

inspiredB2B<sup>♥</sup>

# The secret of successful ABM



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(Clue) It's more  
about people  
than process

# How to unlock the true potential of ABM

Every year the marketing-speak lexicon swells with new go-to terminology. We've heard that marketers need to leverage predictive buying intent signals, strive for personalization, and tap into the newest, shiniest martech. In B2B, these are all characteristics associated with Account Based Marketing (ABM).

The last decade has seen the growth of ABM to a point where some B2B marketers say, "All B2B Marketing is Account Based Marketing." Big talk indeed, but how do you ensure that ABM delivers its full capabilities for your business?

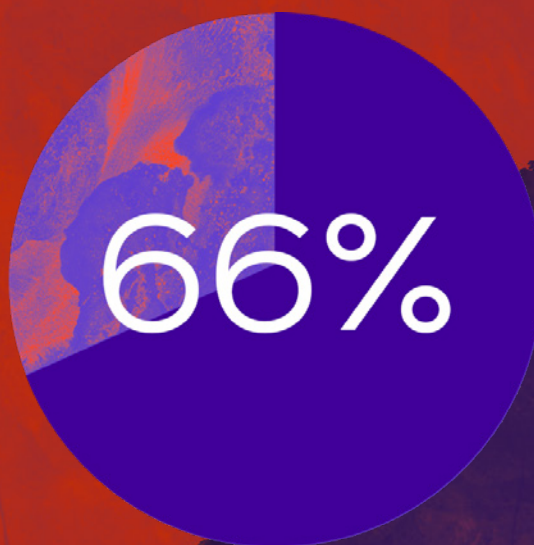
Let's start with a simple truth. It's not Accounts that buy from companies, it's People. Business leaders who need to feel comfortable about the decisions they make, who have professional and personal ambitions, who seek respect, who want to trust and be trusted, and expect consistently positive interactions throughout the sales experience.



# B2B customers aren't robots – they're you

For years B2B marketing has leaned into the rational, spouting forth lists of product benefits and technical features in one-size-fits-all messaging that swells a cold and dreary sea of sameness. There's not a whiff of emotion, and scant regard given to the customer's experience.

66% of B2B respondents to a recent global Wunderman Thompson survey confirm that B2B buying is not purely transactional. They say they're more likely to buy from a supplier that inspires them, and service is paramount. Inspiration is driven by several factors but is inextricably linked to igniting an emotional response that drives decision-making.



**66% of B2B buyers are more likely to buy from a brand that inspires them**

Source: Wunderman Thompson B2B Future Shopper Report 2023

# Consideration is driven by disparate needs and collective intelligence

To earn the trust of buying groups and their influencers, your communications need to cater to diverse emotional perspectives – what's important to a CFO is not what an HR Director might be hoping for. Think of a business as an ecosystem of networks and spheres of influence – some approve, some influence, some might even block – but they interact with one another in diverse ways. Gartner indicates that buying councils can exceed 20 people, each bringing four or five pieces of information to the group.

This is what Account Based Marketing is designed to address. It helps you build a collective intelligence about clients and prospective clients that is shared between marketing and sales teams, helping sales teams position products and services in ways that lean into emotional triggers *and* functional reasons to buy. Lead with communications that build anticipation and optimism around the ways your offering can help clients solve a challenge from a *personal* point of view, not a *corporate* position.

# Use your knowledge to unearth insights about customers' emotions

The secret of successful ABM is to get as close as possible to the one-to-one interactions we've all experienced in our personal lives. Those familiar with ABM will recognize the pyramid shown here, but rather than starting at the base where martech platforms hold sway, let's start at the top - where relationships are integral.

Luxury brands do this beautifully, and you can use ABM to treat your top clients just like they do, wrapping them in moments that reflect their value. A recent field trip with a luxury retailer illustrates the point perfectly.

A salesperson is helping a long-time customer who's considering a \$150,000 piece of jewellery. She checked her 'little black book' - essentially a 'log' of every customer's previous transactions. "I think this necklace would beautifully complement the ring you bought a few years ago. And your husband would be thrilled to see you wearing them both." In that instant, the consultant created an emotional connection that (briefly) transcended the price tag.



## The Foundational ABM Strategies

This is 'Depth ABM' in practice: knowing what's important to the customer, knowing the history of their engagement with your brand, and appreciating that customers buy on *their* schedule, not yours. That way, you're always ready to translate your product's advantages in ways that trigger an emotional response - inspiring your customer to take that next step with you.



# The role of tech: exploiting emotional and rational data points

Used right, tech enables you to operate at the intersection of marketing and selling, rather than marketing and then selling. Account Based Marketing should help you build a knowledge base and craft a suitable tactical plan based on a shared 'little black book': knowing who matters within a company account, who's bought what, what they're thinking about buying, when they're thinking about buying it, how senior executives interact to make decisions, and who has most influence.

Despite this wealth of knowledge, your sales team cannot be everywhere, so technology does the heavy lifting for you. Account Based Marketing tools enable sales programmes at scale – identifying prospective client intent signals, personalizing content, executing plans, and consistently adding nuggets of information.

Now sales executives can schedule their outreach around client buying cycles. They can vary the message depending on who they want to connect with and communicate using an individual prospect's preferred channels. Over time, this timely, relevant, and continuous communication is building a relationship that puts you in pole position when the client is ready to buy.

# Conclusion – and what you can do next

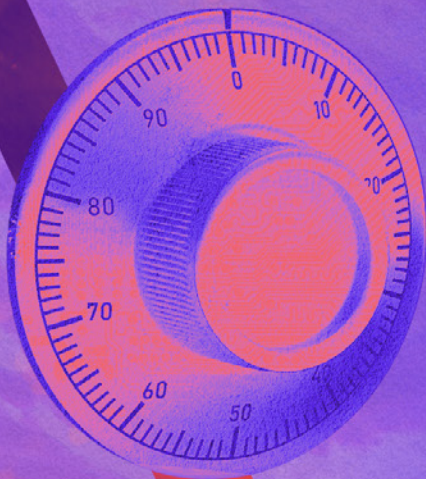
# ABM helps B2B marketers create the emotional connection and distinctiveness that counts

In B2B, dropping a ton of digital display advertising or offering an exclusive gated eBook simply will not seal the deal. But both may well have a role to play, no matter how 'tired' they may seem as tactics. When crafted mindfully, proven marketing methods join the powerful ABM tools that sales teams can use to open the door, start a conversation, and build trust until the time to make a deal is right.

Account Based Marketing pulls together all the elements your teams need to achieve the right balance between emotional and rational appeal. Client information, company intelligence, personal preferences, personal ambitions, and business challenges feed the marketing assets and content that can help your brand achieve distinctiveness.

After all, your competitors can likely offer similar (if not identical) functional benefits and features, so the rational appeal of what you are selling becomes difficult to differentiate – but finding the emotional connection is where your distinctiveness can come from.

Distinctiveness is the challenging part, it's the part that requires creativity and inspiration, specialist expertise, craft, and skill, but it's the part that can make all the difference.



# The authors

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He's been building and delivering client strategies for over two decades. Client engagements include Microsoft, Infor, PMI, Shell, and several other complex, global B2B marketers. ABM has become an essential tool to be leveraged as a foundation to client's go-to-market. Bill leads global ABM for Wunderman Thompson.

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## Assessment Score

To help B2B marketers evaluate their current strategic and operational status, Wunderman Thompson has developed the Inspired B2B Assessment Score. This simple tool helps clients identify areas for improvement and create winning strategies that drive growth and nurture passionate brand fans.

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## About Wunderman Thompson

We exist to inspire growth for ambitious brands. Part creative agency, part consultancy and part technology company, we provide expert end-to-end capabilities at a global scale to deliver inspiration across the entire brand and customer experience.

We are 20,000 strong in 90 markets around the world, where our people bring together creative storytelling, diverse perspectives, inclusive thinking, and highly specialized vertical capabilities to drive growth for our clients.

We offer deep expertise across the entire customer journey, including communications, commerce, consultancy, CRM, CX, data, production, and technology. Wunderman Thompson is a WPP agency. (NYSE: WPP).

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