




6 Best Practices to Elevate Your Account Based Marketing

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A hand holding a pen and a tablet on a desk with a window in the background.

02

Agenda

- 1) Identify the Right Accounts and Leads.
- 2) Nurture Leads Through Personal Messages.
- 3) Leverage Hyper-Personalised Content
- 4) Listen to Key Stakeholders.
- 5) Integrate Storytelling into Your Messaging.
- 6) Consider the Power of Multi-Origin Messaging.

More than 95% of marketers believe ABM has a higher ROI than other marketing efforts, while 85% believe it's more successful in retaining current customers.

But that's only true if it's done right. Miss the mark, and the consequences could be devastating.

Focusing on a few large accounts means losing even one of these accounts could spell doom for your revenue and growth projections.

To prevent that worst-case scenario, it pays to be strategic. A focus on the right tactics and clients is only the beginning. In this segment, we'll highlight six best practices that can elevate your account-based marketing and help to ensure its success in both short- and long-term business growth.

1) Identify the Right Accounts and Leads

As in any other type of marketing, the best ABM strategies begin with your audience. Knowing exactly who to target is the crucial first step in ensuring the success of your messaging and promotional efforts. Ask yourself a few core questions:

- Which pain points does your solution aim to solve?
- Which organisations and potential clients have actively asked and exhibited these pain points?
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- What size company are you looking to attract?
- What do you know about the number of companies at that size in your industry?
- What do you know about your competitors within that space, including their (and your) current market share?
- Can you identify individual leads within your target accounts that can serve as your entry into the organisation?

04



05

You can probably answer some of these questions without help. That last piece, though, requires at least some research. It's not always easy to know who the actual stakeholders, gatekeepers, and buying agents within your target accounts are.

That's where tools like LinkedIn Sales Navigator enter the equation. Advanced Lead Search enables you to find not just target accounts, but the right contacts within those accounts.

Customised lead suggestions provide a clearer picture, while CRM integrations allow you to record contact data for follow-ups. Finally, a live feed of activities by these contacts helps you stay up-to-date and make your connection more relevant to them.



2) Nurture Leads Through Personal Messages

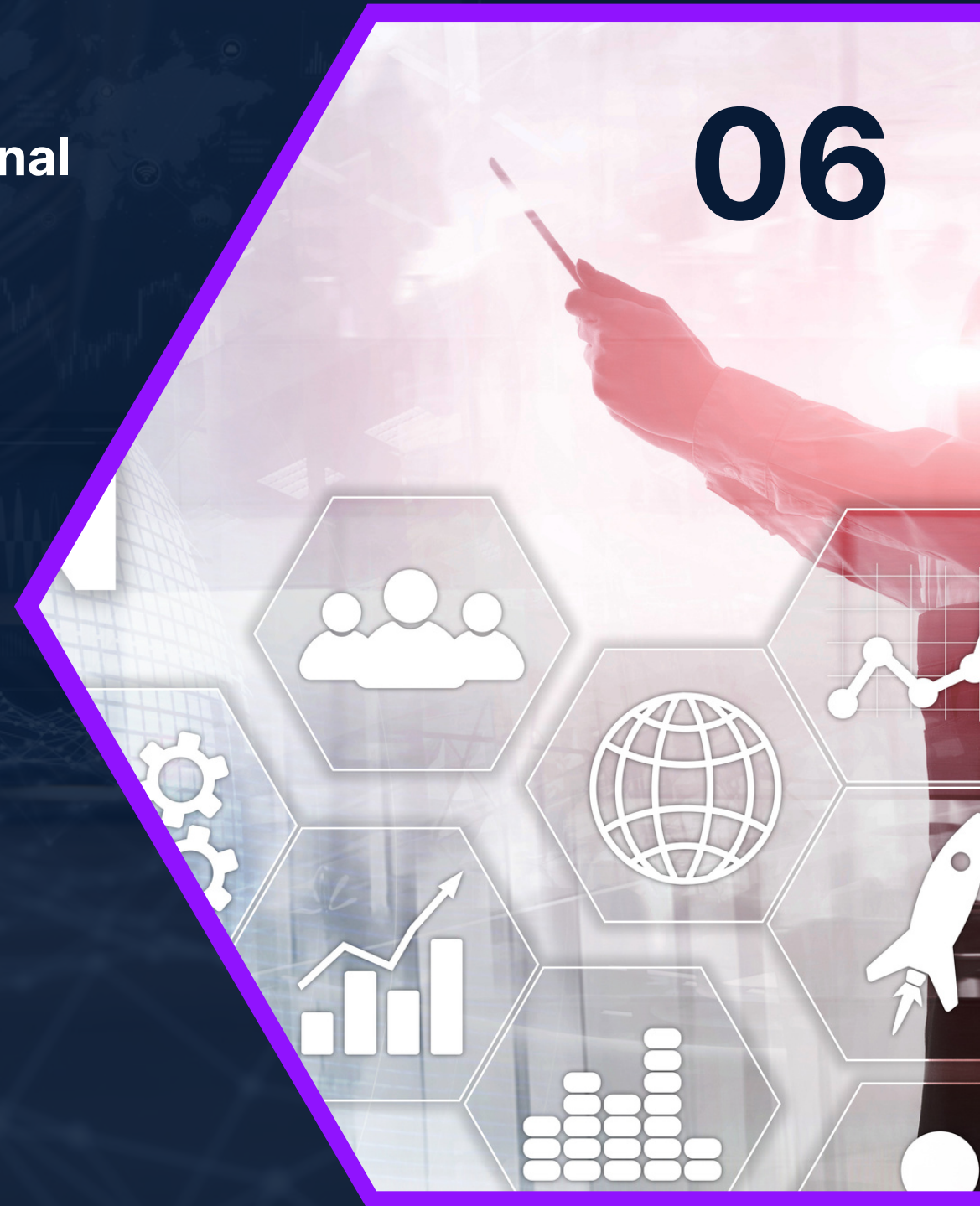
Of course, finding the right leads is only the beginning. Lead nurturing has become a core part of almost any type of digital marketing campaign, but it takes centre stage when the individual account becomes the focus.

The sales cycle, in this case, will be significantly shorter if the lead is nurtured correctly.

You will be required to follow up diligently with relevant information and ongoing support. It's not enough to simply send a few updates about your company and hope for the sale. Instead, the emails need to be customised to each lead's needs and pain points, avoiding direct selling messages and instead focusing on building value.

Above all, the emails should seem like they're coming directly from you, the representative of your company, not a random no-reply email address.

06



Finally, the messages should reach your contacts where they spend their time, which - in most b2b scenarios - is likely a mix of both email and social media.

Two tools will become especially helpful as you nurture your leads with these types of personal messages:

1. Hubspot Emails

Which helps you build automated email flows without losing that much-needed personal touch.

Through HubSpot, you can build visual email templates that are designed to generate high open and reply rates.

You can also track your analytics to better understand which types of nurturing emails your prospects respond to, and which fall on deaf ears.

1. LinkedIn InMail

Which is more customised but also more personal. LinkedIn's internal messaging platform is much more comprehensive than other social networks, including the ability to send sponsored InMails that stay on top of your prospect's inbox for up to 45 days.

Even if you go the organic route, InMail benefits from a less crowded environment in that it doesn't have to compete with the 100+ emails the average business person receives.



3) Leverage Hyper-Personalised Content

Within and beyond your lead nurturing efforts, it's crucial to follow one key to account-based marketing: the true personalisation of talking to a single lead, a single contact, and a single account at a time. This does not mean writing a blog post about general best practices but instead building hyper-personalised content specifically designed for that one account you're trying to win.

That starts with the above-mentioned pain points, narrowed down to the specific situation in which your prospects would benefit from your software. Build content, from individual nurturing messages to entire case studies and whitepapers, specifically addressed towards these pain points.



According to Gartner, organisations who personalise their digital marketing outsell those who don't by more than 30%.

But it's not just about inserting some dynamic content or substituting in a prospect's first name in an email. Hyper personalisation is:

Data Driven

based on visitor and account data to deliver content specifically designed for that audience

Predictive

based on data points that suggest and predict intent in order to become more relevant.

Interactive

allowing the recipient to customise their experience to their liking.





It's not easy to hit on all three of these points, but it's far from impossible. Put simply, it requires a unique marketing strategy for every account, and potentially even every lead you're trying to target.

That starts with data. Learn as much as possible about every lead in your database, from their professional background to the nuances of their current position and how they would be involved in a potential partnership with your company.

Connect that lead data back to the larger account data to build context and begin to find the bigger picture. From there, the process is similar to that of building buyer personas. Except, in this case, you are building profiles of actual human beings.

These profiles then become your content guides. They offer a natural foundation for brainstorming potential topics, and a resource throughout the content build to ensure it's created specifically for the outlined needs and wants. Once created, these hyper-personalised content pieces can be distributed via your lead nurturing channels.



4) Listen to Key Stakeholders Within Individual Accounts

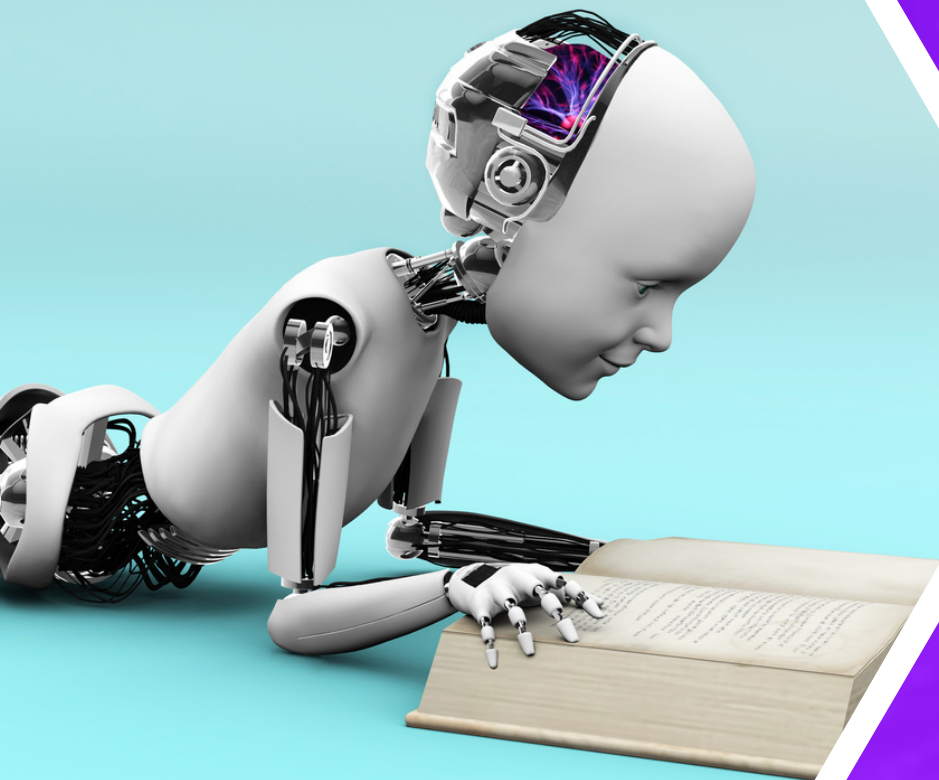
Part of building that lead and prospect profile includes knowing what your audience does and wants to talk about. That, in turn, requires a unique version of the social listening component that has become so beneficial for marketers across industries.

Within social listening parameters, marketers track conversations around their brand and industry.

In account-based marketing, the same concept evolves to track the conversations, mentions, and posts of specific leads that you're communicating with and trying to convert.

The people to focus on here are the stakeholders who would have a formal or informal role in any contract you're trying to sign with your customer-to-be.





More specifically, you're monitoring for a few key pieces of information:

Conversations

in online groups and on social media, which gives you insight into your prospects' areas of interest and open questions within the industry.

Original Posts

on social media, which provide a better idea of the types of topics your prospects are most passionate about.

New Alerts

about your individual prospects, allowing you to better understand their current work and accolades, and giving you a natural 'in' as a conversation starter.

A number of tools can help you monitor these types of activity. Some, like Tweetdeck, are free but relatively limited.

Others, like Brandwatch, are more comprehensive in providing actionable insights across platforms but also tend to be more complex and will cost a monthly fee.

Crucially, listening is not just monitoring. It means taking the information and making it actionable, 'responding' with the hyperpersonalised content we outlined above.

That's why platforms like Brandwatch, which categorise conversations, tend to be beneficial in building more comprehensive reports that form the basis of future communication.



5) Integrate Storytelling into Your Messaging

You might think that account-based marketing, being that it mostly lives in a b2b environment, is strictly rational. But that's not necessarily true.

Studies have repeatedly found that b2b buyers are just as, if not even more emotionally invested than their consumer counterparts. That, in turn, opens the door to significant storytelling opportunities.

As we've emphasised throughout these best practices, the key to account-based marketing is building and nurturing relationships with your individual prospects and contacts. That's especially powerful when you can not just state plain facts and data about why they should partner with you, but weave those facts into a larger narrative that's easy for your audience to follow.

Case studies are the most obvious examples of storytelling in b2b. They take hypothetical benefits and make them come to life through real-world application examples. But that's far from your only storytelling opportunity in this medium.



As you personalise your content, consider how you can give it the traditional story arc:

The Problem

the moment in which the audience realise that they have a problem and try to find a solution.

The Struggle

the time during which the audience tries to solve its problems but faces significant adversity it has to overcome.

The Resolution

the climax in which the audience finds that crucial thing that makes the story come to a happy end.



Through this structure, you can capture your audience's attention, and keep it through the final resolution--which is, of course, your company.

Case studies can follow that concept, but so can anything from an email to a single post on LinkedIn.

Building a story means engaging your prospects' emotions, making them more likely to pay attention and ultimately become your customers.

16





6) Consider the Power of Multi-Origin Messaging

That you should build multi-channel ABM campaigns is obvious to any experienced marketers. You will likely encounter your prospects on more than one channel, and the more channels you can reach them through, the better.

But you might not be aware that the sender of these individual messages can be just as powerful.

More specifically, the ability to switch senders can send a powerful message to your prospects.

If ABM is true one-to-one marketing, chances are your prospects won't react nearly as well to a message coming from a faceless corporate account.

But the same is true if their only point of contact is a salesperson.

Instead, try spreading the wealth. The nature of account-based marketing provides an opportunity to vary the sender and build a complex nurturing stream.

In the course of that stream, your prospects may receive messages from the sales team, a customer success specialist, and a member of the c-suite relevant to them.

That increases trust, but also builds a feeling of being wanted on your contacts' side.

Of course, and once again, this type of strategy is complex and requires significant time to both plan and execute.

You'll need to answer a few core questions:





19

You'll need to answer a few core questions:

Who would your prospects most like to hear from?

What types of messages might be relevant from those specific senders?

Can you guarantee that, should a lead seek out the sender via a reply or indirectly, that sender would be both responsive and consistent in messaging?

The answers to these questions can make a multi-sender campaign extremely powerful. It also allows you to stay within reason, incorporating only individuals within your company that are actually relevant to your prospects.

The result is a more comprehensive, more sweeping campaign designed to get through to your prospects' attention span.

Building Account-Based Marketing Strategies With Best Practices in Mind

Account-Based Marketing has the potential to be immensely powerful - if you can get it right.

It requires nuances and tactics that are different from typical marketing efforts, specifically as it relates to hyper-personalisation and listening to your key stakeholders.

With these best practices, you can build and execute an account-based marketing strategy that is poised for success.

Your messages will be more nuanced, more complex, and more relevant, maximising their chances of getting through to your audience and converting more prospects into long-term clients.

