the accounts are important! We recommend designing a scorecard to identify what makes your Ideal Customer Profile (ICP). Start from there.

Once the identification parameters have been agreed, you can look at your existing tech stack to see how lists can be built dynamically. Sales can tag an account as 1-to-Many or 1-to1 within Salesforce for example, allowing Marketers access to fresh and accurate account prioritization in real time. This agile approach saves hours and hours of up-front work., and increases accuracy.

Dynamic personalization segments

ABX personalization at scale is an area of rapid development. Indeed 53% of respondents in our latest report* say that they are driving some personalization, compared to only 32% last year. 95% have greater ambitions moving forward into 2022.

Building agile segmentation into your marketing plan can more than double performance, and can mitigate the non-linear sales journey. Segmentation priorities will differ by stage. Below are some of the most popular segments that we create for our clients:

1-to-Many	1-to-Few	1-to-1
Re-engaging cold or qualified out prospects	1-to-Few segments can be on account size or funding stage, however are most commonly done by vertical. Top ones are:	Accounts in RFP
Cross-sell segments, particularly for cloud, FinTech or security	Retail	High Intent and multi-contact engagement
Performance optimizations or suppression lists	Tech	
	FinServ	

Data driven targeting

Once you know which accounts and audience segments fit your ICP, we can profile and organize the right data sources to target them both online and in the physical world.

It is important to note that not all data sources are equal - there are thousands of players in this market. It is vital to ask tough questions; to understand exactly how intent data is gathered, and how partners define account inventory. Bad data gains poor results, and this only leads to a poor customer experience.

Leverage the right 1P and 3P data to reach real people in the right accounts

Partnerships
- Partners who have curated strong 1P audiences of their own over time
- Push from walled gardens to your own digital ecosystem

Social
- Platforms like LinkedIn & Facebook who identify individuals not cookies
- TAL upload
- 1P integration & lookalikes

Email/PII Match to Other PII Markers
- Match business to personal IDs and then to cookies for biddable & digital

VPN & MAID
- Quality checking profiles of IP targeting at scale
- Geo-location for multi-office locations

Offline-to-Online
- Onboard CRM & other offline data with partners such as LiveRamp (strips PII)
- Track & ingest purchases to influence online media optimization

List to IP
- Map company names to IP ranges using 3rd party matching services and then bid on IPs

List to Geo
- Map CRM lists to geos and geo-fence those buildings or areas on mobile or with DOOH

Data which provides reporting that is accessible, informative and adaptable to the marketing /sales view required

Engagement, demand and sales KPIs should merge into one measurable journey

The data sources will determine which signals align to your success metrics, and a customer journey of success can be mapped from Marketing through to Sales.

Customer Journey Phase

Account Reach/Depth & Frequency

Velocity & Frequency of Interactions

ROI (Leads, Sales, Retention)

Account intelligence orchestration

- Unique Identifier
- Cross channel management

ID Management

- Intent / buying signals
- Decisioning
- Pipeline velocity

Data Insights

- Data quality
- Cleanliness
- Recency

Data Management

ABX

- Dynamic creative
- Sequencing
- Personalisation

Content Management

- DMP, CMS, CRM, AMP etc.

Tech Platforms

People and Process

- Skillsets and training
- Strong knowledge base
- Sales & Marketing

ABX is a developing discipline. It has many moving parts and requires collaboration across multiple areas of the business. This can seem intimidating when viewed all at once, so we recommend breaking it down to address your immediate priorities.

Prioritizing your ideal customers with a GTM across the sales journey can be underpinned by more simple data structures. With a 4.3x increase in customer lifetime value via ABX, the key is to start.

6 top tips

1 Brand matters: high value accounts are finite, and it is vital to be part of the consideration set from the beginning

2 Build an Account-Based-Experience throughout the customer journey to build trust and relevance

3 Double down on collaboration with Sales to keep the path to purchase as joined up as possible

4 Think beyond the MQL: as your intelligence strategy evolves so should your KPIs

5 When it comes to choosing your data partners, think twice, choose once

6 Bring people on the journey with you. The best strategy in the world will falter without the right people driving it

About Realm

purpose built for an age of change and agility

Realm is a media and marketing agency born to operate and thrive in a constantly changing world. We work with our clients in new and dynamic environments, passionately believing that loving our work, trusting each other and being collaborative are the keys to unlocking success.

firmly rooted in B2B experience

We combine strong expertise across consulting, media activation and data functions to drive unified customer experiences across B2B audiences and accounts. By colouring outside of the traditional agency lines we break down silos, achieving measurable business success for marketing teams and their brands.

passionate about data

During a time of intense digital transformation, a B2B marketers role continues to become more complex. It is no longer enough for media and internal marketing programs to run in siloes. 1P data is the new frontier, whether your challenge is building your database, or intelligently activating against it. Leveraging the right contacts at the right accounts to build your brand and drive action is what we're all about.
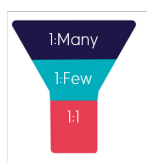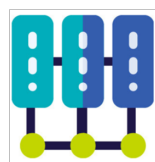
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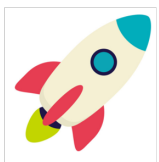
Brand & Strategy	Media Activation	ABM	Data & Technology	Demand Generation	Audience Intelligence

Contact us

To find out how we can transform your marketing and media strategies today, please contact:

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