



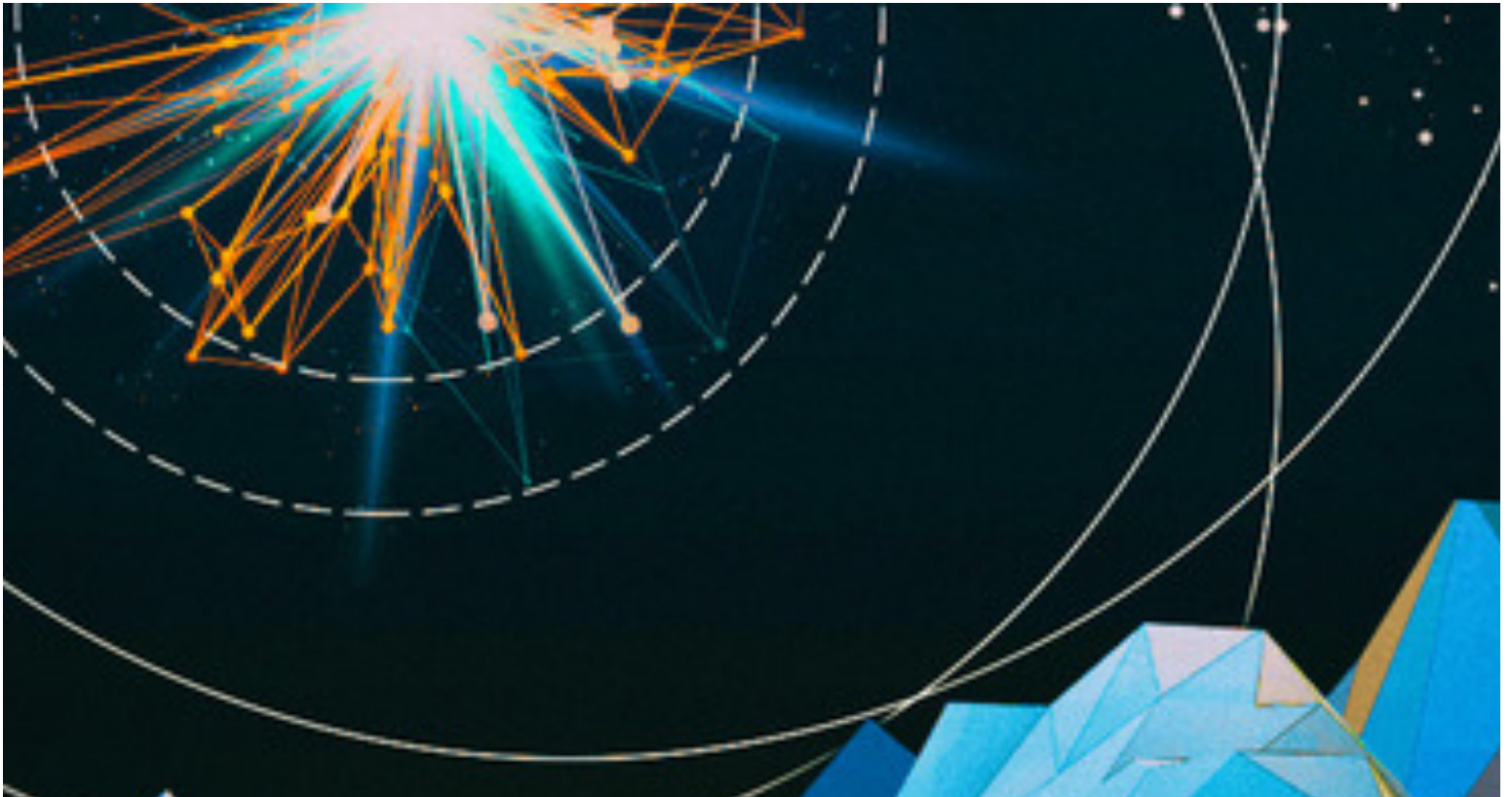
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Let account-based marketing be your guide.

Four steps to account-based marketing brilliance in high-tech.





You've been using email marketing for years. And you've even tried newer lead gen tactics like influencer marketing, retargeted advertising, and paid search. But with rising competition, longer buying cycles, and more decision-makers slowing the process, your tried-and-true tactics just don't work like they used to. That's why so many high-tech marketers are seeking out new and innovative ways of reaching their ideal customers.

With account-based marketing as their guide, more and more organizations have uncovered a direct route to their North Star. Using account-based marketing, sales and marketing teams work together to focus their efforts and resources on those customers who present the greatest opportunity for the business. While account-based marketing isn't a new strategy, emerging technologies are making it easier for companies of all sizes to implement it at scale.



“Account-based marketing has its roots in practices that go back decades, but new technologies make all the difference.”

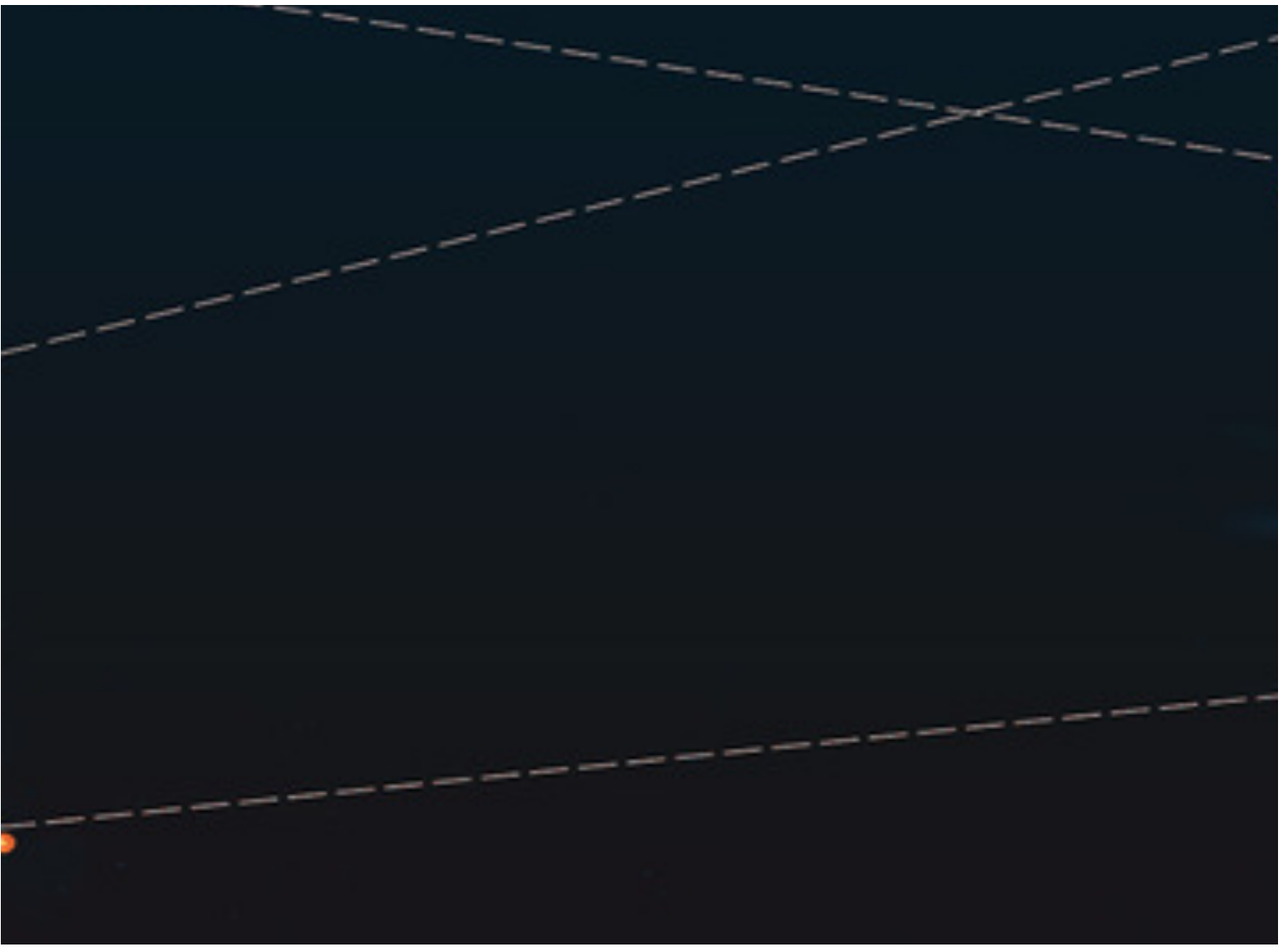
Dorothea Gosling

ABM Center of Excellence leader, CSC¹

With the inclusion of more and more digital interactions in account-based marketing efforts—from emails and forms to targeting and personalization, marketers have an even better chance of reaching more of their best-fit customers in a highly personalized, relevant manner—all before a visitor fills out a form on their website

If you’ve not yet found your way, here are four ways you can get started with account-based marketing now and discover your own North Star.

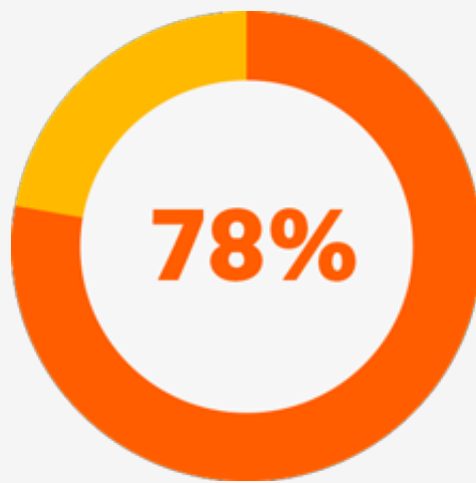




Step 1: Align sales and marketing.

The digital transformation has disrupted B2B high tech, making companies rethink everything from organizational processes to the technologies that

support them. But it's the people who can make or break those digital initiatives. If sales and marketing don't work together to identify shared goals and agree on a plan to get there, the chances their efforts will succeed are slim. And B2B marketers recognize this.



78% of B2B marketers say the team they need to work with most closely in order to move digital initiatives forward is sales—ahead of IT, CRM, and Customer/User Experience.

— *Digital Marketing in the High-Tech Sector Survey, Ovum²*

Holly Bounds, digital strategy leader for GE Energy Connections, understands the importance of keeping sales and marketing interacting on an ongoing basis and advocates involving sales in every step of the buying process. “You need to have that triumvirate in place,” she says. “Even if you don’t shift people into a specific role, you need to have your fingers out, the phone calls going, and have that key integration. It’s got to be ongoing.

“Reaching that alignment, however, isn’t easy. Here are some things you can try to get there.



Commit to a collaborative, account-based approach.

For all of the head butting between many sales and marketing teams, their end goals are actually completely aligned: to generate revenue by winning and keeping customers. The difference lies in the path to get there—lead-centric marketing versus opportunity-driven sales. A fundamental shift needs to happen in the way sales and marketing think about and approach their goals.



“Reaching account-based marketing nirvana requires the right tools, the right processes, and the right set of talent. It requires very tight alignment between sales and marketing, and executive buy-in. It’s not a piece of cake.”

Christopher Marin

senior principal, Digital Marketing Platform & Analytics, CSC³

It’s no coincidence that 91 percent of B2B marketers using account-based marketing are aligned with their sales teams.⁴ For those who aren’t there yet, a commitment to collaboration and a shared belief in an account-based approach will get you well on your way.



Establish common goals and a shared path to achieve them.

Alignment can only happen with clearly defined common goals. Because marketing tends to measure success by lead volume, while sales measures success by close rates, getting them to see eye to eye can seem like an impossible task. But account-based marketing gives these two functions a proven and focused way to bring about that alignment. By creating a targeted list of customers that represents the greatest opportunity, both teams can harmonize their efforts to reach those shared goals.



Demonstrate mutual value.

When sales and marketing are driving towards a common goal, everyone wins. But don't assume that both sides understand what's in it for them. Show marketing that by targeting the right leads, they can not only prove and maximize their ROI, but also consistently provide high-quality leads to

sales.

Jill Steinhour, director of Industry Strategy, High Tech and B2B for Adobe, says that marketing is more likely to get the resources needed to support their efforts if they're able to prove their value in the sales process.

“Marketing teams are ***much more successful*** in getting increased budgets when they are able to commit to providing a given percentage of sales funnel.”⁵





Step 2: Identify your key accounts.

If you want to succeed with account-based marketing, your sales and marketing teams must work together to identify those accounts they believe will provide the most value over the customer lifecycle. Because most of your business is likely to come from just a handful of customers, sales input is critical to determining which accounts are most promising.

Demandbase is a good example of a company that understands the importance of being flexible when developing a target account list. The account-based marketing tech solutions company calls their target list “DB3K.” The “3K” means they have 3,000 accounts on the list. CEO Peter Isaacson recounts how a simple mention of the DB3K list got conference goers excited and curious about

whether or not they had made that list.

“After my presentation, two or three people lined up and wanted to talk to me,” he recalls. “The first one was a woman who said, ‘Hi, that was a nice presentation. By the way, is my company part of the DB3K?’ I looked down at her badge and quite frankly, I didn't recognize the company, and I said, ‘Oh, I'm sorry, I don't think you are.’ She said, ‘Oh, bummer,’ and walked away.”

After he realized that he had just missed a golden opportunity to engage a potential target account, he thought back to his company's directive of putting an account-based lens on everything they do. From that point forward, when his staff heard, “Am I part of the DB3K?” they knew it was their chance to engage potential customers, creating energy and awareness around the program.⁶



“80% of a company's
revenue will originate from
just 20% of its leads.”

Christopher Marin

senior principal, Digital Marketing Platform & Analytics, CSC⁷

To find your company's best-fit customers, you should identify the 20 percent of accounts you believe will provide the most value to your company over the course of the customer lifetime.

Understand your company's strategic business objectives.

In a high-growth, innovative industry like high tech, business strategies are agile and evolving. By understanding your own objectives, you'll have clear guidelines in place in order to create a blueprint for your ideal customer types.

Define your ideal customer profile.

The ideal customer profile defines the type of organization that represents the best fit for your product or service based on a specific set of criteria. Start by reviewing your existing accounts to spot all of the attributes that are most commonly shared by all of your highest value accounts. Look at annual revenue, number of employees, industry

vertical, geographic footprint, and buyer role.

Then go deeper. Find out where they hang out—both online and off. Look at what they read, what they search for, and how they buy. The idea is to find significant characteristics shared across existing high-value customers that align with your organization's unique value proposition.

Find organizations that fit your ideal customer profile.

Developing your target account list can't be done in a vacuum. It has to be a collaborative effort between sales and marketing, incorporating both human- and data-driven research. Get input from your marketing and sales teams, and be sure to include perspectives from executive leadership. Do market research, such as scouring LinkedIn, to find "look-alike" organizations—those that closely resemble your ideal customer profile.

Pull in your data by looking at traffic and lead numbers from website analytics, and take advantage of predictive analytics and look-alike modeling technologies to help you uncover companies you might have never thought to include on your list.

Segment your audience.

Although the process of identifying your target accounts can seem overwhelming, don't let fear prevent you from taking action. For example, if you're a global company or thinking about going global, begin by segmenting your audience into those areas where you want to grow your share of wallet. You can do this by breaking your customers into different verticals such as industries and sub-industries, by geography, or by those you might support with your newest product releases.⁸



“If you’ve got a huge landscape like I started with, segment your audience. You have to start somewhere, just pick.”

Holly Bounds

digital strategy leader, GE Energy Connections⁹

You can also take advantage of models that predict the opportunity at an account level. These practices bring together top-down macroeconomic data, as well as first-party data about the prospect, including past purchases. “High-tech companies are in various stages of developing models to predict the addressable market at the account level,” says Steinhour. “These models provide another key input into an ABM practice.”¹⁰

Pinpoint account decision-makers and influencers.

Once you've created your ideal customer profile, and have identified companies to fit that profile, it's time to make all of this data actionable. Identify the key contacts who make up the actual buying committee within those target accounts. Yes, you'll need their contact information, but don't stop there. Learn everything you can about them to create personalized, highly detailed contact profiles that allow you to take action and see results.



“That’s the problem with most high-level account profiles. They’re not actionable at the *‘Why should I call?’* and *‘What can they buy?’* levels. They’re also not helpful to marketers who want to determine the most relevant messaging and offers. They’re a start, but they are not enough.”

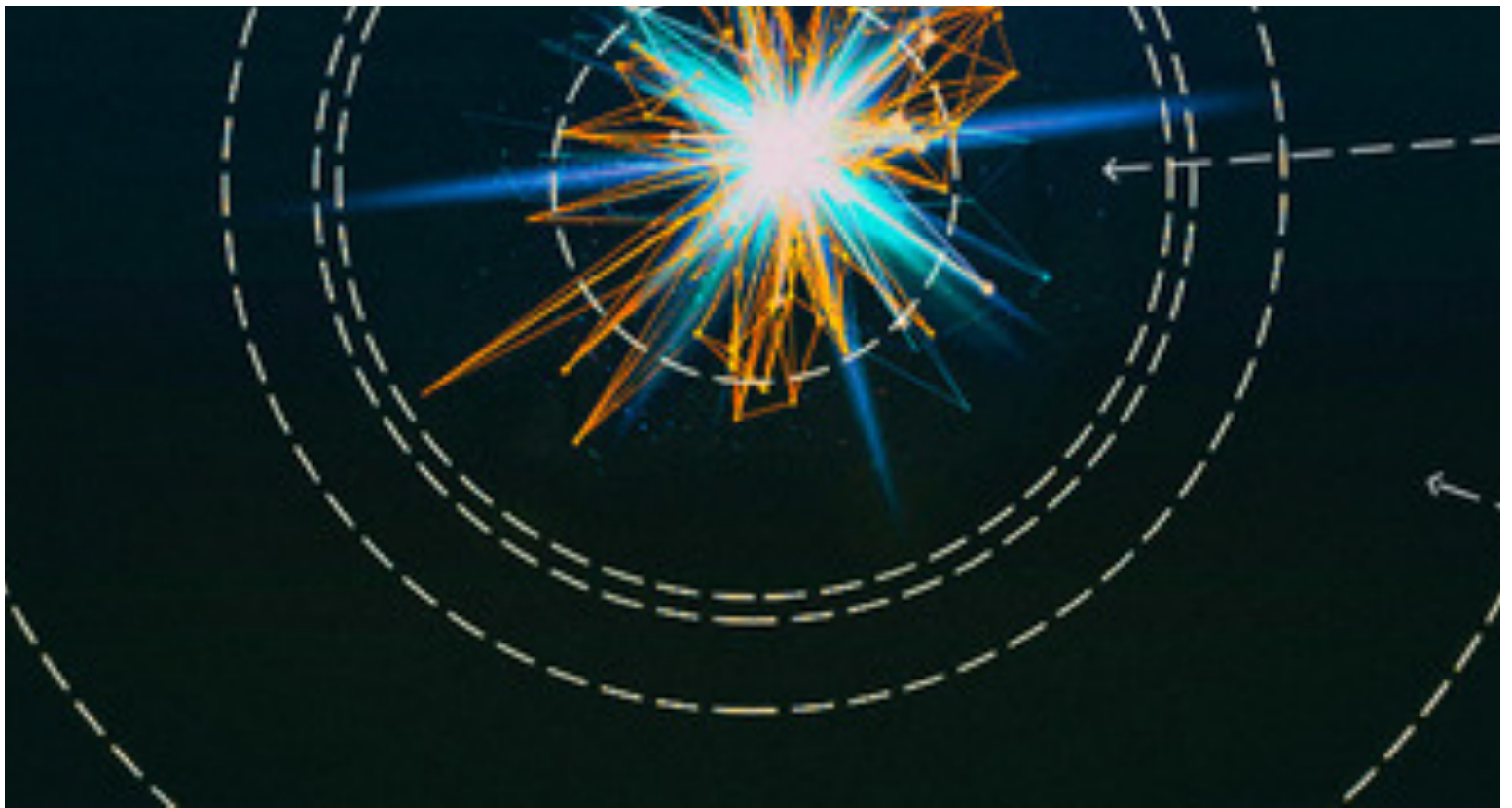
Megan Heuer

group director, Data-Driven Marketing, SiriusDecisions¹¹

Keep perfecting the list.

Because the high-tech market is so volatile, it’s important to regularly review your ideal customer profile and adjust your target account list in response to industry shifts.





Step 3: Develop and execute your marketing plan.

If you really want to see your account-based marketing efforts gain traction, you need to ensure that you reach target buyers across the entire customer journey, engage them in the way they prefer, and deliver personalized digital experiences to individual accounts at scale.

CSC uses what they call a “focused surround” approach—their winning formula for engaging buyers across multiple channels and devices. Their approach combines proactive research with company-level targeted advertising, supplemented by lead generation campaigns and highly focused marketing activities.

In order to earn the attention, engagement, and business of their target accounts, CSC pulls together company and commercial insights, social outreach, personalized digital experiences, offline sporting and dinner events, and face-to-face demonstrations and meetings. They follow up on all interactions with a win/loss analysis. This innovative approach earned them the ABM Program of the Year award from SiriusDecisions.



CSC: A “focused surround” approach.

CSC follows this six-step process to immerse and engage their prospects using a variety of online and offline tactics across multiple devices.¹²



Initiate account-based marketing coverage:

Use your company's analytics platform to collect information about the target company and key individuals within that company. Have your account-based marketing team analyze the data and pass on key insights to sales and marketing for customized messaging.



Gain commercial coverage:

Gather information about any news coverage or social mentions related to your target account and share these with your sales team.



Conduct social “soft” outreach:

Build relationships with targeted influencers and buyers by connecting with them on LinkedIn, following them on Twitter, and commenting on posts they’ve authored.



Use e-targeting:

Create customized advertising for your target buyers, and deliver personalized web experiences, such as home page welcome banners, for those who reach your digital properties. This can be supplemented by multitouch email campaigns and social advertising.



Sprinkle in high-touch engagement:

Supplement your digital efforts with offline events, such as a dinner or sporting event held just for influencers and decision-makers.



Hold formal customized presentations:

Meet with decision-makers face to face in sales demos and meetings, with leave-behinds to keep your company top of mind.

To develop a plan that can help you reach your own target accounts at scale, consider the following:

Approach every engagement with an account-based lens.

It all begins with understanding that in account-based marketing, everything happens at the account level. Take the customer journey, for example. Marketers view interactions along the customer journey in order to justify their digital investment by finding out which channels perform best. They also do this so they can optimize the customer experience. However, in many cases, they view these behaviors on the individual level,

attributing the success of a channel to a first- or last-touch interaction. Instead, a best-fit attribution model can be used to get a full picture of engagement across the total buying cycle.



“We realized that we could no longer blindly deploy tools and techniques that had been optimized, in most cases, for B2C. Everything that we do—reporting, analytics, personalization—had to be seen through that account-based lens.”

Christopher Marin

senior principal, Digital Marketing Platform & Analytics, CSC¹³



Nurture prospects along the buying process.

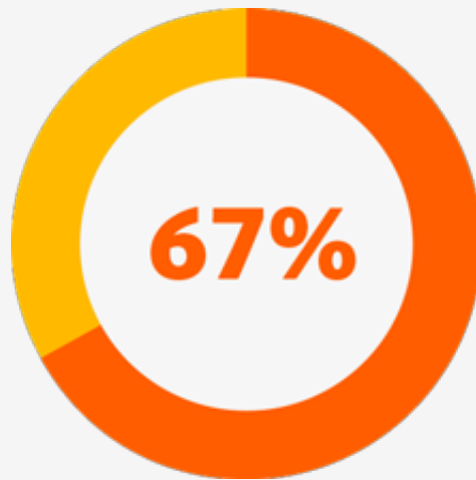
In addition to viewing interactions along the customer journey on an account level, you'll need to consider how to best nurture your prospects along the B2B high-tech buying process, all the way through close and retention. Keep in mind that with so much content and social proof available within easy reach, 57 percent of the purchase decision could be complete before a customer ever contacts your sales team.¹⁴

Here's an example of actions to take to help move your accounts through the funnel:

- **Attract:** Use account-based advertising, such as displaying banner ads with specific messaging to your target accounts. Ads should also include personalized information, like account name, industry, or interest.
- **Engage:** Take advantage of technologies that allow you to personalize website content for your top accounts at scale.
- **Convert:** This same technology can help you gather specific intelligence about your website visitors to help push conversions along. You can


progressively create robust profiles by including additional fields on lead forms to capture further information for return visitors.

- **Measure:** Accelerate the sales cycle by keeping real-time performance data accessible and transparent to both sales and marketing.



67% of B2B marketers consider optimizing the customer journey across multiple touchpoints “very important” in the years to come.

— *Digital Marketing in the High-Tech Sector Survey, Ovum¹⁵*



Build a customized marketing plan for each account.

Before you can create a plan to reach your target accounts, you'll need to gather as much unique account intelligence as possible. This means discovering, collecting, and analyzing information about each person on an account's buying committee.

The first step in this process is to create a data-driven repository of deep challenger- and persona-based insights to provide the framework for delivering personalized content experiences to key contacts on the account. Challenger-based insights are those that challenge a prospect's way of thinking and help you earn the attention of your prospects, while positioning your company over the competition. Next, dedicate an account-based marketing research team to analyze that data and to come up with advanced contact-level insights, including what keeps those contacts up at night, and any shared goals they might have with other contacts. Finally, use your account-based marketing tech stack to help you deliver

personalized digital experiences at the account level.



**Step 4:
Measure your**

performance.

The final step in your account-based marketing journey is to measure the performance of your marketing efforts. Although it might be tempting to track only traditional campaign metrics such as click-through rates, conversions, inquiries, and market qualified leads (MQL), there are more effective ways to demonstrate measurable business value to senior management. Remember that like all of the other components that make up account-based marketing, performance metrics should be defined and agreed upon jointly by marketing and sales teams.

Demandbase uses two types of metrics to gauge the performance of their DB3K target accounts: target account performance versus traditional leads and shared key metrics defined in collaboration with sales (close rate, annual contract value, funnel velocity). When comparing target account performance with that from traditionally generated leads, the company looks at measures such as conversion rate from MQL to sales approved lead (SAL), conversion from SAL to pipeline, and close rate from pipeline to closing.

What they found is that DB3K accounts consistently outperformed non-DB3K accounts in all three of these metrics, performing anywhere from 17 to 75 percent stronger for each KPI. In addition to improvement in shared goals, close

rates rose significantly across all sales teams, and their annual contract value went up by 33 percent.

“Those numbers are huge,” says Peter Isaacson, CEO for Demandbase. “When you start getting into those kinds of numbers, sales is all in. They know that a DB3K account has far greater likelihood to close for them than any other account. With that, they’re totally on board, focusing their attention on your DB3K, on your target accounts.”



Connect marketing to revenue.

Measure results based on revenue performance and other business outcomes. When leadership can see a direct tie between marketing and actual revenue, marketing transforms from a cost center to a profit center, justifying more investment and increased budgets.

Track at the account level, across

the customer journey.

Evolve your account-based marketing maturity to measure from first click, all the way to close, and everywhere in between. Taken from the Demandbase ABM Maturity Model, the following list shows the kinds of metrics you should consider, depending on your level of account-based marketing maturity. The metrics range from Tier 1 (least mature) to Tier 3 (most mature):

Tier 1: Campaign performance metrics: click-through rates, site traffic, unique visitors, and conversions

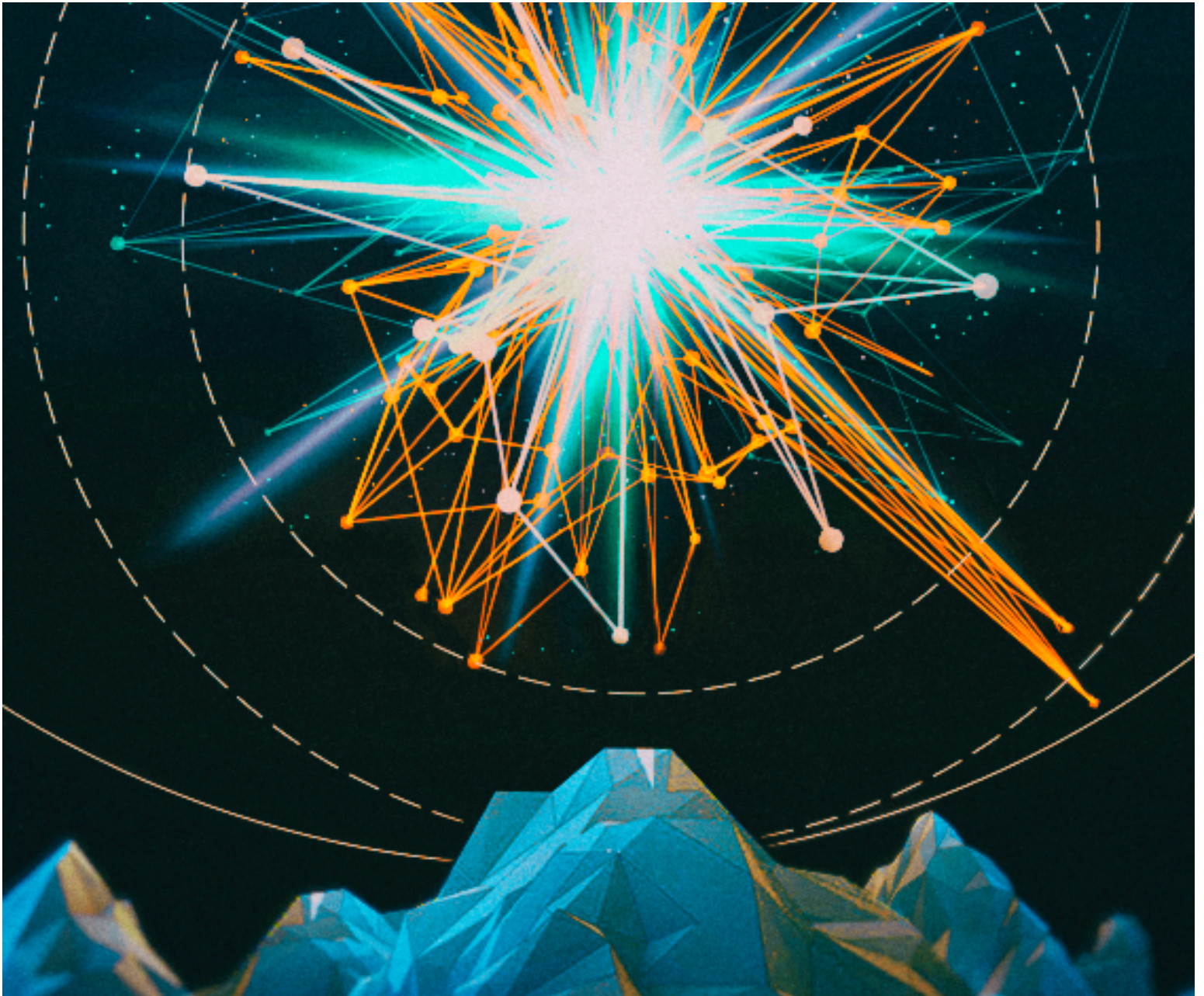
Tier 2: Revenue performance metrics: lift, pipeline, and funnel velocity

Tier 3: Business outcomes metrics: annual contract value, close rate, retention, and upsell rates.¹⁶

Remember that account-based marketing is a team sport.

Get some skin in the game, and the wins will follow. Even if some of your metrics are not directly

within your control, measure them anyway.
Account-based marketing programs inevitably fail
if sales and marketing are not fully invested and
joined at the hip. Be willing to trust your sales
teams and accept that account-based marketing is
not a solo sport. You win and lose together
because you both follow the same North Star.



Outshine the competition.

A strategic and calculated approach to winning over your most valued customers is no longer out of reach. It is possible, and necessary. Getting buyers to open their ears, minds, and wallets in the fast-moving B2B high-tech industry means stepping out of your comfort zone as a marketer to welcome innovative ideas and unconventional approaches. Fortunately, proven account-based marketing tactics and the supporting account-based marketing tech stack fit the bill.

By aligning sales and marketing, identifying your key accounts, developing your account-specific marketing plan, and measuring performance at the account level, you can soar light years ahead of the competition.

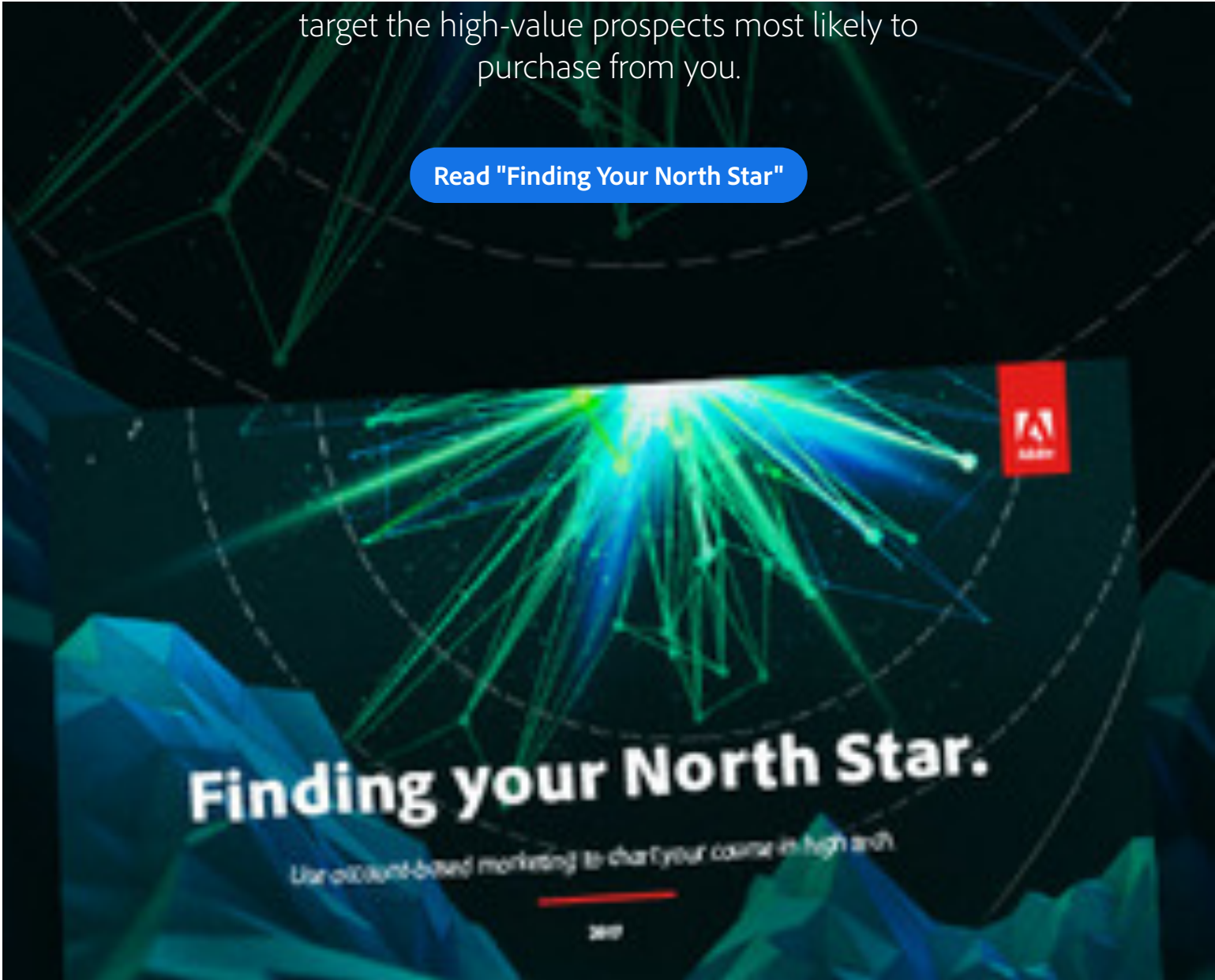


Get back to the basics.

Learn the fundamentals of account-based marketing and how it can help you predict and

target the high-value prospects most likely to purchase from you.

[Read "Finding Your North Star"](#)



Finding your North Star.

Use account-based marketing to chart your course in high arch.

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