



How To Pair ABM And Inbound Marketing To Win At Demand Generation In 2020

6 Tips For CMOs To Win And Retain Target Accounts

SQUARE2



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Successful demand generation hinges upon your marketing team's ability to get customers excited about your products or services. How do they do that? By weaving together two important elements: account-based marketing (ABM) and inbound marketing.

ABM is an approach to B2B marketing that targets specific buyer profiles (the company) and buyer personas (the people); directs helpful messages in the form of educational content to help each prospect; and then continues the conversation with nurturing activities that influence the prospect's buyer journey.

Inbound marketing includes all the tactics that ensure your company is visible when people are looking for you. Tactics like search engine optimization, content marketing, your website and conversion optimization all ensure that your inbound tactics are generating leads.

Understanding how these two marketing approaches work together to drive awareness and leads is critical to a winning revenue generation formula.

If your marketing team is planning on executing an ABM strategy, these tips will help you pair ABM and inbound marketing to ensure you make an impact on your pipeline.



TIP 1

Why CMOs Should Think Strategy Before Tactics

We advise marketing leaders to take a “strategy before tactics” approach to everything sales and marketing. Mapping out your plan before jumping in and executing tactics almost always produces a more efficient and more effective execution.

Using ABM as a strategy to reach prospective clients that may not have actively begun their search for a solution is no different. Before you start planning your outreach, you should understand in detail what an ABM strategy means to your company, who you’re targeting and specifically what issues, challenges or pains they’re dealing with, as it relates to your products or services.

Keep in mind, an ABM strategy includes both company targeting and individual targeting, so you need to know who exactly you want to be included in your program before you start. By understanding the very specific issues these people are dealing with, you’ll be able to create a much more emotional, compelling and disruptive message that will grab their attention and draw them in. Without this thoughtful approach to targeting and messaging, you might find your effort dead on arrival before it even starts.

What's Your Story?

TIP 2

Create A Compelling, Disruptive Story

An ABM strategy targets people within companies who have a need, but who may not be actively looking for a solution like yours.

This makes your marketing messaging even more important. Inbound marketing typically focuses on those people active in their search for information and for solutions. ABM assumes the targeted people have a need, but they may not be actively looking, making your ability to move people to action a critical component for a successful ABM program.

People will do almost anything to not change. In fact, we're programmed to avoid change as much as possible. Since ABM is approaching people who may have not, in their minds, realized change is needed, it's critical that you work hard to disrupt their status quo with messaging that moves them to at least consider thinking about making a change.

Here's a great example. We worked with a cyber security firm that offered software and services to protect a network from hacking. This is obviously a highly topical issue. However, the firm's target prospects are responsible for keeping their networks secure and they all think they're doing a good job.

Simply offering information on network security or discussing the features and benefits of the company's offering is not going to be enough to get someone to act.

Remember, taking action is the goal for every marketing initiative. With that in mind, we offered a message that said, "Your job might be in jeopardy if someone is hacking your network right now and you don't know it." We then recommended following up with a message that offered a review of their network to see if it had been infiltrated already, something that the firm's research showed was common.

The result was an influx of requests to review their network for breaches.

We disrupted their status quo and then offered a solution. This type of messaging takes more time, but produces much better results.



TIP 3

Make Sure You Have The Right Marketing Assets

You can introduce a compelling, disruptive message, but to tell the full story you're going to need some marketing assets that back up your position. To be more specific, you should be thinking about creating a highly educational experience as part of your ABM initiative.

When developing your ABM strategy, be sure your team creates an ABM-specific content plan with assets that pertain to your target's industry, vertical and persona.

This means you'll need the right assets to deliver a remarkable experience for your prospects, from first touch to close. What materials and tools do you need to deliver this level of experience?

Materials might include assessments, case studies, videos, workshops and/or educational materials like whitepapers or e-books. Tools might include marketing automation, intent data, CRM and social media.

When combined, these materials and tools accelerate revenue generation by enabling and empowering your sales team to deliver a highly educational and advisory experience that helps the prospect, builds trust and closes sales.

Build your marketing assets in a way that makes the experience immersive, emotional and highly productive for each prospect on your list.



TIP 4

Integrate ABM And Inbound Into Other Marketing Activities

Successful marketing comes with the ability to marry account-based marketing activities with other inbound marketing and demand generation activities, giving your sales team the advantage of a multi-pronged approach.

ABM and inbound present the perfect opportunity to align your sales and marketing departments. When your sales and marketing teams are closely aligned, your chances of success in ABM are far greater.

Here's an example. You get your prospect to subscribe to the company's blog and monthly email newsletter. Both vehicles are telling similar stories to nurture the prospect through the sales process. Each day (if you blog daily) they get a reminder of your approach and differentiation through blog notifications, and each month they get the company's email newsletter with even more interesting information.

The combination – strategic sales connects plus inbound marketing's delivery of educational content – moves prospects through the buyer journey in a more directed manner. This causes them to close more quickly and at a higher rate than your pre-inbound methods.



TIP 5

Set Quantitative Goals And Metrics For Your Leadership Team

As with other inbound expectations, nothing happens quickly: We're talking about the long game here. Nurture campaigns and educational content marketing help your prospects get to know, like and trust you faster, but it won't affect (nor can anything actually affect) the acuteness of their pain.

People don't purchase until their pain becomes acute and they're 100% safe in their feelings about the purchase decision. You can attempt to poke at their pain and point out how that pain could become even more problematic in the future, but much of the desire to move to fix pain is motivated by internal factors that we in sales or marketing can't affect.

Be sure to set realistic expectations from the beginning. ABM shifts focus away from quantity of leads toward quality of leads. It's about deepening the engagement in your target accounts and getting to know each account at a more intimate level.

Results should pick up over time as your team gets better, as you refine your process, as you adjust your tools to improve conversion metrics and as you get more people into your buying cycle. Over time, ABM will produce, but results might be slow to start and should be managed on the basis of reasonable expectations.

Inbound marketing is all about the metrics, and account-based marketing is no different. How many people were identified? How many connect emails were sent? How many actually connected? How many prospects engaged in a conversation or replied to the content you sent? How many actually had pain and were interested in talking to you about it? How many wanted to see a proposal or agreement? How many converted into clients?

The bottom line: If you don't know what numbers you're targeting, you'll never know if you've achieved your goals.



TIP 6

Track And Test Everything

Track each stage of the process. Monitor your conversion rates. Work to improve conversion rates by optimizing communication and content tools. Look at these numbers weekly and then monthly. An ABM strategy should include more than just traditional marketing metrics; you should be looking at campaign influence, engagement, pipeline and revenue.

Track every week and every month, and compare the data week over week and month over month. If you work to deliver improvements (even small ones) weekly, you'll also get monthly improvements.

If you see areas of the program that are not performing or are performing below expectations, that's an opportunity to run some tests or experiments. If the message is not getting people to connect, try a slightly more aggressive version. Roll it out, test it for a week or two and then evaluate your progress. Even if you do achieve success, use that as the baseline and test adjustments to drive the numbers higher.

Before you know it, you'll have a highly effective ABM effort that is both predictable and repeatable and that makes sales and marketing valuable assets to your company.

As you start to transition away from traditional sales and marketing activities and into inbound, one of the first questions leaders ask is, "What should my salespeople do if they're not making cold calls?" The answer is account-based.

They should be actively looking for people who appear to be the perfect prospects. They should be taking the new inbound marketing tools you've equipped them with and the new sales process you've designed for them and executing the outreach, nurturing and account management processes that are now in play.

Once these tactics are dialed in, you'll see this approach producing much better results than pure cold-calling. More importantly, your sales team will be connecting with buyers in a way they want to be worked with during their buyer journey.



BONUS TIP

ABM Implementation Tip

Change is hard for your prospects, but it's also hard for your sales team. Get alignment in place between your sales and marketing teams *before* you start. Have your sales team represented in the planning process for the most streamlined approach.

Don't request your 100 salespeople get off the phones tomorrow in the hope that ABM turns around your sales effort in two or three days. You need to take a much more deliberate and strategic approach to planning, building and optimizing an account-based marketing approach to sales.

Follow the tips in the guide here, but instead of a massive rollout, start with an ABM pilot. This will help you gain buy-in once you get traction with the pilot and it will help focus your efforts on the smaller team. Sales and marketing will both learn what works and what doesn't so that when your ABM strategy is rolled out with the broader team, you'll have better metrics, refined messaging and tools that produce results.

Get started improving your sales and marketing today by scheduling a free 30-minute marketing assessment with our team of experts.

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ABOUT SQUARE 2

Square 2 is a full-service revenue growth agency designed to produce results for clients. The agency helps businesses understand the changing buyer journey and how revenue is directly related to marketing, sales and customer service execution.

More specifically, Square 2 works with clients on the strategy, tactics, analytics and technology required to build revenue generation machines that produce month-over-month revenue growth in a scalable, predictable and repeatable way, so their business grows.

Square 2 uses its proprietary Cyclonic Buyer Journey™ model to help clients map their prospects' buyer journeys to the right sales, marketing and customer service tactics. The agency also applies its own AI-powered recommendation and insight engine software called MAXG to drive a smarter set of campaign and action-oriented tactics for clients.

In addition, Square 2's Accelerated Engagement provides clients a dedicated team of cross-functional people who work with only one client at any time. This allows the agency to deliver six months of work in just 30 days and a month's worth of work in just one week, while accelerating results for clients from months to weeks or even days. Square 2 wants you to #LOVEYOURAGENCY!

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