

Why is Account-Based Marketing **the hot**



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Customers are tuning out

Research has shown that sophisticated buyers and customers tune out from everything except the most relevant messages and content. For example, about 64% of senior executives don't believe a salesperson knows enough about their business to bring value to a meeting, and only 25% of them are prepared to take a second meeting! That means that 2 out of 3 sales meetings are a waste of time for both the customer and account manager. To change this dire situation Account Based Marketers and Key Account Managers must work together to make sure they achieve a hyper-personalised approach at the heart of all customer contacts.

What is Account-Based Marketing? How does it differ from regular B2B marketing?

ABM treats individual accounts as if they are markets in their own right. At Capita we are currently employing two models of the three ABM methodologies in existence:

One-to-one Typified by deep dive research into a small number of key accounts, followed up by myriad programs designed to strengthen the company's competitive position in these accounts and ultimately to open up new opportunities. But delivering one-to-one customised marketing and activities programmes can be more labour-intensive.

One-to-few This new marketing technology takes the best/most

accessible elements of the one-to-one approach and applies it to small groups or clusters of important accounts.

Capita's one-to-one approach applies to our top 20 key accounts, public and private sector. Then our next tranche of customers receive a one-to-few approach where we apply best practice elements of one-to-one ABM.

By comparison, regular B2B marketing applies generic account targeting and personalisation at scale, using mass technology and relevant messaging. It's a much more broad-brush approach, so investment per account is much less.

How do Account-Based Marketers work best with KAMs and key account teams?

At Capita the marketing team works with our Key Client Partners to develop an ABM 'playbook' both teams sign up to. Getting together, collaboration and partnering as a joint unit are core principles. Any marketing and strategies must be grounded in deep customer insight and real personalization. At the same time, they must be outcome driven in terms of enhancing our reputation, the client relationship and, ultimately, our business and revenue growth.

The playbook starts from a typical successful plan across 12 months and then works out what customised piece of thought leadership can be developed, designs the co-creation workshop, determines the content the customer wants, and specifies webinars for them (not broad industry 'pie in the sky', but tailored to that specific customer's strategic goals).

KAMs are the people meeting the customer so ABM should be raising their profile wherever possible, on social media, the company website, newsletters etc: and creating a portfolio of activity around them – not least because the insight they gain into what their customers really care about can be used in campaigns. ABM teams need KAMs to shape their massively personalised campaigns, because KAMs have a deep understanding of the customer's issues, know how the industry is changing and the impact on the client. Sadly, marketing teams often neglect this source and don't

“ ABM teams should be raising their KAMs profile wherever possible ”

look in-house to get these insights.

Content marketing often makes the mistake of failing to match content to the buyer's stage of decision-making – it may be too sales-focused and over-pitchy – which strikes the wrong note with people who aren't ready to buy, while the KAM knows the customer's position. ABM should also address the longer term, relationship building and value for the client. It has a whole raft of approaches to help the KAM report value back to the client: by video, value reports, success stories conveyed by infographics and more.

In fact, both ABM and KAM need to work with brand marketers, who are focused on overall markets rather than specific customers. Activity needs to straddle both, understanding that while broader-based brand teams are looking at the top of the brand perception funnel, others need to take those messages and hyper-personalise them, taking care to maintain authenticity across all communications. The most

test topic in KAM?

successful approach is always having all of the team working together across the full mix of marketing.

Authenticity is critical for key customers

Key customers, often big companies with a lot to win in the world (but also a lot to lose), are exposed daily to alarming and potentially threatening news reports about child labour, corruption, pollution and more. Surviving and thriving is about more than just the business now, and key customers increasingly want to do business with trustworthy companies committed to similar values.

Recent research suggested that 90% of buyers would buy from a supplier just on the basis of how they dealt with social matters! And in 2025 – not far from now – 70% of the world's working population will be millennials. Together, these two statistics suggest that authenticity and how we market and take our message to customers has never been more important.

It's sensible business because customers will buy from companies seen to be doing the right thing. Corporate Social Responsibility has always been seen as a 'side of desk' piece by marketers, but today it needs to be the underbelly of everything – now every substantial organisation (i.e. any likely to be key accounts) has targets around the UN's sustainability goals.

But is Marketing telling customers how we share their values? Obviously, your product and capability offer should be aligned with the customer's strategic goals, but are you also acting as a true partner and caring about the same things? To quote a major facility provider customer, «You may supply something to our company if you don't share our values, but you'll never be a Key Supplier «.

What characterises Best Practice ABM programmes?

Value co-creation

This means helping the supplier to co-create value with their customers. ABM should be marketing to the customer's customers as well as the direct customer, indeed, the supplier's marketing team should be working with the customer's marketing team, the whole ecosystem should be working together. One company specifically targeted its marketers with KPIs on reaching out to customers, and afterwards demonstrating how they had applied the knowledge gained in a new initiative.

Measuring effectiveness: 3 Rs

Revenue goals: what is in the pipeline and number of unweighted leads, but also feedback from KAMs, their input and their perception of how campaigns are working in bids and major renewals.

Reputation: perhaps how the bulk of ABM campaign success should be measured, in terms of positive mentions in mainstream and social media from key accounts, touch points with them, and people reading the content. You have to ask if people are genuinely reading all the thought leadership reports out there and listening to the video soundbites about industry challenges, and what is the resulting brand perception?

Relationship: relationship strength and how Marketing is helping KAMs to move the dial on the relationship.

But there is no point in measuring anything unless you do something about it. Data is essential in gaining a true reflection of how marketing is performing and impacting on the customer and creating better outcomes: It must be collated and what's working and what's

10 STEPS to ABM success

1. positioning for opportunities & pipeline growth
2. campaigns we can run
3. collateral we can use
4. research to help us stand out and communicate our USP
5. customer relationship building
6. helping the KAM with stakeholder profiling (where do C- suite and group heads interact on social media, what content do they actually care about?)
7. enabling the sales and account teams
8. promoting our KAMs
9. differentiating ourselves, talking to the USP
10. reporting value back to the client.

not captured. Then you do more of what's working and less of what's not - of course? But is that always the case? Having a good set of metrics mixed across the 3 Rs enables you to constantly refine your programs more perceptively – if it's used properly.

AMB works

Annual benchmark surveys have shown that companies applying ABM increase their ROI: a study in 2019 research reported nearly 50% companies achieving double their ROI through using ABM.

The same research found that over 70% of these customers were prepared to give the supplier a case study, which are notoriously hard to get. And 55% of ABM accounts had worked with suppliers in collaborative innovation, leading to valuable new solutions. That sounds like success!