

Account Based Marketing: How to Build and Use ABM Profiles

by James Miller - Monday, September 10, 2018

<https://www.searchbug.com/info/account-based-marketing-abm-profiles/>

Account based marketing, or ABM, is a smart marketing tactic that enables your company and sales teams to address customer-specific barriers to buying and provide a better overall customer experience.

The backbone of ABM is detailed company profiles. You can't treat every enterprise-level customer as a market of one if you don't know all about them.

Without fully developed ABM profiles, your account based marketing plan will fall to pieces.

So, to help you ensure that your account based marketing generates the sales you need, we've outlined the process for building precise customer profiles.

But before we get too deep into those weeds, let's cover some ABM basics. That way we're all on the same page.

What is account based marketing?

This is a solid account based marketing definition to supplement our summary above:

Account based marketing is hyper-targeted marketing designed to appeal only to your highest quality leads.

ABM is particularly effective for attracting enterprise-level clients. Actually, it works best on companies. Account based marketing for individuals is possible, but there are very few individuals that would be considered enterprise-level clients and that don't have additional people helping them make decisions.

As such, ABM is best for B2B marketing.

The reason ABM is great for marketing to enterprise businesses is because these businesses have complex buying processes.

Some businesses have over 10 people involved with making purchase decisions. Therefore, you need marketing materials that address the concerns and needs of each of those 10 (or more) people.

With ABM, you create a sales funnel specifically designed to capture all of the people involved with the purchasing decision and get the nod from each of them.

It's important to note that ABM can't replace inbound marketing. Rather, ABM is a supplement to your inbound marketing.

Inbound marketing brings you basic leads. These basic leads are the foundation of your ABM profiles.

Essentially, account based marketing is creating a complete marketing ecosystem that aligns your marketing and sales teams. This way, leads are completely prepped to make that buying decision when it comes time to buy.

How to Build Account Based Marketing Profiles

Now that we're clear about what ABM is, let's break down the most important part of the process—building solid account based marketing profiles.

Identify Your Most Valuable Leads

The first step is to check your rolodex and find out who's already in your database. These will be the easiest to build ABM profiles from because you already have a bit of information to work from.

Also, leads from your inbound marketing funnel have expressed some interest in your product. It won't be awkward or invasive if they receive additional marketing from you, as long as you're professional in your outreach.

You can also simply pick out companies that you want to have as customers.

This may require a bit more work as you build out your customer profiles. But it can be just as effective.

It's also a great way to avoid wasting marketing on companies you don't want as clients.

Another way to identify your most valuable leads is to establish the most valuable attributes of a company. Consider things like:

- Location.
- Industry.
- Company size.
- Annual revenue.
- Market influence.
- Likelihood of repeat purchase.
- Expected profit margin.

This isn't the same as building customer personas. You'll actually do that in the next step.

Right now, you can either use these company attributes to identify your best leads outright or to get more granular with the companies that you'd like to have as customers.

Choose your best leads based on the attributes that are most valuable for your company.

Build a list of these most valuable leads.

Identify Who You Need to Appeal to With Your Marketing

Remember how many people are involved with buying decisions in enterprise companies?

This is where you determine who those people are, so you can address their needs.

Typically there are four types of people you need to identify:

- **Interested Stakeholder.** This is usually a project manager or a department head. This is the person who's interested in purchasing your product or service for their team.
- **Users.** These are the people who will actually be using your product or service once it's purchased. They have a strong influence over buying decisions because good managers don't want to buy tools their teams can't or won't use.
- **Bean Counters.** In most corporations, there's an accounting department that has to sign off on purchases. In some companies, the accounting department has veto power over purchases.

It's critical to keep accounting happy with your marketing.

- **Gatekeepers.** The second layer of approval for corporate purchases are the compliance departments. Security, legal, and compliance issues can shut down a purchase pretty easily.

So be sure to include information for these teams in your ABM as well.

At this point, you're essentially creating a list of the key decision makers and influencers within the decision making trees of your ideal enterprise-level clients.

All you need to do right now is identify the people you need to research. You'll flesh these leads out into customer profiles in the next step.

Research Each Company to Build Specific Profiles

If you're using leads from your inbound marketing, you'll usually have at least one name and maybe an email address to start with.

From here, you'll want to use some [people finding](#) techniques to identify the influencers, users, bean counters, and gatekeepers that your initial lead associates with.

Social media, especially LinkedIn is a great way to identify the network of people who make buying decisions for the company.

If you have incomplete information that makes it difficult to pinpoint someone on social media or if you need to [find an email address](#), you can use [data cleansing services](#) on your contact list to complete the information.

Also, be sure to [validate any emails](#) you use for social media marketing.

This way you can be sure you're reaching out to the right people with your marketing.

Use Your Profiles to Build Highly Personalized ABM Campaigns

It's time to use the information from your super detailed profiles. Create marketing messages that address the specific needs and barriers to purchasing that your prospects have.

Keep in mind that collecting a lot of information—especially personal information—can make you look like a stalker if you bring these things up out of the blue.

Using a first name in an email for personalization is fine. People are used to that.

Asking how someone's significant other is if they've never offered you that information? Skip that line of personalization.

Stick to using the personal information to help reduce buying friction. Point out the benefits that will most appeal to your prospects and address their specific concerns.

Talking about how much their significant other might appreciate your product might be a bit scary.

But pointing out that your product will save them time at work so they can spend more time with the people they care about will likely strike a more sensitive chord with someone who's married.

Here are some specific issues that you can use your detailed ABM profiles to address:

- **Logistical issues.** If the company is located in a place like New York, there may be some challenges to moving physical products around.
- **Personal benefits.** If your product can make their life away from work better, let your prospects know.
- **Profession-Specific Features.** If there are parts of your product that are especially useful for certain positions or professions, put it in your marketing.

For example: if you have software that helps engineers, but there are certain features that mechanical engineers will especially appreciate *and* the team your targeting has some people who went to school for mechanical engineering, speak to those mechanical engineers!

Ultimately, the result of this exercise is to have all the information you need to address all the questions and buying objections that may be presented during the purchasing process.

Also, you should be able to contact the key decision makers directly, if you need to.

Build Marketing Campaigns for Each Person Who's Involved in the Buying Process

There's another fork in the road here.

You may or may not want to contact other members of the interested stakeholders team directly.

Some companies have been very successful in distributing free samples or freeware versions of their software to the influencers.

Then they send an ABM campaign to the interested stakeholder.

When the interested stakeholder asks the influencers what they think of the software, the influencers say they're already using it in some capacity.

Something like that can pretty much seal the deal.

But, depending on the business, it may be better to only communicate with the interested stakeholder. Use your detailed customer profiles to predict the questions that influencers and gatekeepers might ask. Then provide that information in advance.

That way, when team members ask questions, the interested stakeholder can work as your salesman by providing answers based on the information you provided.

Last thing:

If you advertise on social media, add all the team members to the custom audience for your paid social ads.

It should be super easy if you've built good ABM profiles.

This way, if someone asks about your product in a group setting like a weekly meeting, everyone will know what they're talking about.

That's the basic framework for creating ABM profiles. This is an incredibly effective marketing technique if you can get the right information.

Leave a comment and let us know what your favorite tools for building ABM profiles are!