

Research Report | December 2021

# Embedding ABM: Next Steps for Market Leadership

## 2021 ABM Benchmark Study

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# Introduction

Through the last two years of pandemic-based disruption, B2B marketers have put even more emphasis on Account-Based Marketing (ABM) as a critical strategy to drive business growth.

*Embedding ABM: Next Steps for Market Leadership*, the fifth annual ABM benchmark study from ITSMA and the ABM Leadership Alliance, highlights ABM's ongoing success and the five ways that ABM leaders stand apart from others to generate more substantial results.

As ABM increasingly becomes business as usual, this essential study provides critical insight into the current state of play with ABM, what's working for the most effective programs, and the investment priorities required to maximize business impact in 2022.

B2B marketing leaders continued to prioritize ABM investment and program development throughout the disruptions of 2021. Companies with ABM programs dedicated more than a quarter of their total marketing budgets to ABM this year, and three-quarters of program leaders plan to increase budgets in 2022.

As in past years, we saw great results from ABM programs in 2021, with 72% of companies reporting greater ROI from ABM than other types of marketing, and 70% saying that ABM principles influence the way they do all marketing today.

*Embedding ABM*, the fifth annual ABM benchmark study from ITSMA and the ABMLA, documents both the continued maturation of the discipline and the reality that most programs are still in early stages of development. Companies continue to experiment with different types of ABM, with about half implementing One-to-One ABM and One-to-Many ABM strategies, and almost two thirds implementing One-to-Few ABM. Almost half of ABM programs now include at least two types.

Amid their success, ABM programs continue to struggle in several key areas, including aligning with sales, customizing content and campaigns, and measuring business impact.

Most important, the study identifies five critical areas in which the most effective ABM programs stand apart from the rest:

- **Strategic alignment:** Leading programs include more, and more diverse, senior leaders in ABM strategy and governance
- **Sales collaboration:** Leading programs work more closely with sales at every stage of program management and customer relationship development
- **Staff development:** Leading programs have built teams with greater skill levels across a wide range of ABM competencies
- **Process excellence:** Leading programs have invested more in strengthening and solidifying essential tools, templates, and processes
- **Technology and data leverage:** Leading programs take more advantage of existing capabilities and use them to their fullest potential

Check out the full report and let us know what you think. We'd love to continue the conversation.

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@ABMLA1

#EmbeddingABM

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# Key recommendations



- Position ABM as a strategic corporate growth program, not just as a marketing program or tactic
- Enlist greater involvement in governance from a more diverse group of senior leaders
- Measure and report results, both quantitative and qualitative, using the Three Rs: Reputation, Relationships, and Revenue

- Collaborate with sales to fully integrate marketing with the account planning and engagement processes
- Work more closely with sales at every stage of customer relationship development
- Educate sales every step of the way to increase their confidence in ABM and build trust

- Invest in team and individual skill development across a wide range of ABM competencies
- Create formal career paths for ABM-ers to support team retention and growth
- Use a competency model designed specifically for ABM to:
  - Prioritize skills
  - Identify skills gaps
  - Plan for professional development to close the gaps

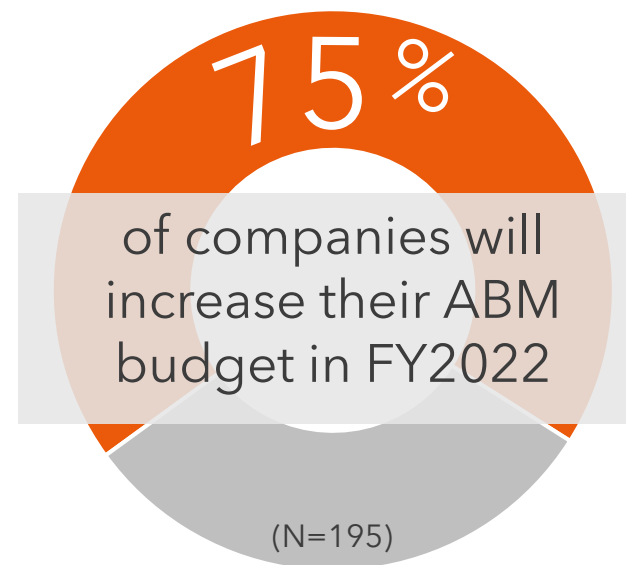
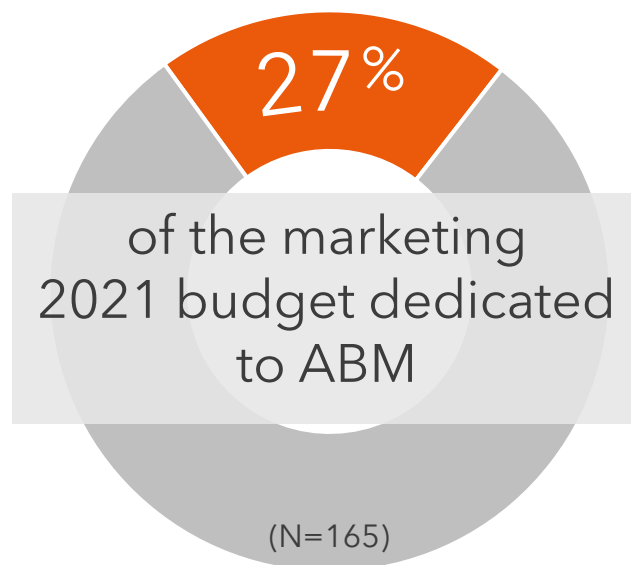
- Centralize your ABM program management to achieve scale and embed ABM in your organization
- Invest in tools, templates, and process development to standardize and facilitate reuse
- Build a community approach to share best practices across divisions and business units

- Reinforce the tech stack with analytics and insight tools
- Emphasize integration, useability, and adoption to ensure maximum leverage of existing tools and systems
- Invest more in training to ensure confidence and capability with priority data, insight, and tools

# Looking back: ABM in 2021

# The continued rise of ABM: COVID-19 disruptions have fueled the ABM fire

**#1** B2B  
marketing  
priority in  
2021



Average ABM  
Budget Growth  
**13.5%**

72%

N=118

of companies say **ABM delivers higher ROI** than for other types of marketing

# Marketers report improvement in the three Rs of strategic marketing

% reporting **improvement** from ABM (N=183)

73%

Reputation

(Brand equity, perception, awareness, and knowledge)

65%

Relationships

(Account engagement, relationship strength, breadth/depth of relationships)

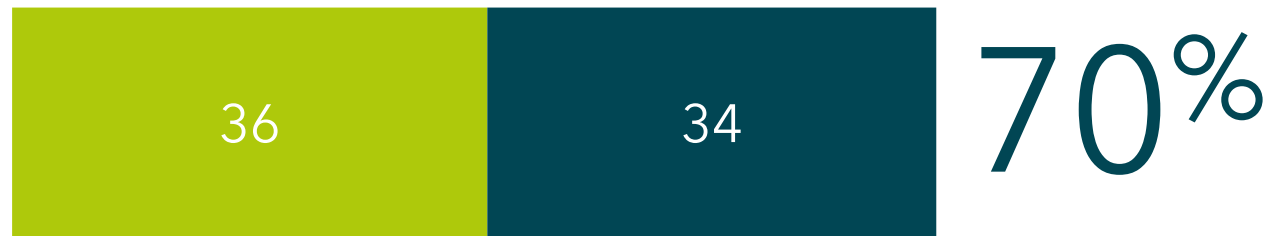
40%

Revenue

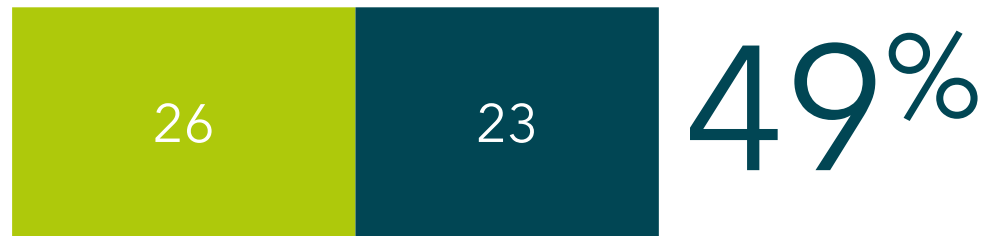
(Revenue per account, pipeline growth, deal size, portfolio penetration)

# The benefits of ABM extend across all of marketing and beyond

The principles of ABM are influencing the way we do all our marketing today



ABM is playing a major role in making our entire company more customer centric



■ Agree ■ Strongly agree

# ABM is playing a major role in making companies more customer centric

"We have multiple geo-based account teams for specific global accounts that are segmented and siloed. There's little communication between those account teams. ABM is helping to bridge the gaps so we can take a more holistic approach to account planning."

"The future is bright for ABM. Our CEO recognizes that ABM is not just about marketing but improving our client experience. He knows that we cannot continue to show up with a disjointed sales approach with multiple people, each from a different BU. It's too difficult and confusing for the client and that's not how you grow relationships."

"The vision is to go as account-based as we possibly can. Our CEO and CMO believe that the more personalized we can get with our customers, the better. With our long history and legacy customers, there's still so much opportunity to expand."

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# What's changed since the pandemic?

More virtual  
and agile  
(of course!)

87%

% of ABM program  
**tactics online**  
(N=206)

More focus on  
existing customers

Importance of growing  
business with **existing**  
**accounts**

Mean rating  
(N=220)

4.1

Greater  
collaboration  
with sales

ABM is responsible  
for significantly  
**improving**  
**marketing and**  
**sales alignment**  
at our company

61%

% Agree  
(N=221)

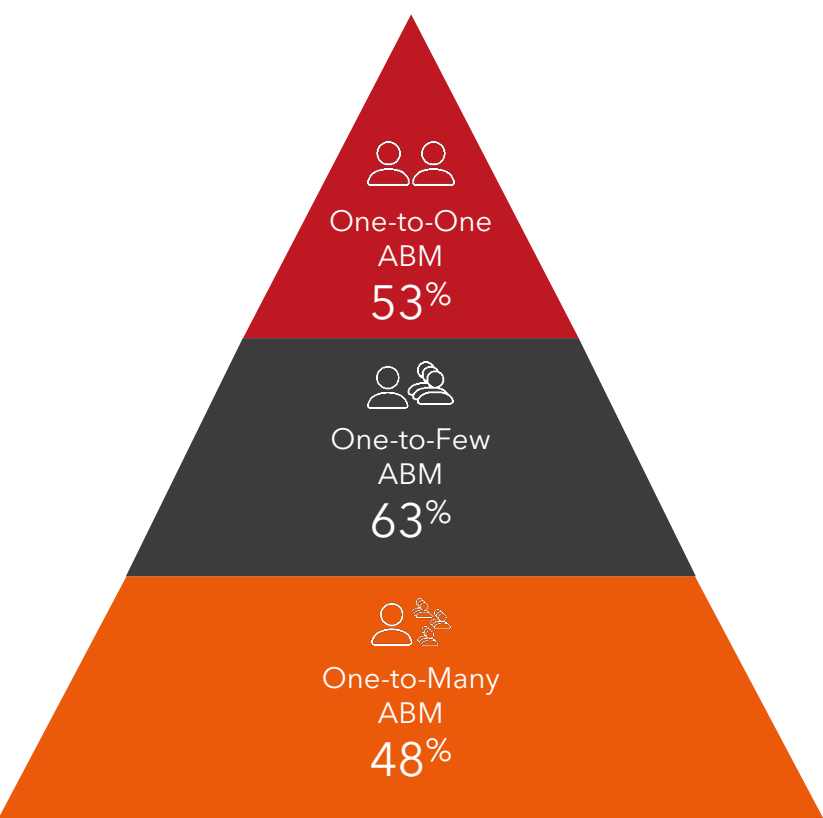
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Note: Mean rating based on a 5-point scale where 1=Not at all important and 5=Our most important, primary objective.

Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2021 ABM Benchmark Study, September 2021

# Many companies are creating a blended strategy to ABM development and coverage



One-to-One ABM only	17	55% One Type Only
One-to-Few ABM only	20	
One-to-Many ABM only	18	
One-to-One ABM and One-to-Few ABM	15	24% Two Types
One-to-One ABM and One-to-Many ABM	1	
One-to-Few ABM and One-to-Many ABM	8	
All three types of ABM	22	22% All Three Types

# We see the emergence of new approaches to blend and implement ABM

"We have accounts that are customer accounts, but we are looking to seed net new buying centers. It is almost as if it were a new logo push. We'll work with a specific territory of these select accounts aligned by industry. Each ABM-er will own one One-to-Few ABM cluster and one One-to-One ABM account plan as we move forward."

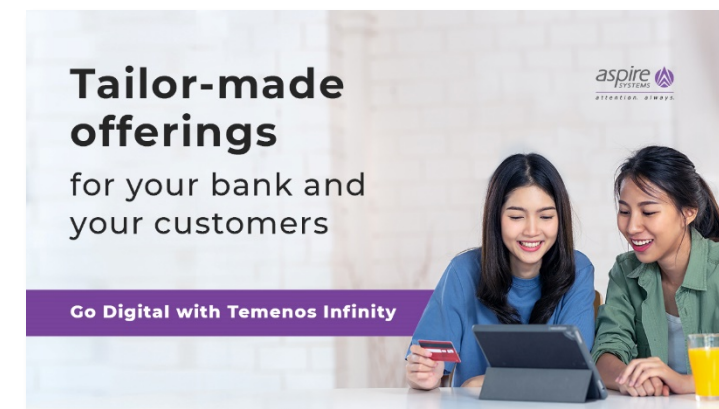
"We do all three types of ABM: One-to-One, One-to-Few, and One-to-Many. We call the One-to-Many ABM programmatic, and we do programmatic campaigns for all three tiers out of our strategic territory layer. And then what my team will do, is layer on the One-to-Few and One-to-Many ABM approaches when it makes sense, based on the play, the campaign, the effort, and so forth."

"Ultimately, the plan is to have an ABM program that spans the entire customer journey. A One-to-Many ABM program at the top of the funnel to raise awareness, that top of the funnel that then flows into a One-to-Few ABM sales enablement approach at the middle to bottom of the funnel, and then One-to-One strategic ABM for our existing customers. That would be the utopia, to cover off the entire customer journey with an ABM strategy."

# Aspire Systems implements a hybrid ABM strategy aligned to the buyer journey



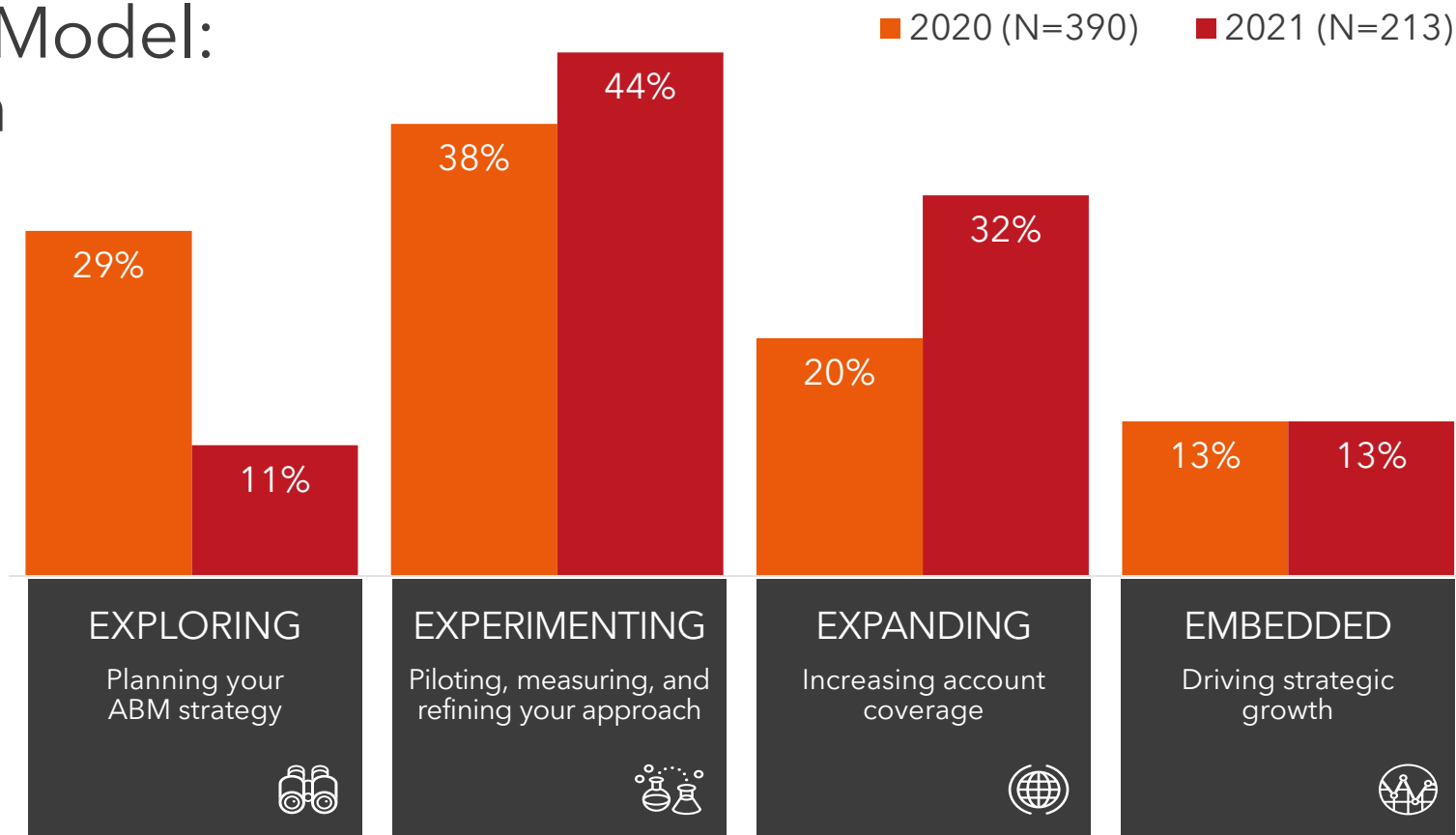
<b>Situation</b>	During the pandemic, banks and financial institutions needed to go digital. There was a huge market opportunity and <u>Aspire</u> Banking and Financial Services (BFS) BU had to tap it quickly by scaling its sales and marketing efforts.
<b>Solution</b>	<p>Used insight and an AI-driven tool (<u>Recotap</u>) to select accounts and personalize marketing messages and deliver them via multiple sales and marketing channels within an ABM campaign. They essentially went from One-to-Many ABM to One-to-One ABM with increasing insight and personalization within a single campaign.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assembled a team of six, including a strategist, content marketers, digital marketers, and a market researcher to provide insight</li> <li>Identified and targeted best-fit accounts</li> <li>Focused on creating brand awareness; switched to lead gen when executives engaged with content</li> <li>Once engaged, marketing outreach was supplemented by personalized, one-to-one sales outreach</li> </ul>
<b>Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved brand awareness across Aspire's target audience</li> <li>Increased inbound leads 30% over the previous year</li> <li>Generated a 25% increase in the sales pipeline each quarter</li> <li>Created \$12 million in new pipeline opportunities</li> <li>Aspire's BFS ABM campaign strategy now is being adopted across multiple service lines and industry verticals.</li> </ul>



<https://recotap.com/>

# ABM programs are maturing; almost half of all programs are in Expanding or Embedded

ITSMA's ABM Adoption Model:  
Four Stages of Adoption



# Maturity matters: ABM results improve with experience

% reporting significant (>10%)  
improvement (N~180)

	EXPLORING/ EXPERIMENTING	EXPANDING/ EMBEDDED
Sales rep/account team feedback or satisfaction*	33%	61%
Active engagement with selected accounts*	46%	59%
Pipeline growth*	26%	53%
Revenue growth*	17%	43%



For stability, you need a guaranteed budget upfront; it can't be ad hoc. ABM is a long-term program. In other areas of marketing, you can add campaigns or tools and see success right away. But with ABM, you need the relationship building; it takes time.

# Amid the impact, significant challenges remain

## What's working well?

- ✓ Active engagement with accounts
- ✓ Pipeline growth
- ✓ Sales satisfaction
- ✓ Influence on overall marketing
- ✓ Return on Investment

## What's still challenging?

- Educating sales on the process and value of ABM
- Tracking and measuring ABM results
- Developing campaign assets that are mass- customizable to allow scale
- Personalizing and tailoring marketing to the key contacts at each account
- Keeping up with the demand from the sales team requesting ABM for their accounts

# ABM challenges are varied and persistent

"The biggest challenge was education and trust between sales and marketing. We know that ABM is not going to be successful without that partnership. We had to make sure that we showed up, did what we said we were going to do, and showed results using the data."

"ABM is such a highly visible program, and everyone has a business case for it, but we just don't have the resources to support the demand."

"I would love to give our ABM-ers the ability to take a longer-term approach to ABM across a somewhat smaller group of accounts. Unfortunately, publicly traded companies have to make quarterly numbers and we don't always get that luxury."

"Our creative services team has so many priorities that they don't have the bandwidth to help us in a timely manner. Therefore, we have to turn to outside agencies to get things done and there's costs associated with that."

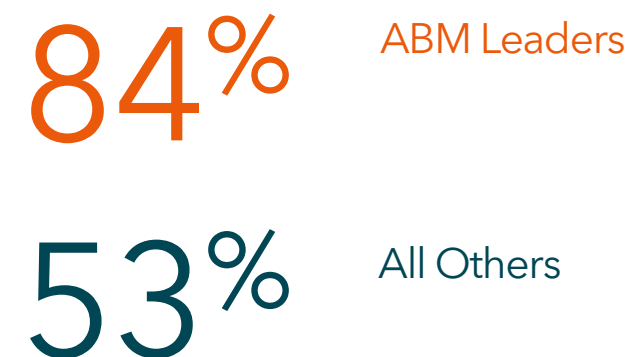
"Data is a huge challenge. We need to get an aggregate view of all the data we have in disparate channels to better track our engagement. As we transform, we're doing a better job of getting data using the tools and tech we have today, which is leading us to not only insights, but also better marketing and sales engagement."

# What leaders do differently

# Some companies are meeting the challenge: Meet the ABM leaders



Measurable business improvement in **revenue**



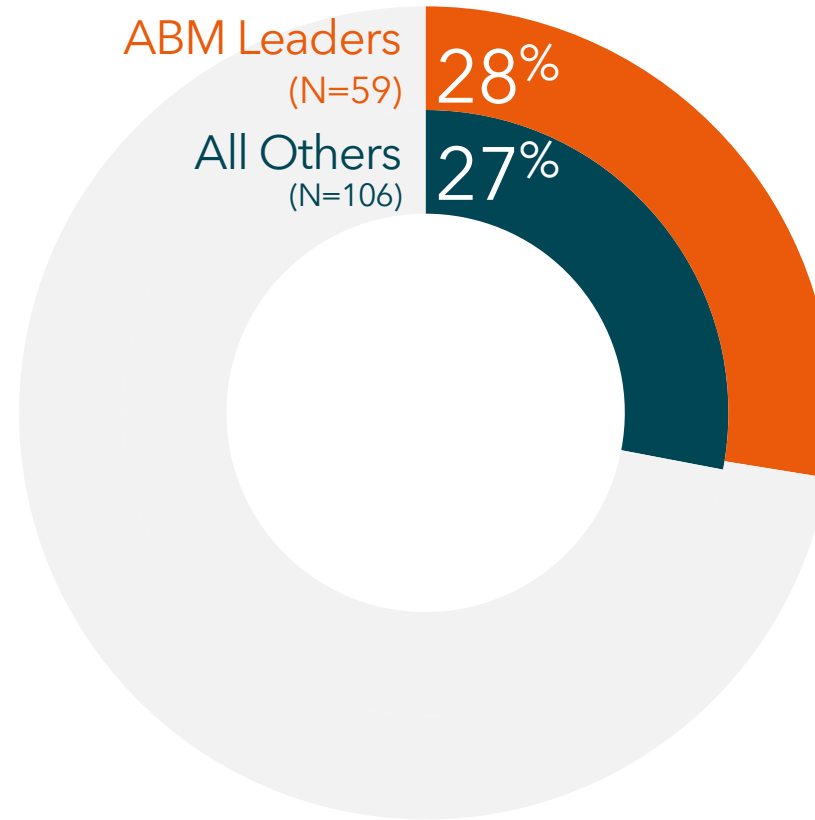
# First, let's look at what ABM leaders do NOT do differently

ABM leaders do not:

- Spend more money on ABM
- Deploy different types of ABM
- Use different marketing tactics
- Take a different approach to staffing

# ABM leaders do *not* spend more money on ABM

% of marketing budget  
dedicated to ABM



# ABM leaders do *not* deploy different types of ABM

Which of the following most closely describe the types of ABM you have implemented (or are piloting)?	% of Respondents	
	ABM Leaders	All Others
	N=74	N=147
<b>One-to-One ABM.</b> Marketer works with key account teams to develop and implement highly customized sales and marketing programs for individual accounts; typically with 5–50 top strategic accounts.	59	50
<b>One-to-Few ABM.</b> Marketer works with specific sales teams to create customized campaigns for small groups or clusters of accounts with similar business attributes or imperatives (e.g., banks, hospitals, digital transformation, cybersecurity); usually 5–15 accounts per cluster.	72	59
<b>One-to-Many ABM.</b> Marketers work with sales to target priority accounts at scale, using technology to support issue-based campaigns with personalization; typically hundreds or more named accounts.	43	50
<b>Deal-Based Marketing.</b> Marketers work with sales to pursue specific deals within key accounts.	27	19
<b>Other.</b> (Hybrid, Buying Stage)	3	1

# ABM leaders do *not* use different marketing tactics

Top five most effective tactics

## ABM Leaders

## All Others

One-to-One ABM	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Account-specific content</li><li>2. Executive-to-executive programs</li><li>3. Webinars and virtual events</li><li>4. Microsites</li><li>5. Paid social media</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Account-specific content</li><li>2. Executive-to-executive programs</li><li>3. Webinars and virtual events</li><li>4. Microsites</li><li>5. Email marketing</li></ol>
One-to-Few ABM	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Account-specific content</li><li>2. Executive-to-executive programs</li><li>3. Webinars and virtual events</li><li>4. Email marketing</li><li>5. Paid social media</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Account-specific content</li><li>2. Email marketing</li><li>3. Webinars and virtual events</li><li>4. Paid social media</li><li>5. Executive-to-executive programs</li></ol>
One-to-Many ABM	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Email marketing</li><li>2. Webinars and virtual events</li><li>3. Reverse IP/targeted digital ads/retargeting</li><li>4. Paid social media</li><li>5. Account-specific content</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Paid social media</li><li>2. Webinars and virtual events</li><li>3. Content syndication</li><li>4. Email marketing/e-newsletters (your own)</li><li>5. Reverse IP/targeted digital ads/retargeting</li></ol>

# ABM leaders do *not* take a different approach to staffing

What are your organization's top approaches to attain ABM skills and talent?	% of Respondents	
	ABM Leaders	All Others
	N=72	N=142
Train existing marketers	63	67
Hire from outside the company	43	40
Outsource to agencies	18	18
Hire from within the company, but outside of marketing	7	8
Use interim staff or consultants	6	9

Note: Up to two responses allowed.

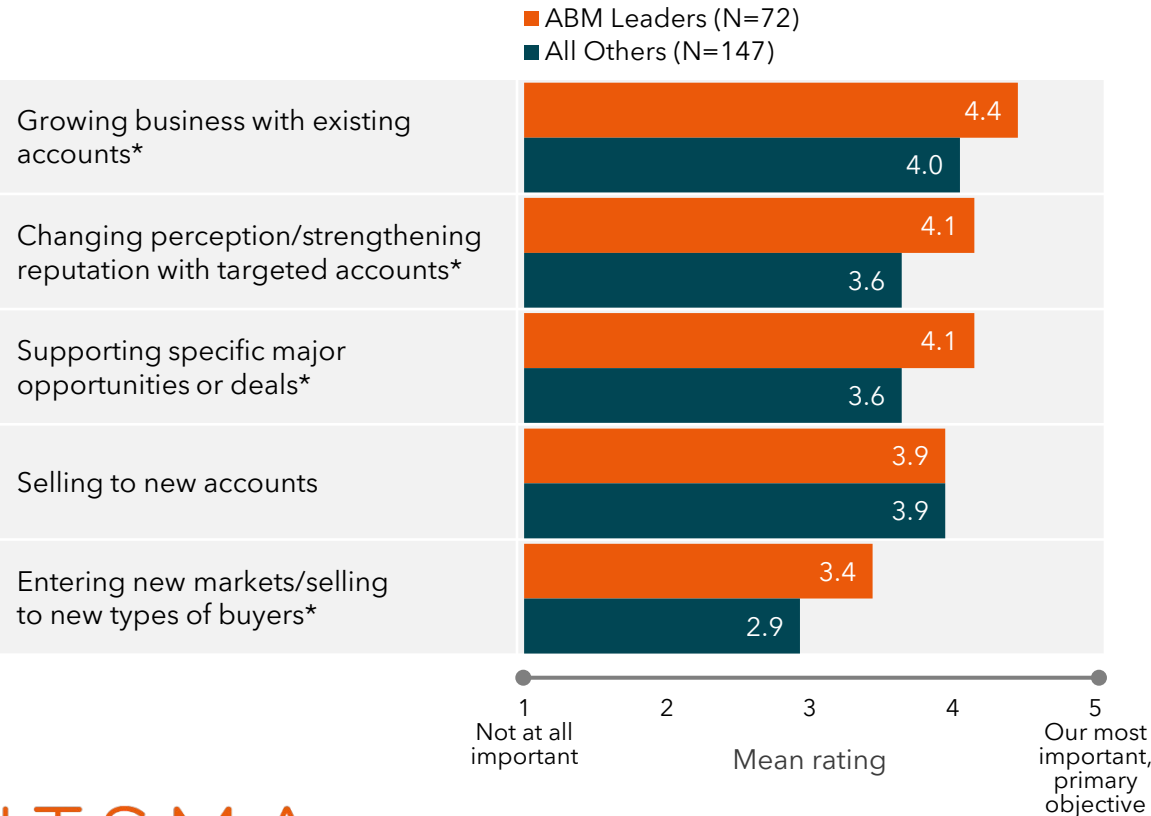
Does your marketing organization have a defined career progression or career development plan for ABM marketers?	% of Respondents	
	ABM Leaders	All Others
	N=73	N=145
Yes	15	6
Formal career development plans are under development	8	8
No, but we plan to create more formal career development plans in the next 12 months	32	43
No, and we have no plans to create formal career development plans	11	13
Don't know	34	30

# What do leaders do differently?

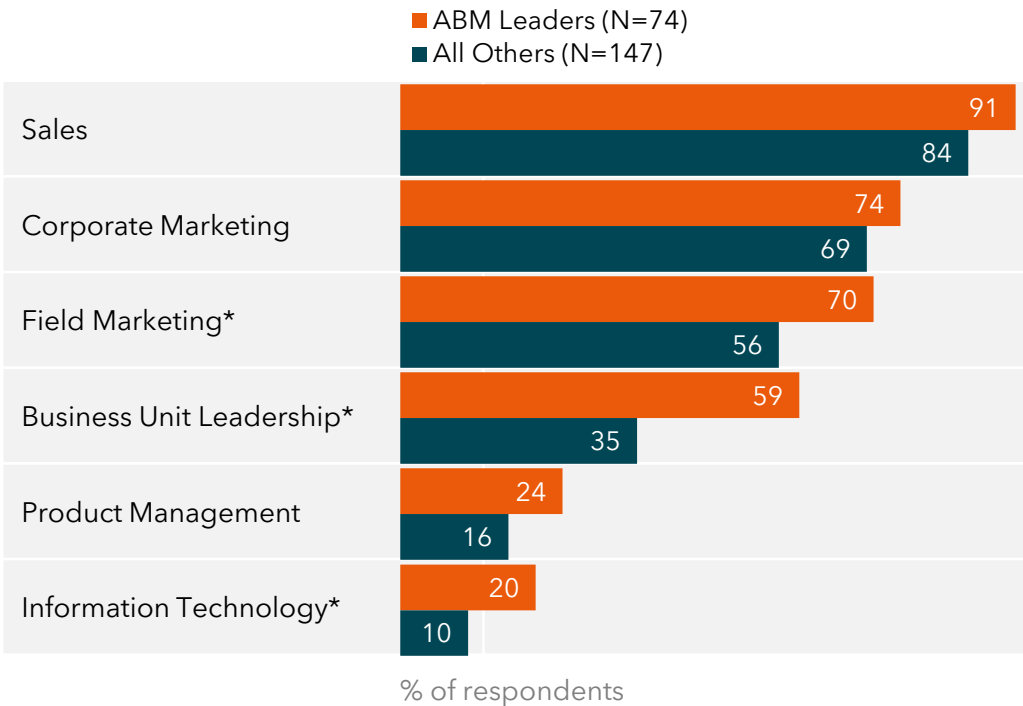


# Strategic alignment: Leaders have broader objectives and greater stakeholder alignment

Right now, how would you rate the importance of each of the following potential ABM business objectives?



Which internal organizations have formal representation in influencing or helping govern your ABM program?



Note: Mean rating based on a 5-point scale where 1=Not at all important and 5=Our most important, primary objective.

\* Indicates a statistically significant difference.

Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2021 ABM Benchmark Study, September 2021

# Effective strategic governance requires a diverse set of stakeholders

"We have two ABM executive sponsors: our chief marketing officer and our chief revenue officer. The sales, service, and customer success organizations report to the chief revenue officer. It also helps that both customer marketing and account-based marketing are huge priorities for the CEO. That's why we get the support and resources we need."

"We've had a few stops and starts with ABM. I view my role as the champion, bringing all the disparate groups and people together to formalize the program and build consistency. We can then work together across the enterprise instead of having separate teams doing their own version of ABM."

"I think the Center of Excellence will do wonders in terms of bringing consistency and continuity. The fact that we've got the right governance is important. We've got very senior leaders embedded, taking ownership and helping to shape the program. This isn't just about creating a cute little side project. This is about helping to reshape the way that we, as a firm, approach B2B marketing."

"Our CEO and senior vice presidents view ABM as one of the six levers for the company. We have not had account-based marketing at that level in any of the other iterations. It has made a huge difference in what we've been able to accomplish in a short period of time. And there's a joint commitment from both sales and marketing to make it successful."

"We have a governance board made up of business leaders from across our organization, ranging from sales, marketing, solution consulting, brand, sales operations, and customer success. We need them to buy into the vision and support the program, even if they're not directly responsible for the goals. It's critical that they understand our roadmap, give us feedback, and represent us at different levels of the business. For us, ABM isn't just a marketing imperative, it is a business imperative."

# Sales collaboration: Program leaders are significantly more likely to have stronger alignment with sales

% Strongly Agree



# Sales collaboration requires top-level commitment and constant reinforcement

"I have regular and frequent conversations with sales because if you're not talking to sales, you're not aligned to the business and market strategies. At the end of the day, my goal is to enable sales to deliver outcomes."

"Alignment with our global sales organization is critical. Sales will influence our global marketing organizations and where they put investment and resources to support our One-to-One ABM team. We work closely with them on account execution, but we could use them more to influence what the marketing team does at a global level to support our team."

"We map the ABM organization to the geographic sales model. ABM-ers do not report to their sales leaders, but their sales leaders feel like we're their team. Some say it is inefficient because ABM-ers have to work across multiple industries. But the trade-off works for us because what you gain is familiarity and trust with sales leadership. And because there are so many people doing industry marketing, it's not hard for us to find, curate, and personalize the right content."

"Our number-one initiative in year one, was to align with sales; constant meetings, reiterating what ABM is and why they should care. It is paying off for us now. We have great partnerships from the top down. Our CMO and CRO are locked at the hip. There is constant inclusion of the ABM-er on the account team and that provides us with great accountability and insight."

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# Strengthening sales collaboration: TCS launches ABM++ to embed marketing in each critical phase of the sales cycle



<b>Situation</b>	<p>TCS wanted to change its marketing culture from a support unit to a revenue-generating unit. That meant integrating the efforts of both marketing and sales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-depth analysis of 30 top growth accounts revealed stagnating pipelines, engagement limited to CIO organization, and sales messaging not aligned with TCS positioning</li> <li>• Sales teams operated in silos, coordinating with local marketing units only</li> <li>• No institutional mechanism to integrate sales and marketing</li> <li>• With the pandemic, sales lost the opportunity to be in front of the customer</li> </ul>
<b>Solution</b>	<p>The CMO-sponsored ABM++ initiative was piloted for 30 accounts.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Collaboration with Sales:</b> ABM++ embeds marketing in each phase of the sales cycle. Strong governance ensures consistency and institutionalizes the new practices.</li> <li><b>2. Technology-led:</b> Relies on extensive use of technology in gathering customer insights, understanding customer buying patterns, deploying digital campaigns, and measuring results.</li> <li><b>3. Data-driven:</b> TCS monitors and measures marketing through a centralized, automated dashboard providing feedback to evaluate effectiveness.</li> </ol>
<b>Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased awareness and share of voice vis-à-vis competitors</li> <li>• 300 leads generated</li> <li>• \$200M of new pipeline with marketing as the lead source</li> <li>• 453 new customer meetings</li> <li>• Demand to expand the program by adding 100 accounts</li> </ul>

**Personalised Content to influence the buyer journey**

THEME SPECIFIC SALES PLAYBOOK

INDUSTRY SPECIFIC

ACCOUNT SPECIFIC

IoT | [Link](#)

Cloud | [Link](#)

Neural Manufacturing | [Link](#)

Intelligent Risk Enterprise | [Link](#)

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# Staff development: ABM-ers within leading programs are more proficient across a wide range of skills

As a group, how proficient are your ABM marketers in the following competencies?	Mean Rating	
	ABM Leaders	All Others
	N~73	N~139
Sales and marketing collaboration and integration	4.0*	3.6*
Campaign planning and execution	3.9*	3.6*
Leadership	3.8	3.6
Account relationships and strategy	3.8*	3.2*
Business acumen	3.7	3.5
Cross organizational collaboration (sales, operations, customer success, subject matter experts, and so forth)	3.7*	3.4*
Tailored value propositions	3.7*	3.1*
Content creation and tailoring	3.6*	3.3*
Market and account Intelligence	3.6*	3.3*
Data and analytics for ABM	3.5*	2.9*
Marketing technology for ABM accounts and programs	3.3*	2.9*

# Skills development is a top priority for ABM leaders

"We run multiple training sessions including our own internal training development and mentorship program called 'Demystifying ABM' to inspire the next generation of ABM leaders. We now have over 160 individuals trained on the ITSMA ABM framework, actively deploying One-to-One and One-to-Few ABM-as-a-service into about 200 accounts across 10 countries."

"There's a lot of job opportunities for ABM because it's become the hot, new, shiny object, but it's hard to find people. And when you do find good people, you want to make sure they stick around. That's why we developed IDP, individual development performance, a template we use to talk about career path. Where do they see themselves in three years? What is going to excite them?"

"We are looking at the mix of our ABM talent. We need people with a content focus and, unfortunately, our talent is more towards program management. Our ABM-ers are very good at conducting programs and doing events, but not messaging and value proposition development. So, until we build quality talent, we have to bring in the outside experts."

"Instead of recruiting experienced ABM leads, I have pulled in some junior people who have the right personality type even though I know they're not quite ready. I have them shadowing the existing ABM leads. Right now, I have three people that are growing into the role, and next year, I will probably give them each one account."

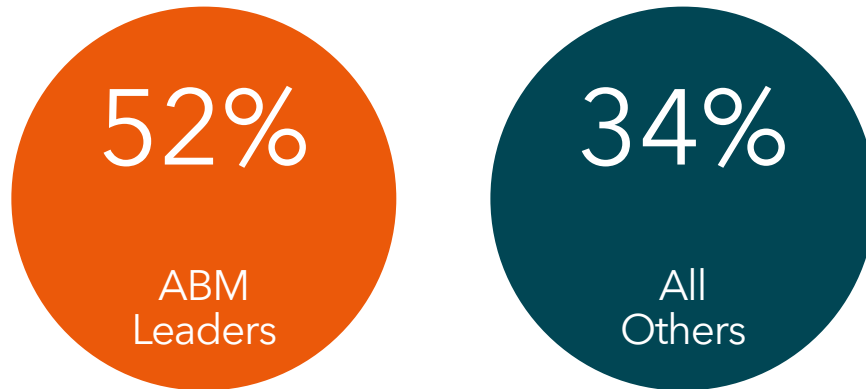
"Once we got the sales organization in the U.S. to understand the value, they wanted more. To do more, I need people. It is critically important for us to drive ABM skills through the certification process. ITSMA has been a resource for me guiding, innovating, and building the program."

ITSMA

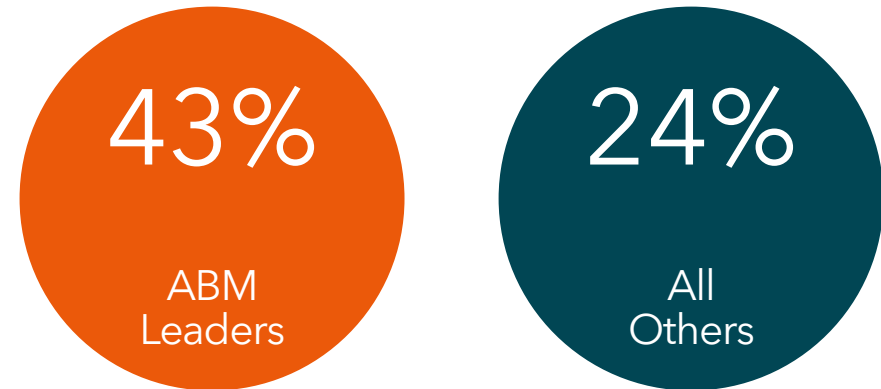
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# Process excellence: ABM leaders invest more in tools, templates, and processes for reuse and sharing

Standardized campaign templates and tools to facilitate ABM program scaling\*



ABM community to share ideas and best practices across organizations/business units\*



# Program leaders focus on tool and process development for efficiency, consistency, and impact

"We need to have a solid understanding of all the technology and tools and assets we're investing in as a part of our transformation to enable us to be more agile and efficient. Once the transformation takes hold and we see the benefits, we will determine if key account marketers can pick up more accounts."

"We are creating an engine for marketing teams that are aligned to the products and solutions to feed their campaigns into ABM. ABM-ers are building on top of the existing campaigns that marketing teams are driving. We're saying, ABM-ers, you have the best of our B2B marketing plus the additional budget and resources to do some personalization and customization to make sure that whatever touches your account is based on the strategy you've built."

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# Tools and templates for reuse: SAP's central repository for ABM content assets strengthens sales enablement for One-to-Few ABM



<b>Situation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SAP needed to change perception from an ERP software company to a strategic innovation partner delivering digital solutions</li> <li>The company needed a way to spark new conversations with senior decision-makers inside its largest customers</li> </ul>
<b>Solution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement One-to-Few ABM with 40 accounts in 6 industry clusters</li> <li>Conduct industry research, as well as deep-dive profiles of each customer and stakeholder maps, to identify topical areas of interest and specific, situational business nuances</li> <li>Arm field marketing and sales with content-based toolkits relevant to their region, market, and specific accounts</li> </ul>
<b>Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generated significant pipeline</li> <li>Although still early, closed business</li> <li>Increased C-level engagement through relevant conversation</li> <li>Improved marketing and sales alignment</li> </ul>



# Communities of practice can strengthen best practiced sharing and process excellence

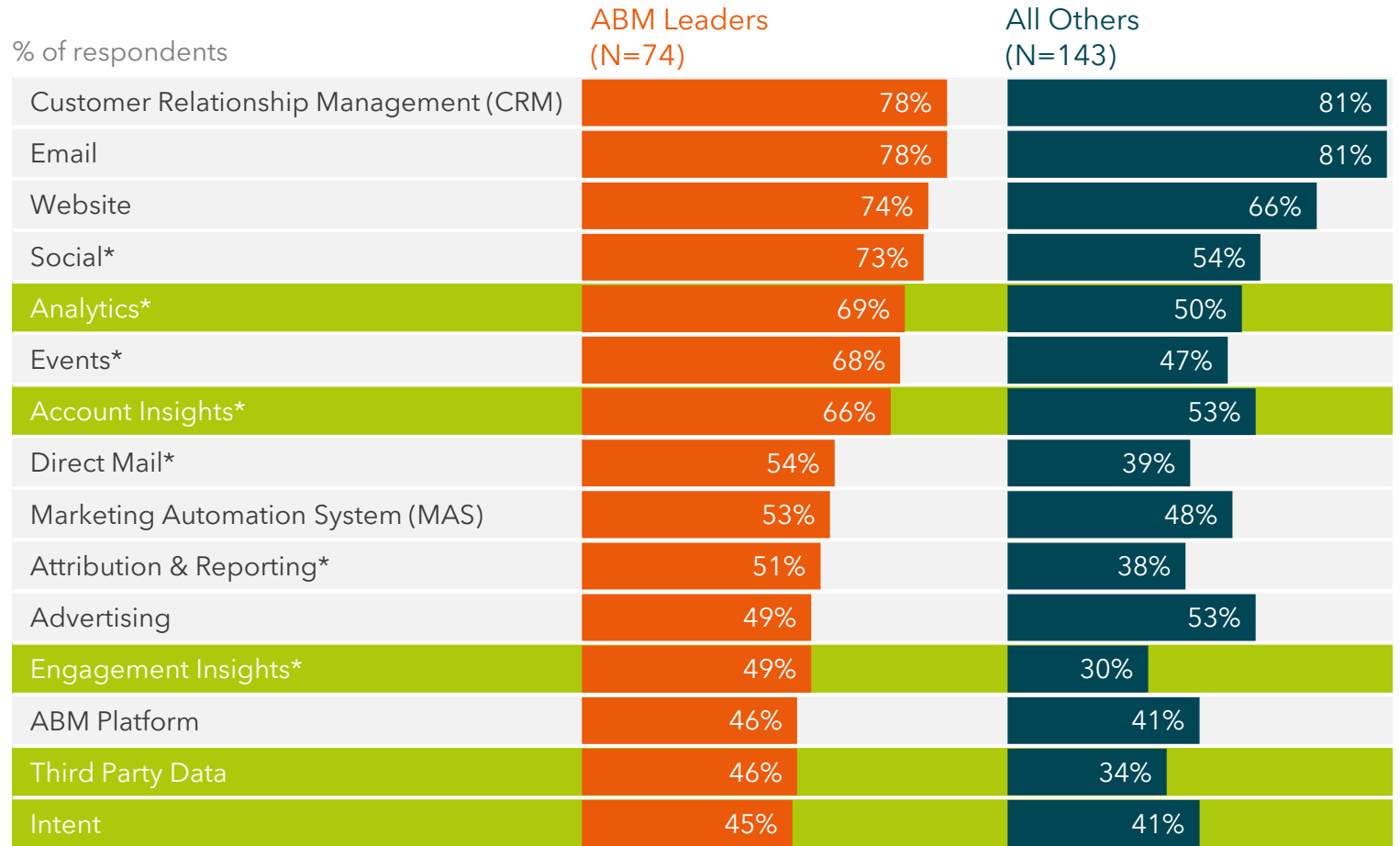
"We have formed an ABM Global Council consisting of the ABM leads in each of our geos. We meet bi-weekly to talk through processes, best practices, governance, and reporting. Everyone who sits on the Council must be ITSMA certified so we are all speaking the same language and following the same processes. Monthly, we host a wider ABM network meeting for all ABM practitioners or those interested in starting ABM. This meeting starts with some best practice and information sharing and then there's usually one to two presentations of specific programs and successes."

"We started an internal ABM monthly newsletter to capture and share best practices and ideas across our verticals, as well as from outside. For example, we encouraged people to join and listen to the ITSMA ABM Great Debate series. In addition, we bring in agencies and other experts to present to the entire team. The idea is to provide resources they can call in case they get stuck."

"One of the things we're doing to make sure there's consistency is to bring together an ABM community of practice. I see this as the start of a center of excellence to push downward best practices, consistency, tech...all of the enabling tools that allow groups to be successful. We're forming the foundation for ABM and what it will look like by bringing together pockets of goodness from all over the company."

Tech & data leverage:  
ABM leaders are more likely to include data analytics and insight in their tech stacks

Which types of technologies do you currently use to support your ABM programs?



# Leveraging tech and data effectively requires ongoing focus and investment

"So much of what we do is insights driven: It's trends-driven, it's tech-driven. There are so many different pieces of the tech stack that are being built."

"Sales intelligence tools are a big part of our ABM. I'm building a dashboard that shows intent among accounts that AEs don't seem to have the capacity to look at. There's a lot of people in market who are raising their hand that we're just not aware of or paying attention to."

"Sales want to see the ABM impact at an account level, which is currently not visible because our CRM is not fully geared up to support ABM initiatives. How can we have an account view? We are starting to operationalize ABM more and more in our systems, including impact such as account engagement metrics that go beyond revenue."

"Previously, account selection was more subjective based on what the seller wanted. Since then, we've been a lot tighter on defining target accounts. Now there's a close collaboration between sales and marketing and we are partnering with 6Sense to further build out our ideal customer profile (ICP) using data to identify our target account list based on our predictive models."

Tech & data leverage:  
ABM leaders are more likely to use technology to its full potential

To what extent are you leveraging these tools to their full potential?	ABM Leaders		All Others	
	N	Mean Rating	N	Mean Rating
Events	50	3.9*	66	3.4*
Customer Relationship Management (CRM)	58	3.9*	116	3.5*
Email	60	3.9*	112	3.4*
Marketing Automation System (MAS)	39	3.9*	69	3.4*
Advertising	36	3.8*	76	3.3*
Website	55	3.7	93	3.4
Engagement Insights	36	3.7*	42	3.0*
Analytics	51	3.6*	71	2.9*
Intent	33	3.6*	60	2.9*
Social	54	3.5	76	3.3
Account Insights	48	3.5*	73	2.9*
Direct Mail	40	3.4*	55	2.8*
ABM Platform	34	3.4*	60	2.8*
Attribution & Reporting	38	3.4*	53	2.6*
Third Party Data	34	3.2	47	3.1

Note: Mean rating based on a 5-point scale where 1=Just scratching the surface and 5=Fully leveraging the tool's capabilities. Showing the top 15 technologies.

\*Indicates a statistically significant difference.

Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2021 ABM Benchmark Study, September 2021

# What's still challenging, even for the ABM leaders?

- Positioning ABM as a business growth initiative, not a marketing initiative
- Attracting, retaining, and developing ABM talent
- Aligning marketing and sales
- Standardizing programs and processes across BUs, geos, divisions
- Measuring and reporting results



# Too few companies position ABM as a strategic corporate growth program

Nearly two decades into ABM as a strategic discipline, many programs are still positioned as tactical, marketing-centric initiatives

To what extent do you agree with the following statement?  
Mean Rating (N=221)

Strongly Agree

27%

We position ABM as a companywide business initiative, not a marketing initiative.

3.4

1  
Strongly Disagree

5  
Strongly Agree

# Positioning ABM as a growth initiative: Qlik Infusion aligns marketing, sales, and customer success

ITSMA  
**mea**★  
MARKETING EXCELLENCE  
GOLD AWARD WINNER 2020



<b>Situation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qlik was leaving opportunity on the table by not converting small opportunities into large, enterprise-wide ones</li> <li>Within its strategic ABM accounts, Qlik needed to drive awareness and demand faster than the competitor to win a greater share of the market</li> </ul>
<b>Solution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ABM aligns with sales and the customer success team</li> <li>ABM-ers identify and work with a customer champion to offer Qlik Infusion as a value-added service</li> <li>Via a Qlik Infusion collaborative workshop, Qlik and the customer design an internal marketing campaign and Qlik invests up to \$100K to support the customer's goals</li> </ul>
<b>Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Success per account is measured in four categories: revenue growth, database growth, executive and line of business engagement, and ABM activity</li> <li>When Qlik Infusion is deployed, there is a 31% year over year growth in strategic accounts</li> </ul>

## Why Brand?

Branding should be present on all communications and deliverables.

**Helps connect campaign communications.**

On customer brand. Analytics by Qlik.



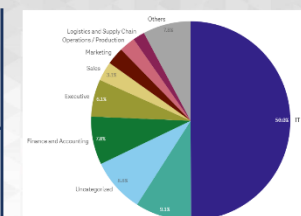
## The Qlik Infusion Program

### Measuring success

# Mkt Contribution Opps	\$ Mkt Contribution Opps (Millio...	<b>82% Revenue Growth</b>
10,960	\$537.8 M	
# Mkt Engaged Opps	\$ Mkt Engaged Opps	
14,846	\$708.0 M	

Total Responders	<b>12%+ Database Growth</b>
142,919	

First Ever Responders	Net New Responders
51,730 <sup>36% of Total</sup>	41,740 <sup>29% of Total</sup>



**Executive & LOB Relationship Growth**

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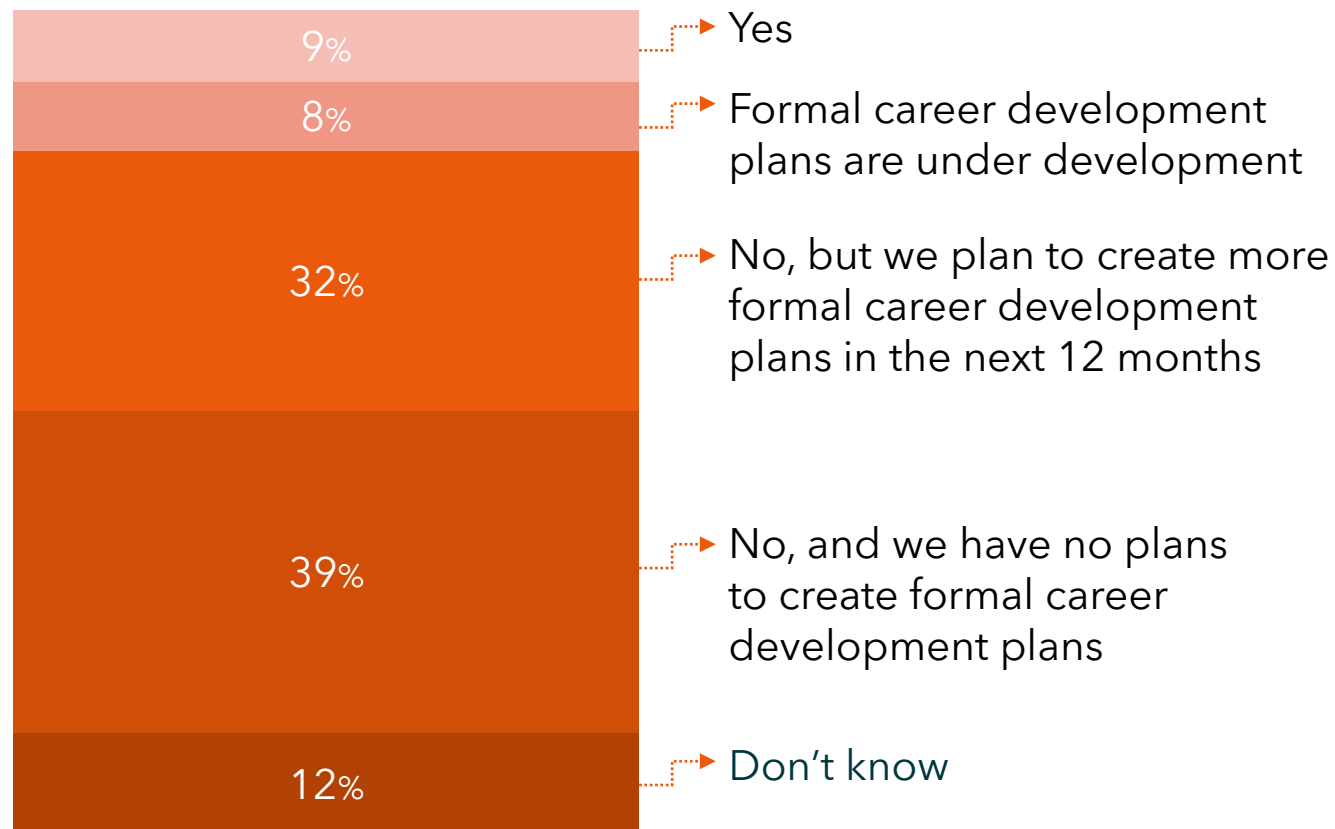
<https://www.itsma.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Qlik-MEA2020-WinnersBooklet.pdf>

# Less than 10% of companies have formal career paths for their ABM-ers

Even ABM can't escape the great migration; more attention must be directed to developing formal ABM career paths and competencies

Does your marketing organization have a defined career progression or career development plan for ABM marketers?

% of respondents  
(N=218)



# There is still work to be done to improve sales and marketing collaboration, despite the progress

ABM leaders are doing only marginally better collaborating with sales; everyone, even the leaders, needs to raise their game

To what extent do you agree with the following statement?  
Mean Rating (N=212)

Strongly Agree

13%

We are completely satisfied with the degree of collaboration between marketing and sales when it comes to ABM

3.1

1  
Strongly Disagree

5  
Strongly Agree

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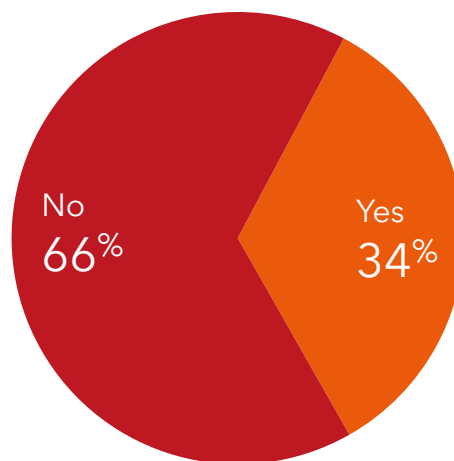
Note: Mean rating based on a 5-point scale where 1=Strongly disagree and 5=Strongly agree.  
Top Box Score is the percentage of respondents who rated the factor a "5"  
Source: ITSMA Account Based Marketing Survey<sup>SM</sup>, March 2016

# Most companies do not yet have centralized ABM program management

Standardization is essential to achieve scale and embed ABM in the organization, especially at larger, more complex companies. A prerequisite for an ABM program that will mature rather than fizzle is establishing a centralized PMO/CoE, formal governance, and/or a marketing community

Do you currently have a Center of Excellence (CoE)/Program Management Office (PMO)?

% of respondents  
(N=215)



Top Roles and Responsibilities of the ABM PMO/CoE

- Strategy and planning
- Establishing ABM program metrics and dashboards
- Standardizing ABM processes
- Coordinating internal ABM resources
- Selecting ABM technology/tools
- Reporting program results to senior management
- Producing standardized ABM templates and tools
- Sharing best practices

# Centralizing program management: ServiceNow's CoE provides greater economies of scale, knowledge sharing, and innovation

Delivering Business Outcomes Through 5 Services



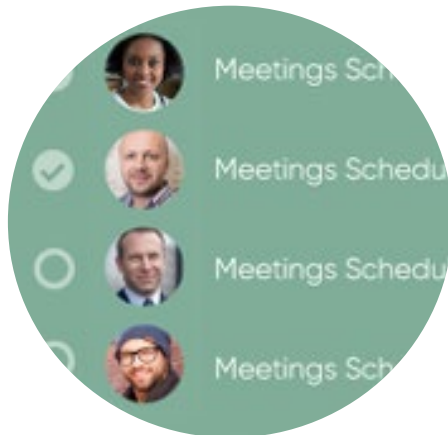
**Develop deep decision-maker relationships**



**Create custom content**



**Key stakeholder awareness**



**Secure meetings & accelerate pipeline**



**Drive advocacy & adoption**

 **Account Based Marketing Team**  
Center of Excellence

**servicenow**

# The most important metrics across each type of ABM over-emphasize revenue, falling short on reputation and relationship metrics

## One-to-One ABM

Revenue growth

Pipeline growth

Account engagement

Win rate/number of deals closed

Total revenue tied directly to One-to-One ABM initiatives

## One-to-Few ABM

Revenue growth

Pipeline growth

Win rate/number of deals closed

Account engagement

Length of sales cycle/deal velocity

Portfolio penetration, cross-sell/upsell

## One-to-Many ABM

Pipeline growth

Revenue growth

Win rate/number of deals closed

Account engagement

Length of sales cycle/deal velocity

# ABM programs must measure and report results, both quantitative and qualitative, using the three Rs

Reputation

Relationships

Revenue

Most marketing campaigns have a short time horizon and concrete objectives:

- Drive demand for specific products and/or services
- Generate qualified leads
- Show results in 30-90 days

ABM programs have a longer time horizon, and the revenue opportunities aren't always known in advance. ABM aims to:

- Change perception or positioning within accounts
- Build stronger relationships for ongoing collaboration and value creation
- Grow business with existing and new accounts through more targeted marketing

# Strategic and long-term metrics are essential for sustained business impact

"Are we going to win it? Where is the evidence?" This is where the ITSMA account-based marketing model works well. We draw a timeline from day-zero to two years out with expected close date and 20+ milestones along the way showing how the relationship is developing. And against our 50 ABM accounts, we can show our progress. Sales understands that it might take two years to bring these large deals in, but it's reliable. You can almost put that money in the bank."

"There's a variety of issues that we need to work through. They've never thought about how to measure ABM differently than you would a general demand generation program."

"You're not going to see net new pipeline all of a sudden just because we're doing ABM; it's not going to happen overnight. It's a journey and people at our company aren't necessarily patient. It's a balancing act to prove value using early indicators to predict the longer-term value. It takes internal education of key stakeholders to get ABM up and off the ground and keep people invested."

"Relationships and reputation come first because they are the leading indicators of success. Revenue is a lagging indicator because you would only see revenue as an impact of these activities. We are never asked the ROI upfront. We are asked about the impact and influence ABM is going to have on our stakeholder relationships."

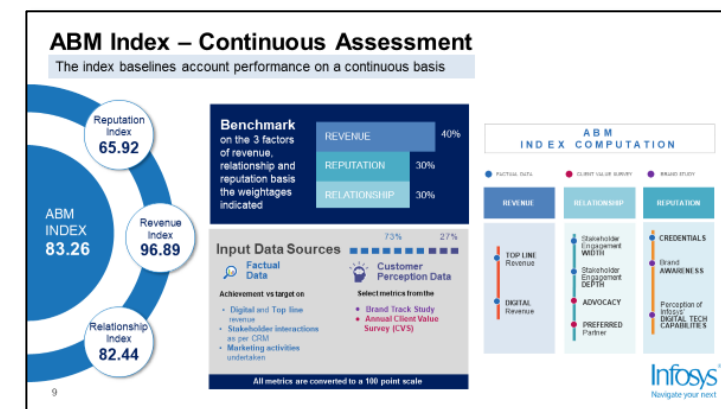
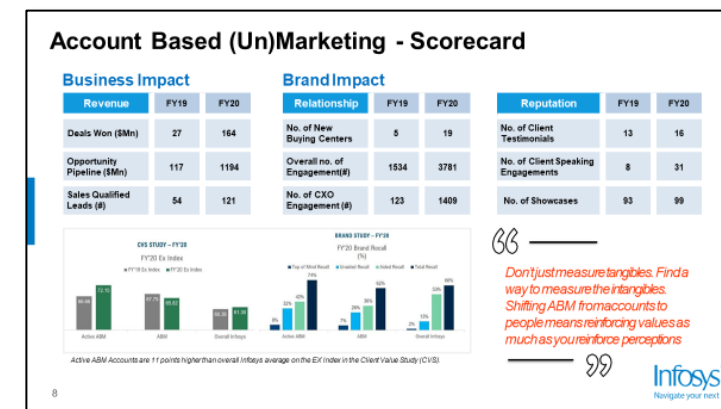
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# Reporting strategic impact: Infosys uses the 3Rs to communicate ABM value via its Scorecard and Index



<b>Situation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ABM at Infosys is an important growth strategy; over 97% of revenue is repeat business and the top 10% of accounts deliver up to 80% of the revenue</li> <li>Over the last few years, ABM at Infosys has evolved to a new approach leveraging what Infosys calls “Unmarketing,” weaving it into the fabric of the relationship rather than a forced conversation</li> </ul>
<b>Solution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Infosys’ ABM goals and metrics align with the ITSMA 3R’s metrics framework: enhance reputation, strengthen relationships, and support revenue</li> <li>In addition to its ABM scorecard, Infosys has created an ABM Index, a single numeric measure that encompasses the key metrics of revenue, reputation, and relationship</li> <li>By creating a framework to operationalize all data points into actionable outcomes, Infosys can compare impact across accounts to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generate healthy internal competition</li> <li>Share best practices</li> <li>Benchmark progress</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Via its ABM program, Infosys inspired clients with compelling content, influenced large deals, and changed the perception of the company to preferred partner               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the 2020 fiscal year, Infosys’ ABM program has been credited with \$1.1B of pipeline and \$163M in new wins across 121 opportunities</li> <li>Infosys engaged with 3,781 contacts, 1,409 of whom are at the C-level</li> <li>Client advocacy has increased substantially with 31 clients speaking engagements and 16 public testimonials</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



# Key recommendations



- Position ABM as a strategic corporate growth program, not just as a marketing program or tactic
- Enlist greater involvement in governance from a more diverse group of senior leaders
- Measure and report results, both quantitative and qualitative, using the Three Rs: Reputation, Relationships, and Revenue

- Collaborate with sales to fully integrate marketing with the account planning and engagement processes
- Work more closely with sales at every stage of customer relationship development
- Educate sales every step of the way to increase their confidence in ABM and build trust

- Invest in team and individual skill development across a wide range of ABM competencies
- Create formal career paths for ABM-ers to support team retention and growth
- Use a competency model designed specifically for ABM to:
  - Prioritize skills
  - Identify skills gaps
  - Plan for professional development to close the gaps

- Centralize your ABM program management to achieve scale and embed ABM in your organization
- Invest in tools, templates, and process development to standardize and facilitate reuse
- Build a community approach to share best practices across divisions and business units

- Reinforce the tech stack with analytics and insight tools
- Emphasize integration, useability, and adoption to ensure maximum leverage of existing tools and systems
- Invest more in training to ensure confidence and capability with priority data, insight, and tools

# About the research: Qualitative and quantitative study with 300+ ABM leaders and practitioners

## 5<sup>th</sup> annual ITSMA-ABM Leadership Alliance Study



Web-based survey in August 2021 with ITSMA member companies and ABM Leadership Alliance contacts

313

Marketers at B2B technology and business services companies

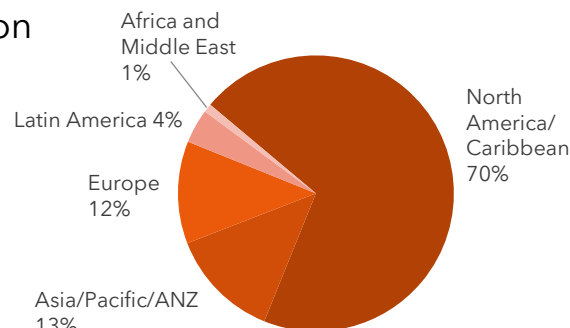
Qualitative interviews

24

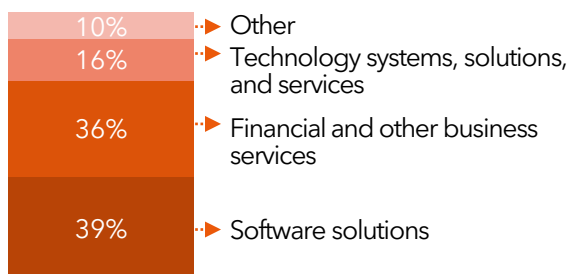
In-depth interviews with leading ABM practitioners

% of respondents (N=313)

### Location



### Industry



## Analysis by

### ABM Performance

33%  
ABM Leaders  
Achieving significant improvement in business results from ABM

67%  
All others

### ABM Maturity

43%  
Expanding/  
Embedded

57%  
Exploring/  
Experimenting

### Size of Company

40%  
\$1B or more

21%  
\$100M-  
\$1M

39%  
Less than \$100M

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\*See the Appendix for the ITSMA ABM Adoption Model  
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2021 ABM Benchmark Study, September 2021

# 24 qualitative interviews



# ABM definition

Treating individual accounts as  
markets in their own right

As ABM has taken off in recent years, so too have the number of definitions. Even the sponsors of this research have used different definitions in the past.

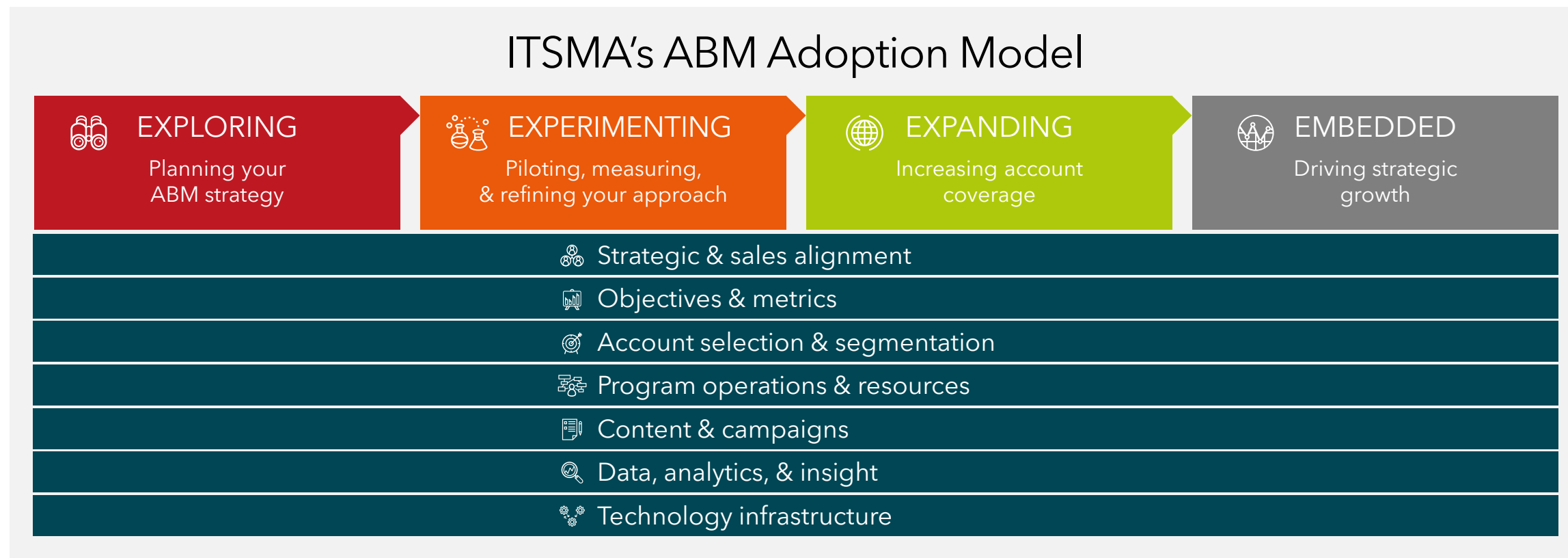
For the purpose of this report, and with the hope of helping marketers rally around a common definition, we agree on the following:

Account-Based Marketing (ABM) is a strategic approach to designing and executing highly-targeted and personalized marketing programs to drive business growth and impact with specific, named accounts.

Core principles for ABM include:

- Strategic focus on improving business reputation, relationships, and revenue (if it's just about lead gen, it's not ABM!)
- Tight partnership and integration with sales (if there isn't active, ongoing collaboration throughout the lifecycle, it's not ABM!)
- Tailored and personalized programs and campaigns based on deep customer insight (if customers get the same experience and inside-out messaging, it's not ABM!)

# Appendix: ABM strategy and assessment programs revolve around ITSMA's ABM Adoption Model



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# About ITSMA and the ABM Leadership Alliance

## ITSMA

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For more than 25 years, ITSMA has led the way in defining, building, and inspiring B2B services marketing excellence. With a dedicated focus on services and solutions for the connected economy, we provide our corporate member community with insight, advice, and hands-on help to strengthen reputation, increase revenue, and deepen customer relationships.

ITSMA pioneered the concept of account-based marketing in 2003 to help marketers stop generic sales pitches and instead zero in on the essential needs of their most important clients and prospects.

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## ABM

LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE

The ABM Leadership Alliance unites industry-leading technology partners to educate B2B marketers about how developing and deploying an ABM strategy can help them improve their reputation, strengthen relationships, close bigger deals with target accounts, and increase pipeline velocity.

Members include Bizzabo, Demandbase, Engagio, LeanData, NetLine Corporation, ON24, Opensense, PathFactory, PFL, SalesLoft, and Vidyard.

### More info

- [ITSMA.com](https://www.itsma.com)
- [abmleadershipalliance.com](https://abmleadershipalliance.com)

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