

A close-up photograph of a man with light brown, wavy hair, wearing a dark suit jacket, a light blue checkered shirt, and a dark tie. He is looking slightly to the left with a serious expression. He is applying a thick, white shaving cream to his right cheek with his right hand. The background is a dark, textured blue.

COMPETE AND WIN IN THE AGE OF ACCOUNT BASED BUYING

What every B2B revenue team must know and do to understand and embrace the modern B2B buying journey

If you're on a B2B revenue team, it's likely your Marketing and Sales teams are experiencing some angst these days when it comes to understanding how prospects and customers want to interact with your company. On one hand customers seem to want ultra-personalized attention on every channel, and on the other it seems as though they instantly delete every one of those painstakingly-crafted, personalized emails you send. They come to your website to download your latest eBook, but then fill out your contact form with "Mickey Mouse" from "ABC Company." What gives?

The reality is, B2B buying has changed and it's likely your revenue generating teams have become disconnected from the modern buying journey. In fact, according to Forrester, upwards of 70% of the B2B buyer journey happens before a prospect ever identifies themselves to you.

With instant access to 3rd party research and review sites as well as a host of other resources, once-salesperson-reliant business buyers have turned into savvy consumers who no longer feel they need you to lead them through the buying journey. This isn't because you don't have anything to offer that might assist them in their purchase decision, it's because you're still blasting out what you think they want,

not what they need to build consensus within the buying team and complete their purchase.

“OVER THE YEARS WE’VE SEEN B2B SALES AND MARKETING STRUGGLE MIGHTILY TO PROGRESS CUSTOMERS THROUGH THE PURCHASE PROCESS. THE PROBLEM IS, FOR THE CUSTOMER, BUYING IS NOT REALLY ABOUT PROGRESSION, IT’S ABOUT COMPLETION. UNFORTUNATELY, THE CURRENT COMMERCIAL PROCESS TODAY IS NOT BUILT TO SUPPORT THIS NEW WORLD OF B2B BUYING.”

~ BRENT ADAMSON, DISTINGUISHED VICE PRESIDENT AT GARTNER

Bottom line: marketing and sales is operating mostly in the dark, and your front-line revenue generating teams are feeling the pain.

If you're like most organizations, the reaction is to try to take back control of the buying journey by investing more and more of the marketing and sales budget in technology to solve the problem.

According to a recent Forrester report, Marketing Automation Technology Forecast, 2017 to 2023 (Global), published

QUICK TEST

Are Your Revenue Generating Teams Disconnected from the Buying Journey?

Which of these kinds of sentiments have you felt coming from your Marketing and Sales teams?

- CMO:** "I can't prioritize where I spend my budget."
- Demand Gen:** "I can't deliver more pipeline with budgets going down and costs going up."
- Field Marketing:** "I don't know where to plan my field events to impact future pipeline."
- BDR:** "Even with a Target Account List, I have no idea how to prioritize them for outbound."
- AE:** "I don't know what competitors I'm up against in this deal."
- Customer Service:** "I don't know which of my customers is looking to leave."
- VP Sales:** "I can't seem to focus my reps on the right accounts."

If you recognize one or more of these sentiments, its likely your front-line revenue generating teams do not understand or embrace the modern B2B buying journey.

in 2018, spending for Marketing Automation tools will grow vigorously over the next few years, reaching \$25.1 billion annually by 2023, up from \$11.4 billion in 2017.

From Marketing Automation Platforms, to point solutions designed to deliver personalized content, enrich data, attribute spend, score leads, predict behaviors and much more, CMOs are fielding daily requests from every corner of Marketing for new tools with the promise of staff that, "this next piece of technology is going to be the silver bullet that delivers the functionality and/or data we really need."

All of this spending on disparate, siloed technology is creating mountains of disconnected and dynamic data impossible to analyze and orchestrate, making the problem worse. In fact, it's likely you're spending the majority of your marketing technology budget to address a small percentage of the problem.

LET'S FIGURE OUT WHY, AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT







B2B buying has changed. Today's buyers are anonymous, fragmented and resistant.

As mentioned, the majority of the buying journey is happening in the “Dark Funnel,” where buying signals like anonymous web visits, 3rd party research and false form fills go unseen by your current MAP and CRM platforms.

In addition, Account Based Buying means you now have to address the needs of an entire buying committee, or “buying center” inside of the prospect organization. Gone are the days of identifying the “buyer” and a few “influencers” on the deal. According to Gartner, there are an average of 9.6 people involved in a typical

Account Based Buying Jobs - Why So Many Are Needed on the Buying Committee
 B2B selling today is no longer about progressing a customer through a linear buying journey.

Descriptions for Completion of the B2B Buying Jobs

 Problem Identification	 Solution Exploration	 Requirements Building	 Supplier Selection	 Validation	 Consensus Creations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare customer's performance against peers • Quantify cost/benefits of action/inaction • Prompt exploration of overlooked questions/information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate alternatives • Visualize solution in customer context • Prioritize possible trade-offs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify solution criteria • Prompt exploration of overlooked questions/information • Prioritize possible trade-offs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare competing supplier solutions • Visualize solution in customer context • Evaluate alternatives • Prioritize possible trade-offs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm independent learning • Corroborate supplier's claims • Solicit end-user feedback and customer references • Consult peer/professional acquaintances • Review third-party expert analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a shared understanding of the problem within the buying group • Educate stakeholders outside the immediate buying group • Surface and resolve disagreements; engage in debate • Build a business case and secure budget

gartner.com/SmarterWithGartner

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Gartner research reveals that B2B buyers must complete six distinct activities — or “jobs” — to successfully complete a purchase today. Most B2B buyers will revisit nearly every “buying job” at least once before they make a purchase. The result: a customer buying journey that resembles more of a maze than a linear path.

ARE YOU EMBRACING THIS NEW BUYER JOURNEY?

B2B purchase decision (and that number continues to grow every year). Gartner also says each one of those individuals need 4.5 content “engagements” in order for you to build consensus and get the deal over the finish line.



DARK FUNNEL WHERE SIGNALS LIKE ANONYMOUS WEB VISITS, 3RD PARTY RESEARCH, AND FALSE FORM FILLS GO UNSEEN BY YOUR MARKETING AUTOMATION PLATFORM

And guess what? If you’re fortunate enough to identify who inside the organization is on the buying committee, it’s likely none of them are eager to engage on your terms, but rather only when they are ready, and on the channel they prefer. In fact, according to Forrester, it can take more than 12 highly-personalized touches to break through buyer resistance, and even then you’re not reaching buyers until the end of their journey — sometimes only the last 10% — providing little opportunity to influence the deal, address the competition or in some cases, correct buyer misconceptions.

All this means we, as B2B revenue teams, need to make a dramatic shift in the way

we market and sell in order to compete and win in the age of Account Based Buying.

ABM TO THE RESCUE?

Account-based marketing (ABM) has become increasingly popular among marketers over the past several years as a way to engage with resistant B2B buyers, and for good reason. According to a recent report published by TribalVision entitled, *The Rise of Account-Based Marketing*, 85% of marketers say that ABM outperforms other marketing investments, and companies that implement ABM strategies typically see a 171% increase in annual contract value.

***ABM DEFINITION**

Account-based marketing (ABM) is an alternative B2B strategy that concentrates sales and marketing resources on a clearly defined set of target accounts within a market and employs personalized campaigns designed to resonate with each account.

The bottom line: ABM works. But the question everyone’s asking is, “*Does it scale?*”

We often hear, “ABM is about quality, not quantity,” which is true if you adhere to the traditional definition of ABM.* Today, there are dozens of technology solutions

designed to help marketing and sales teams scale ABM efforts and deliver targeted messaging through automation. However, most organizations that have deployed an ABM strategy have been challenged to expand the approach beyond a handful of target accounts, despite these investments. According to Topo, a research and advisory firm that helps sales, marketing and sales development grow revenues faster, ***“Account based is a proven winning strategy. In our recent research 86% of account based organizations report improved close rates and 80% say it is driving increased customer lifetime values. Based on this success, organizations are doubling down, planning to increase spend by 33% in 2019. With the increase in resources, the next phase is scale and this is a challenge. In our research, scaling account based initiatives is the #1 challenge account based marketers identified for 2019.”***

The reason? More data, more problems.

The B2B buying journey is complex and ever-changing, throwing off petabytes of data that can be used to help us find new business, create segments and audiences, target and personalize our message and more. However, according to findings from

Dun & Bradstreet’s Sixth Annual B2B Marketing Data Report, while 89% of B2B professionals believe data quality drives the right B2B sales and marketing campaigns, less than half (49%) aren’t confident in the quality of their data.

But even more shocking, 39% of B2B professionals describe their level of data integration with core technology systems (e.g., CRM) as “novice” or “beginner,” and 14% say they aren’t sure how well integrated that data is at all.

It’s one thing to be able to identify accounts to target, quite another to orchestrate all of that data into meaningful outreach, across thousands of accounts and dozens of channels.

Without the right tools, big data can overwhelm rather than empower. Here, AI must be a part of the solution to help marketers turn a massive volume of buyer intent signals into actionable insight that accelerates demand.

As an account based revenue team, you must be able to predict, with confidence, exactly where any account is in their buying journey—no matter how many accounts fall into your Total Addressable Market (TAM).

A NEW APPROACH: ACCOUNT BASED ORCHESTRATION, POWERED BY AI (ABM, BUT SMARTER)

Today, it's possible to put the power of AI, big data and machine learning behind every member of your B2B revenue team, empowering them to uncover anonymous buying behavior, prioritize fragmented data to focus on accounts in market and engage resistant buying teams with personalized, multi-channel, multi-touch campaigns.

Here, it's important to understand the difference between automation and orchestration. In simple terms, automation describes a task or function that can be accomplished without human intervention because it requires little intelligence. We've been automating routine tasks like running display ads or email nurture campaigns in Marketing for years. Usually these tasks run out of a single system like our CRM, or MAP and often rely on integration with other systems to ensure the proper data has been captured prior to executing the task.

Orchestration, on the other hand, blends human and machine-based intelligence to predict timing and coordination of tasks across people and systems, ultimately resulting in a responsive process or workflow.

When we talk about orchestrating ABM, we're talking about targeting the right person, at the right account, with the right message, at the right time. It seems simple at first blush, yet here is where so many companies miss the mark.

Consider the number of decision makers (remember, Gartner says around 10), and the number of times you need to engage each of them (12) in order to get a deal across the finish line. And then think about the expanding number of different channels and types of content that each member of the buying committee may prefer. Even with just a few accounts, the content and channel mix can quickly become overwhelming and unmanageable, even with automation.

Here, AI can power your programs and bring intelligence to the orchestration across all of these people, channels and content to deliver "always on" personalized, multi-channel, multi-touch campaigns. AI can also spark new insights throughout the buying journey that we, as humans, might not otherwise see. These insights allow us as marketers to truly understand what is working and become laser-focused on delivering real results, not just leads.



MAKING ACCOUNT BASED ORCHESTRATION A REALITY

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW, AND DO

1. Uncover Demand - Make the Anonymous Known

Your current CRM and Marketing Automation Platform are designed to execute campaigns and programs targeting known contacts and leads: those individuals who have given you their contact information. These systems have become the foundation of the sales and marketing tech stack and have become mainstream in every organization in some capacity. However, these systems are designed to only deal with the known—the 10% of your TAM that you’ve captured in your database. They are blind to the other 90% who are actively doing 3rd party research in your space.

This behavioral blind spot is where your advertising dollars are focused. Despite incredible amounts of individual and firmographic data available from advertising platforms for targeting, we really have no idea if those seeing our ads are real people from accounts that are “in market” for what we offer. Yes, advertising works. But imagine what you could do if you knew which companies out there were actively researching your product, and you

could deliver highly personalized ads and campaigns to individuals in those organizations.

The truth is, buyers are leaving behind a digital footprint of exactly what they want and need. In order to regain control of the buying journey, you need to be able to track that activity, no matter where it occurs — from your own campaigns, to anonymous Dark Funnel intent — to understand exactly where any account is in the buying journey.

“WITHIN 48 HOURS WE WERE UNCOVERING OUR DARK FUNNEL AND SEEING OPPORTUNITIES WE HAD NO INSIGHT INTO BEFORE. MANY WERE NOT EVEN IN OUR CRM.”

~ MEDIAFLY

To understand buyer intent, you need to analyze visitor insights from millions of web domains and billions of interactions across devices and channels, then capture, standardize, clean and master all of that data, and tie it all back to an account. Seem impossible? Its’ not, but it’s also not easy, and it can’t be done without a true Big Data and AI-based platform.

To Uncover Demand

What you need to know	What you need to do
Which accounts to target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make it easy for people to raise their hand • Find more good customers • Build audiences based on intent AND profile
Who, inside the account, is a member of the buying center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean and enrich your database • Fill holes in contact records • Make sure leads go to the right account
Who is researching you AND your competitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • De-anonymize 1st party and 3rd party data (your website + competitor site visits & search)
What potential buyers care about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze search and 3rd party research to develop insights that can be used for engagement by marketing & sales

2. Prioritize Actions - Identify Accounts "In Market"

For many organizations, one of the biggest challenges when firing up an ABM program is determining the "A." Deciding on which accounts to target often stalls the program before it gets started. Here, the approach is no different than any other kind of prospecting; look at industries or types of companies where you've been successful in the past and go find more of those kinds of buyers. Typically, "look-alike" prospecting relies on identifying some kind demographic, firmographic and/or technographic characteristics that helps you to create an ideal customer profile (ICP).

Once the ICP has been established, it's up to Sales to identify which accounts to "go after." This can quickly derail things as the conversations between Marketing and Sales become all about account "fit," or concerns about including too many or too few accounts in the program. The head of Sales starts to get nervous about redirecting budget and resources previously driving hundreds of leads, to now focusing on just a few accounts, "Are you people serious?!"

As mentioned, potential buyers are leaving a digital footprint in the form of intent signals across the internet in the form of both known and anonymous interactions with your website, as well as thousands of other 3rd party sites. This footprint, when properly analyzed, can take the guesswork out of identifying which accounts to target with your ABM program by helping you understand where each account is in their buyer journey, and focus efforts on those who are actively "in market" for your product or service.

This, of course, means sifting through and analyzing petabytes of fragmented data across millions of interactions, but this is what Big Data and AI were created to do.

Not only can AI predict, with mathematical certainty, which accounts are in market, AI can also help you to understand which

personas inside of the account are likely part of the buying committee, so you can focus on engaging the right people within the account to build consensus and help lead them through their journey.



ARM THE REVENUE TEAM WITH INSIGHTS THEY CAN USE: WHICH ACCOUNTS ARE IN MARKET, WHO TO ENGAGE, WHAT CONVERSATIONS TO HAVE

Finally, if accounts are being selected due to the fact they are in market (not because they just look good on paper), Sales is more likely to act when they have visibility into every interaction that an account took along the way to meet that threshold. This means it's critical to provide salespeople with insights that show not only why it's important to engage now (timing), but also arms them with details on all previous interactions (content consumption, website visits, 3rd party research, keyword searches, etc.) that can help drive meaningful conversations with any member of the buying committee.

To Prioritize Actions

What you need to know	What you need to do
Which accounts are "in market" for your solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Predict, with certainty, which accounts are showing the right levels of intent to be considered "in market," and focus efforts on these accounts
Who, inside the account, to engage (members of the buying team)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a persona map that can track engagement levels for each member of the buying team, focus outreach on individuals where engagement is lacking
What messages will resonate, effort and budget needed to drive success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop account and contact fit and profile scoring to focus message, effort and budget on high-value accounts and contact

3. Engage Buyers - Overcome Buyer Resistance at Scale

Remember that Forrester stat that said it takes more than 12 highly personalized touches to break through buyer resistance? And remember the nearly 10 people that are a part of the B2B purchase decision? That adds up to an impossible-to-manage number of personalized, multi-touch, multi-channel campaigns you'll need to orchestrate to break through and reach buyers with your message.

Targeted advertising and highly personalized digital campaigns have become a staple of many ABM efforts, likely yours if you're already executing a program. The challenge with traditional advertising and outbound campaigns are

they rely on audience segmentation that is static in nature, and likely obsolete on day one of the campaign.



PERSONALIZATION IS NOT JUST ABOUT THE PERSONA IT'S ALSO ABOUT BUYING STAGE. PROVIDE THE RIGHT CONTENT AT THE RIGHT MOMENT, AND AT THE RIGHT VOLUME

In other words, you're creating ad segments that identify accounts matching certain criteria at a particular point in time. However, once the campaign starts, new accounts that fall into that segment are not added, causing you to continue paying for ads targeting organizations that no longer meet your criteria.

Here, AI is dramatically improving the way display and digital campaigns are done across channels, accounts and personas. AI allows for dynamic segmentation, where audiences can be defined at an incredibly granular level with an added dimension of time. This means you can automatically trigger any kind of marketing program, from ads, to email to direct mail, even field

events, as your prospect's demand signals change.

For example, you might create a segment that looks for anyone who visited your website within the last 7 days and consumed a particular piece of content, and also visited your competitor's site in the last 3 days, is a member of buying committee of an identified account in market, and has not been engaged with at least 4 interactions.



DYNAMIC, ALWAYS-ON SEGMENTS MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO EXECUTE ABM @ SCALE

If you're thinking that could be thousands of micro-segments, you're getting it! But don't panic, this is where AI makes possible a once-overwhelming, if not impossible undertaking.

"WE WERE ABLE TO DRIVE A 540% INCREASE IN ENGAGEMENT ACROSS A HI-POTENTIAL SEGMENT, WHERE WE'D SEEN NO ACTIVITY."

~SOCIALCHORUS

Over time, members of an account's buying team fall in and out of each segment, and AI does the heavy lifting to determine who gets what message at what time, and on

what channel. Again, impossible to orchestrate without AI.

One final benefit here is that over time the AI behind all of this becomes smarter and smarter by analyzing the impact at the account level, not just counting up “clicks.” This means real ROI, not vanity metrics.

To Engage With Buyers

What you need to know	What you need to do
That the right message is getting to the right person at the right time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Execute personalized, multi-channel, multi-touch campaigns to any number of custom audiences and segments based on any combination of attributes or behaviors
That Sales is engaged and following up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver “in market”, ready-to-buy alerts and insights to Sales
What others are doing to drive engagement success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tap into a community of ABM experts to leverage best practices
What’s working, and what’s not	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop 360° view of engagement on accounts, audiences, and segments



CONCLUSION

The era of Account Based Buying is here. There’s a pretty good chance your revenue teams are feeling the pain of not understanding and embracing this new B2B buying journey. This isn’t a management problem, or a process problem, or even a technology problem, per say. It’s a data problem. Each member of your revenue team has gone to their corner to solve this problem with their own set of point solutions creating a massive amount of disconnected data.

It’s time to look beyond the siloed *#st@ckshow* (pardon our French) you’ve created and put the power of AI and Big Data behind every member of the B2B revenue team, empowering them to uncover anonymous buying behavior, prioritize fragmented data to focus on accounts in market, and engage resistant buying teams with personalized, multi-channel, multi-touch campaigns.

Revenue teams that know everything they need to know about their buyers can easily do anything they need to do to generate more opportunities, increase deal size, get into opportunities sooner and win more often.

About 6sense

6sense's Account Based Orchestration Platform helps revenue teams compete and win in the age of Account Based Buying by putting the power of AI, big data and machine learning behind every member of the B2B revenue team, empowering them to uncover anonymous buying behavior, prioritize fragmented data to focus on accounts in market, and engage resistant buying teams with personalized, multi-channel, multi-touch campaigns. Revenue teams using 6sense know everything they need to know about their buyers so they can easily do anything they need to do to generate more opportunities, increase deal size, get into opportunities sooner, and win more often.



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