Lead generation for B2B tech companies

Best practices

A practical guide to generating leads using account based marketing and inbound marketing tactics.

▽ Brightvision

Table of contents

Introduction

B2B marketing has changed dramatically over the past few years. The digital environment is constantly evolving while the B2B sales cycle is becoming more and more complex.

A successful and sustainable lead generation engine is what keeps your sales pipeline busy. It's hard at work even when you're not–and that's how it should be. But in order to build an effective lead generation strategy, you need to provide potential leads with an experience that will both capture and keep their attention.

Producing unparalleled results, account based marketing (ABM) and inbound marketing have grown to dominate the B2B marketing space.

We've created this guide to help you concentrate your resources in the right place and help you fill your sales pipeline with qualitative leads by combining account based marketing and inbound marketing.

Enjoy!

The lead gen team at Brightvision

"

Leads are the metric that, as marketers, we rely on.

Because leads mean money.

Kipp Bodnar

Chief Marketing Officer at HubSpot

2 What's lead generation?

In order to get a full grasp on lead generation strategies, we first need to understand what it is.

Let's start with the definitions.

What's lead generation?

Lead generation is about finding unique ways to attract potential customers to your business and create an interest in your product or service with the ultimate goal of increasing revenue and lowering cost of sales.

What's a lead?

There are several different stages of being a "lead." In its most basic form, <u>a lead is a person who has indicated some form of interest in your company's product or service</u>. This normally happens through actions such as downloading content, signing up for a newsletter or contacting your sales team directly.

▽ Brightvision

Information Qualified Lead

When a lead first converts by downloading your content, they're considered an IQL. They have provided their information and are now at the top of the funnel, or the "awareness stage."

At this stage, leads normally don't know your company or how you can help. Often, IQLs will simply download the content they came for but not progress further down the funnel. That's why these leads are often referred to as "subscribers."

Marketing Qualified Lead

What constitutes an MQL will vary from business to business. Normally, they're qualified based certain type of behavior, such as "Person x has downloaded two guides and read 5 blog posts."

You set a specific activity threshold that's unique to your business. Then, leads must reach this threshold before being classified as an MQL. MQLs are often considered to be in the middle of the funnel, or the "consideration stage."

Sales Qualified Lead

An SQL is someone who has expressed a genuine interest in your product or services by requesting to speak to your sales team or a representative at your company.

They're now at the bottom of the funnel, or the "decision stage." This means that the prospect is potentially ready to make a purchase. And it's that potential of a sale that makes them a sales qualified lead.

▽ Brightvision

3 What makes lead generation for B2B tech companies different?

A one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work for B2B tech companies. Complex products, long sales cycles and a large number of decision makers are factors that make it more challenging for B2B to generate leads and create opportunities that result in new customers.

Let's take a closer look at what sets B2B tech companies apart.

Complex products

Many B2B tech companies have complex and feature-heavy services that can be hard to explain to a prospective buyer. Whether you're selling an enterprise-level product or targeting smaller businesses, your product will most likely have a significant impact on the entire organization and require company wide buy-in.

Complex products often require a tailored content strategy that's highly educational and presented in a way that's easy to understand. This will help you reduce sales friction and move prospects further along in the buying journey. You want to look at content as a tool in itself that will help you solve problems.

The B2B content mindset

▶ Embrace teaching, not pitching.

▶ Deliver value with the goal to enable your readers.

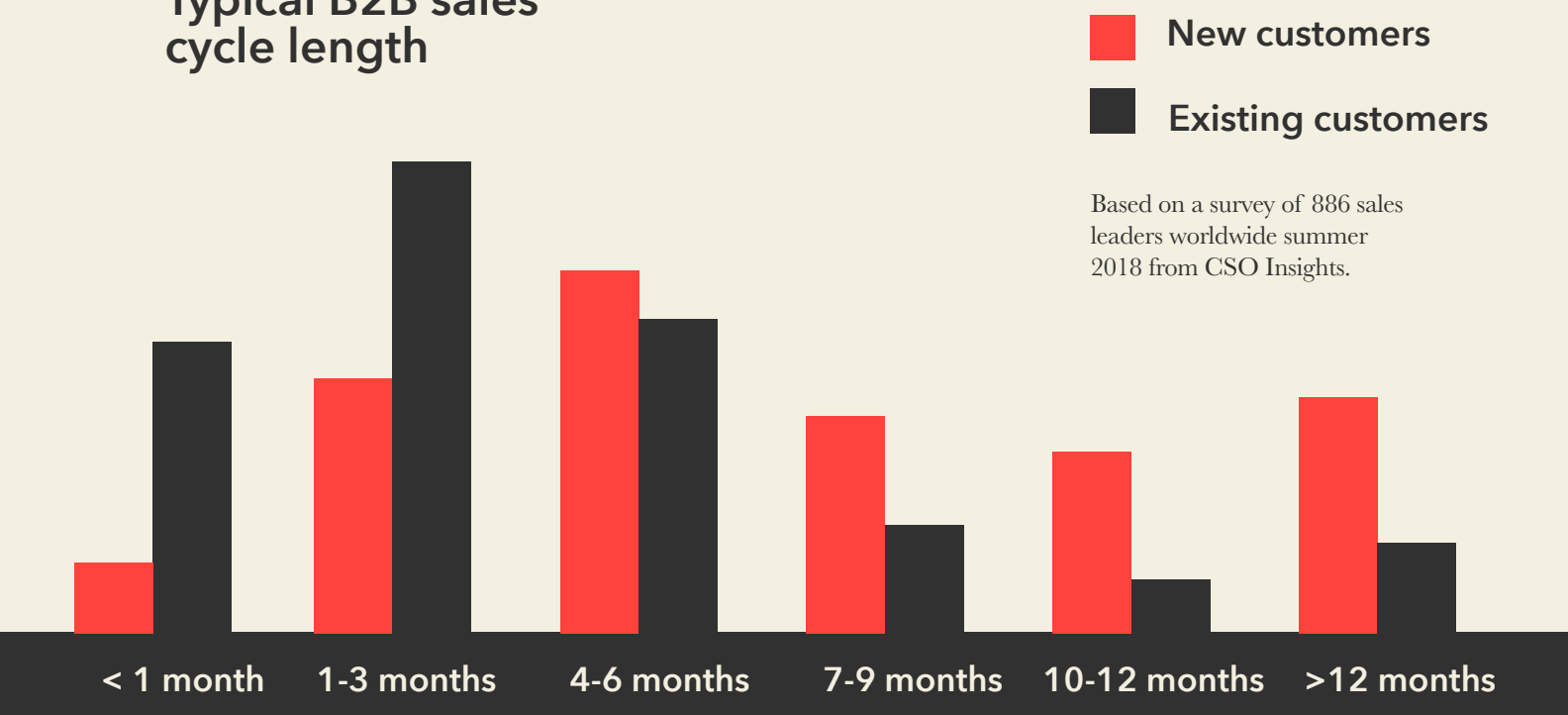▶ Become an educational resource to your target market.

Long sales cycles

The buyer's journey is never a straightforward one, especially when it comes to technology. Every company defines their sales cycle differently. For some companies, the sales cycle begins when they acquire a lead, for others it begins when they start working a lead. Regardless, a sales cycle refers to the process of creating and closing a deal.

B2B tech buyers are much more proactive in their buying behavior than they were in a pre-internet age. Today, 81% of buyers do their research before even thinking about talking to sales (CMI, 2017). This means you have to provide prospective buyers with the information they need to help solve their challenges and move them further along in the process.

Because the B2B buyer's journey can be a long and winding road, it requires a balance between building awareness and providing educational content. Depending on where they are in the buyer's journey, you need to optimally provide them with content to educate, nurture, and convert them.

Typical B2B sales cycle length

🟥 **New customers**

⬛ **Existing customers**

Based on a survey of 886 sales leaders worldwide summer 2018 from CSO Insights.

| < 1 month | 1-3 months | 4-6 months | 7-9 months | 10-12 months | >12 months |

Multiple decision makers

B2B purchase decisions are often of high strategic importance and high spend. That's why it involves significant amount of research, evaluation and consideration. In fact, <u>the average number of stakeholders involved in a B2B purchasing decision in 2016 was 6.8</u>.

A study from DemandBase (2018) further demonstrates the attitudes behind B2B purchase decisions.

How have your purchase processes changed over the past year?

45%	We spend more time researching processes.
45%	We use more sources to research and evaluate proceses.
44%	We have formal buying groups in place to review purchases.
44%	We conduct a more detailed ROI analysis before making a decision.
41%	Purchase decisions are often accelerated or put on hold based on changing priorities.

▽ Brightvision

B2B marketers have to take into account that the role of the CTO isn't what it used to be. They no longer make IT purchasing decisions on their own.

They have to assess the needs of several other departments. So instead of directing marketing messages toward a single person, marketers need to think about how they can get buy-in on a companywide level. This leads to an increased need for customized campaigns that targets every person that has an influence on the buying process.

Multiple people in multiple roles will be carrying out the research to make sure that the solution is a right fit for their organization. Your lead generation strategy and its supporting content need to reflect the B2B buyer's journey and cater to everyone involved.

4 Challenges & opportunities

Just like any other form of marketing tactic, lead generation comes with its very own set of challenges and opportunities. It operates in a fast paced environment where new trends come and go quickly. Figuring out what works for your business is much more important than jumping on the next big trend just because your competitors are doing it.

Let's look at the most common challenges and opportunities B2B marketers are faced with today.

Challenges

The challenges are plentiful in the B2B marketing world, industry challenges and unique company challenges all keep marketers on their toes.

Based on a survey of more than 1,000 companies, The State of B2B Lead Generation Report (2017) revealed that the top three challenges in B2B lead generation were:

Ensuring lead quality

The ultimate goal of a lead generation strategy is to convert a lead into a customer. In order to do so, the leads that are handed over to sales have to be of high quality. To ensure high quality leads a process needs to be in place that makes sure that leads that make it to sales are worth their investment.

Getting the right processes in place

Sales often get caught up in admin work when they need to focus on selling rather than streamlining manual, tedious, time-consuming tasks in the sales process. This is why implementing marketing automation systems and sales enablement tools is becoming a priority.

Tracking ROI from leads

The problem with tracking ROI starts with the tracking itself. Often, the data can be misleading and many people still use single-source attribution. Single source attribution means that you give all visits, conversions or sale credit to only one marketing channel, when the reality is often much more complex.

30%

28%

26%

▽ Brightvision

Opportunities

In an environment where you can expect each year to get more competitive than the last, there's a lot of things to be excited about when it comes to B2B sales.

With more knowledge and tools than ever before, B2B salespeople are ready to sell smarter and build stronger relationships with prospects and existing customers.

Adopting a customer-first mindset

Marketers are all too often focus on quantity instead of quality. But a pipeline full of low quality leads, doesn't lead to business growth. By putting the customer in focus and looking at your ideal customer profile and focusing on a product/customer fit, you will find the leads that are not only to convert but become a long-term customer.

Creating a personal sales experience

One-size fits all marketing is dead. People want to cultivate more meaningful relationships with companies. This is why account based marketing is such a successful strategy for B2B companies. By working on an account level and nurturing individual relationships, you're likely to find customers that are a better fit for your company.

Empowering the prospect

As marketers, it's our job to anticipate the buyer's journey and accommodate the needs of the prospect. By offering expertise, advice and providing prospects with educational content we'll help them feel informed and empowered throughout the process. Education should be at the very core of the sales experiencerth.

▽ Brightvision

5 Lead generation best practices

The B2B industry and B2B lead generation processes are constantly going through changes. But while trends come and go, the fundamental components of building a sustainable sales pipeline using lead generation tactics will never change.

Let's start with the most important part of any marketing strategy– who's your buyer?

"

The company who understand their customers best, wins.

Katie Martell
CMO and cofounder at Cintell

5.1 Developing your B2B buyer personas

A successful lead generation campaign, regardless of marketing strategy, starts with defining your potential buyer. The reason for defining your buyer personas is simple: it helps you market and sell to them better. The effects of creating B2B buyer personas can be significant.

What's a buyer persona?

A buyer persona is fictional character used to humanize and understand a particular audience segment.

71%
of companies who exceed revenue and lead goals have documented buyer personas.

The difference between a B2C and a B2B buyer persona

Defining your buyer personas isn't an easy task. It requires a lot of time and research. Your buyer personas aren't stagnant, just like your business grows and evolves–so do your buyer personas. That's why they need to be updated and maintained over time.

Let's look at the differences between a B2C and a B2B buyer persona.

B2B

Collective decisions as a company, weighing out the pros and cons of the available solutions

Rely on value-driven, educational content to help make decisions

Need to establish trust and credibility before purchase

No impulse purchases

B2B

Purchases are typically based on an individual decision

Purchases are more emotive, and less logical

Make purchases based on their own perceptions, wants and needs

Purchases can be impulsive

▽ Brightvision

Your 6-step process to creating a B2B buyer persona

In order to maximize your marketing reach and create successful lead generation strategies, you have to get to know your potential customers beyond just demographics.

We've put together a six-step process to get you started.

1 Role in the buying process

Who has the most influencing and purchasing power? This often comes down to C-level roles at bigger companies, but you also need to take into account the people that will influence that decision.

Ask this

What job titles do they have?
What are their daily responsibilities?
Who do they report to?
Who reports to them?
What's their career background and career path?

2 Fears and challenges

By identifying your buyer persona's fears and challenges you can develop more targeted messaging. Essentially, you want to find out what keeps them up at night.

Ask this

What's a daily cause of stress for them at work?
What challenges does your product help eliminate?
Why would they not want to buy your product?
What important problem does your product solve for them?

3 Drivers and motivators

To understand your buyer persona, we need to know what motivates them as well as the company.

Ask this

What is the company or person trying to achieve?
Could our product help this person perform better in their job?
Does our product help them get to where they want to go?

4 Organizational goals and priorities

Understanding overall company goals and how your product can help the company reach those goals is essential in the buying process.

Ask this

What are their individual and team goals?
How are goals measured?
What targets do they need to meet?
What problems are they trying to solve?

5 Problems and issues

Your product or solution has to actually solve a problem that they have. This is the key factor that will drive the buying process forward.

Ask this

How are they currently doing business?
What systems do they have in place?
Which of our competitors are they using?
How can we make their job easier?

6   Online behavior

If you plan on launching a digital inbound campaign you need to know where your buyer personas spend time in order to reach them and target them correctly.

Ask this

- What type of content does your buyer search for?
- How does your buyer persona consume content?
- Where do they spend time online?

How many buyer personas should you create?

As a general rule, you should consider creating between three and five personas for your B2B company.

What your buyer persona could look like

**Lead generation Lara
Lead generation manager**

Lara is tasked with building a revenue-focused lead generation engine fueled by content and data

Buzzwords

Micro conversions
Customer journey
ABM & Predictive
Full funnel marketing
Personalization
No silos

Top 3 goals

- Delive a scalable and predictable pipeline
- Attribute revenue to specific funnels
- Deliver qualitative leads that drive ROI

Top 3 challenges

- Manage workflows and data sources
- Integrate sales and marketing activities
- Too much admin work

Purchase triggers

- Frustrated team member
- Lack of visibility
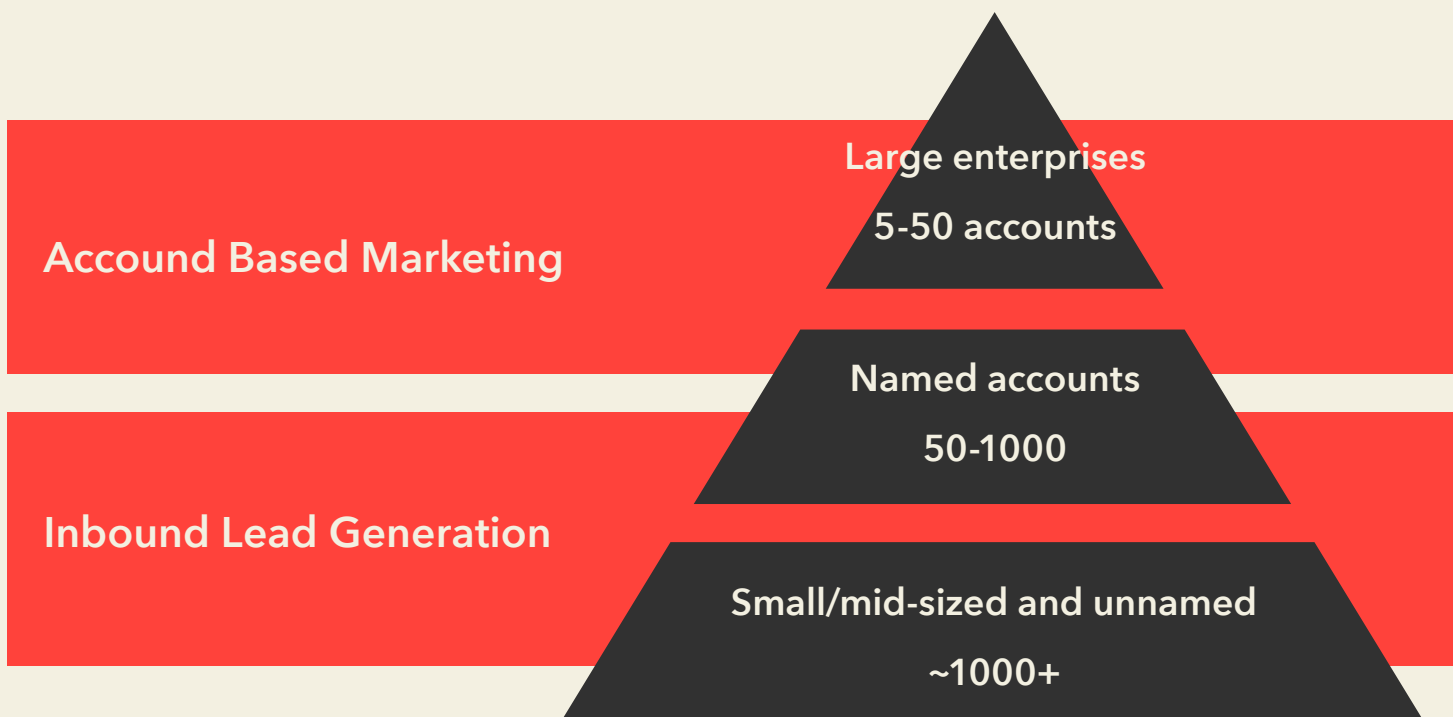- Integrating and accessing the right data

Questions & objections

- We don't have the budget
- We don't have the resources
- Now is just not a good time

5.2 Choosing your lead generation strategy

You might already have an existing lead generation strategy in place or you might be thinking about setting up your first lead generation strategy.

Regardless of your situation, your choice of lead generation strategy should be based on your existing business challenges.

Accound Based Marketing

Inbound Lead Generation

Large enterprises
5-50 accounts

Named accounts
50-1000

Small/mid-sized and unnamed
~1000+

Improve existing lead generation strategy

If you have an existing lead generation strategy in place, you need to identify the areas of weakness in that strategy.

Those weaknesses can be one or several of the following:

▶ Wrong buyer personas

▶ Inability to reach decision makers

▶ Poor lead quality (database, lists)

▶ Poor content quality

▶ Wrong channels

▶ Wrong/irrelevant message

▶ Ineffective pipeline processes

How do you identify weaknesses in your lead generation strategy?

The easiest way to do this is to map out and visualize your lead generation strategy into a pipeline to discover where it's falling short.

Identify a new lead generation strategy

If you're just getting started with your lead generation efforts, the first thing to do is to identify which lead generation strategy is the best fit for your company.

In order to to so, you'll need to take two actions:

▶ Define your targets.

▶ Identify your challenges.

Your targets are going to be unique depending on your company, its maturity and the market it operates in. But it's important that your targets are specific and quantified. Only once your targets have been identified can you anticipate the challenges they pose and how to best tackle them.

Once you've identified your challenges, it's time to choose your lead generation strategy. There's two primary lead generation approaches: inbound and outbound.

Let's take a look at the differences.

Inbound vs. Outbound

Lead generation – online or offline – refers to a wide range of tactics, campaigns, and strategies depending on the methods through which you choose to capture leads.

Inbound lead generation

means that you earn your prospects' attention organically.

Example: They download a piece of content because it's relevant to their business.

Outbound lead generation

means that you initiate contact by reaching out to people with a high probability to buy your services.

Example: You email them with an offer that's relevant to their business.

Inbound tends to focus on a high volume of leads while outbound focuses more on high quality of leads.

The above tactics may be fundamentally different, but the goal is the same: Generate business growth. At the end of the day, whether your leads find you or you find them is irrelevant as long as you provide value.

The differences between inbound and outbound

Inbound

Outbound

Who initiates contact?

The potential customer

The business

Who chooses the medium of first interaction?

The potential customer

The business

What are the most common methods?

Content SEO, Social media

Email outreach, cold calling, direct mail

How long does a campaign last?

Your inbound campaign lives as long as your content does.

When the sales rep stops acticities

What's the cost?

High volume of leads and low cost

High quality of leads and high cost

"

Account based marketing is simply instead of fishing with nets, we're fishing with spears.

You identify exactly the prospects you want to do business with and then you market very precisely and narrowly to them directly.

Matt Heinz

President at Heinz Marketing

6 Account based marketing

Account based marketing (ABM) is not a new concept. It's a lead generation strategy that's been used by B2B companies for decades.

In recent years it's become increasingly popular as both an alternative and a complement to inbound marketing when a need for better targeting and high-quality leads emerged.

Let's take a closer look at what account based marketing is and how it's bringing in the big fish.

What's account based marketing?

The idea behind account based marketing can be spun in many ways, and you'll see many wordy definitions around the web. However, this is how ITSMA, the organization that first coined the term in 2004, defines account based marketing:

"Account-based marketing is a form of marketing that uses highly targeted, personalized campaigns to win over particular accounts. Rather than relying on blanket campaigns that are meant to appeal to an entire market, ABM treats 'individual accounts as markets in their own right."

What it simply means is that instead of ending with a handful of target companies (after filtering out all the non-qualified leads) that's a good fit for your company, ABM starts with target companies.

The ABM funnel

When we talk about the sales process, we often talk about it in terms of a funnel. This funnel is what we use to make sense of the buyer's journey to know how and when to target different stages.

The ABM funnel, however, looks very different from the traditional sales funnel we're used to seeing. In fact, it's traditional marketing in reverse.

Identify

Identify the target accounts that meet the criteria of your ICP.

Expand

Populate those accounts with relevant information.

Engage

Execute your multi-channel marketing plan.

Advocate

Turn your best customers into brand advocates.

Measure

Measure the success of your ABM against your KPIs.

8 steps to getting started with ABM

Account based marketing consists of eight key stages. Let's take a closer look at each stage.

1. Define your goals

Like any other successful marketing strategy, ABM starts with defining your goals. What do you want to achieve with your ABM campaign? These goals will inform your ABM strategy and make sure that your team is aligned throughout the lifetime of the campaign.

Your ABM goals need to be tangible and realistic:

▶ Upsell to existing customer base

▶ Expand into a new market segment

▶ Increase market share in an existing segment

▶ Increase company revenue by targeting specific accounts

If you're just getting started with ABM, focusing on one goal is a good place to start. Once you feel that your workflow and processes are in place, you can expand your goals.

2. Choose your ABM strategy

There are four main approaches to ABM. Based on these you can choose to target between 1-1000 accounts. Your choice of strategy will depend on your goals, but also on resources available.

1:1 ABM
Focusing on 1-10 high-value accounts with hyper-personalized messaging.

ABM Lite
Targeting 10-100 accounts that share similar characteristics.

Programmatic ABM
Focusing on 100-1000 accounts using targeted ads for increased reach.

Bolt-On ABM
Supplementing lead-based nurturing with account-based advertising to expand reach to include an entire account.

If you're just getting started with ABM, <u>start small and scale up.</u> You need to learn how to crawl before you can run.

While 1:1 ABM is the most resource intensive way to do ABM, it's a great approach for beginners to learn the ropes and keep focused.

3. Assign roles

Once your goals have been defined and you've chosen your ABM approach, it's time to assemble your team and assign roles.

If you're just getting started you can make do with a small team, but once your goals get bigger, your team will have to scale along with those goals.

Your ideal ABM team setup:

▶ Sales Development Reps (SDRs)

▶ Sales Database Administrator

▶ Marketing Operations Administrator

▶ Content Manager

▶ Graphic Designer

▶ Account Executives

▶ Sales Leader

▶ Customer Success Managers

Your initial ABM team doesn't require the above setup. A dedicated SDR assisted by digital producer that manages copy, content and ads will be enough to get an ABM pilot off the ground.

4. Select your technology

Technology is an integral part of your ABM strategy. Without it, implementing ABM campaigns at scale would be impossible.

ABM technology allows you to:

- Target individuals and entire accounts
- Choose the best channels for your contacts and accounts
- Engage contacts on their terms
- Create customized content and provide context
- Personalize your approach based on personas and sales stage

The ABM technology toolstack includes:

▶ **ABM tools** such as Infer, Engagio and Triblio

▶ **A CRM** such as Salesforce, HubSpot, SharpSpring

▶ **A marketing automation system (MA)** such as Marketo, Customer.io, Eloqua

▶ **Performance tools** such as HotJar, Looker, Formisio

▶ **Analytics platforms** such as Google Analytics, Heap Analytics, KissMetrics

▽ Brightvision

Note that ABM is a business strategy, not a technology category in itself. There's plenty of tools and software that can be used for your ABM needs. When you're ready to scale, you will likely want to invest in more than one solution to see what works best for your team.

You can set up a successful ABM pilot campaign with very little technology, a phone and email account will do.

Once you're ready to scale your ABM efforts, the right tools will be imperative to your success.

5. Identify target accounts

Identifying your target accounts is about finding the best-fit accounts that will help you reach the goals you set in step one. The number of accounts needed is based on the approach you selected in step two.

Identifying and choosing your target accounts starts with identifying what your ideal client profile (ICP) looks like

Identifying your ideal client profile (ICP)

Identifying your ICP starts with research. Look at data from your prospects, current clients and past clients. Similar to creating your buyer persona, you will create a fictional character who represents your best client. But in this case, the information and data needs to be based in reality.

In simple terms, your ICP is someone who will get the most value possible from your product or service, with the highest possible profit margins for your company.

Identifying target accounts
is a 3-step process:

1

Identify your Ideal Client Profile (ICP)
Create a realistic ICP that's based on real data.

2

Identify target accounts
Identify the target accounts that meet the criteria of your ICP.

3

Prioritize target accounts
Determine which accounts to go after based on potential and size of campaign.

This process is about focusing your sales and marketing resources and finding a relatively small number of accounts that have the highest revenue potential for your company.

▽ Brightvision

6. Populate your accounts

Once your list with target accounts is ready, it's time to populate those accounts with relevant information.

▶ Who are the decision-makers?

▶ What do you need to know about them?

▶ How can you best reach them?

**The more information you have,
the better you can target your accounts.**

Since GDPR came into force in May 2018, this work can no longer be done simply through purchasing lists and information. This part of the process now has to be carried out by a Sales Development Representative (SDR) manually.

7. Engage contacts

When it's time to engage with your accounts, your marketing automation system and CRM tool will be crucial to your success. You can deploy your account based marketing campaigns using a variety of tactics such as content marketing, events, personalized emails, and phone calls.

Channels to consider include:

▶ Email

▶ Direct mail

▶ Social media

▶ Website

▶ Blog

▶ Display ads

▶ Search engine ads

▶ In-person events

▶ Webinars and virtual events

▽ Brightvision

Here's what an ABM campaign could look like:

Hyper-targeted advertising

Personalized content

Personalized video email

Direct mail

Sales call

Product demo

Quote

Prioritize channels based on what's historically worked in previous campaigns. If it's your first campaign, look at industry benchmarks and experiment with the channels that works best for your accounts.

8. Measure your campaigns

As with any marketing strategy, you'll need to measure, evaluate and optimize your campaigns in order to maximize results. ABM strategies are agile, they are meant to be optimized continuously throughout the campaign period.

Evaluate your campaigns using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data.

▶ Are we able to reach the accounts on our target list?

▶ Is the messaging working?

▶ How are the ads performing?

▶ What's the quality of the sales calls?

▶ What can marketing and sales do to reach goals?

Your key performance indicators (KPIs) will include:

▶ Marketing Qualified Accounts

▶ Engagement rates

▶ Reach within an account

It's important to understand that ABM efforts take time. If you don't see any results in the first months, it doesn't necessarily mean you're doing something wrong, or that certain accounts should be taken off your target list.

You often need to stick with your strategies for a longer period of time to see results, so don't let your SDRs get discouraged.

"

ABM aspires to be 'zero-waste' marketing. It's a model that Targets only the companies and contacts that are likely to buy your product and that sales has pre-committed to try to close.

Joe Chernov
VP of Marketing at InsightSquared

The benefits of ABM

Personalized approach
Account based marketing doesn't follow a generic approach.
It creates personalized messaging for target accounts and
tailors all marketing assets of their
campaign to the customer's specific needs.

Shorter sales cycles
Major purchase decisions involve multiple stakeholders
and this often slows down the sales process. In account based
marketing, the length of the cycle is shortened as
all prospects are nurtured simultaneously.

Clearer ROI
Account based marketing is precise and measurable, helping
you better understand what's working and what's not. That's
why account-based marketing is considered to deliver higher
returns than any other marketing approach.

Less wasted resources
Resources are strategically allocated to a small number
of accounts that are most likely to close sales. Thismeans up
resources that would previously have been wasted.

▽ Brightvision

The future of ABM

B2B companies have every reason to be excited about account based marketing. As ABM is fostering high-performance sales cultures and more B2B companies are realizing the benefits, we will see ABM programs both mature and expand.

22

Increases closed opportunities
22% of respondents reported that their closed opportunities rate increased by over 50%.

Increases average deal size
91% of respondents say deal size is larger and 1 in 4 (25%) say it is over 50% larger.

91

56

Impact on pipeline and revenue
56% of respondents stated that pipeline is greater or significantly greater than last year.

budgets toward ABM is accelerating
18% of respondents are allocating over 50% of their marketing budget to ABM.

18

▽ Brightvision

"

If marketers aren't creating quality content that is, above all, useful, the effectiveness of their inbound efforts will be curtailed.

Content is the soil in which Inbound success is grown.

JAY BAER

Founder at Convince & Convert

7 Inbound marketing

The term inbound was coined by HubSpot's Co-founder and CEO Brian Halligan back in 2005. It emerged as a response to the changing behaviors and decision patterns of B2B buyers. But as a marketing strategy, it didn't really take off until 2012 when businesses started to realize the potential and importance of content. Today, businesses that use inbound marketing consistently report an average cost per lead drop by 80% after 5 months (Forrester, 2018).

Let's take a closer look at what inbound marketing is and how it can fill your sales funnel.

What's inbound marketing?

When the phrase "inbound marketing" first was coined, it didn't immediately gain traction in the B2B marketing community. However, HubSpot, the company behind the new methodology stood firm in its belief. This is how they still define inbound marketing today:

> Inbound marketing is a holistic, data-driven approach to marketing that attracts individuals to your brand and converts them into lasting customers.

The main difference between inbound marketing and other marketing tactics is that the lead is the person that initiates communication with your business, not the other way around. Companies have gone from trying to find customers, to being found by customers. Rather than chasing after prospects, you make potential customers come to you by providing them with educational and relevant content that helps them in the buyer's journey.

The 3 stages of inbound marketing

Inbound marketing traditionally consists of three stages: attract, engage and delight. These stages help us focus and determine how to attract leads, create lasting relationships and keep prospects and customers coming back for more.

1 **Attract**

Create relevant and educational content that your prospects need.

2 **Engage**

Start a conversation and personalize their experience using email.

3 **Delight**

Deliver relevant and helpful content to your prospects when they need it.

The inbound marketing funnel

Sales and marketing love funnels. Funnels help us visualize the buyer's journey and identify what prospects need at various stages of that journey.

Let's take a look at what the inbound funnel looks like and what type of content fits in each part of the funnel.

Awareness stage
Top-of-the-funnel (TOFU)

At this stage of the journey the prospect is looking for answers or options to help resolve a specific problem.

Deliver problem-centric content such as eBooks, guides and blog posts in order to educate the prospect around the problem.

Consideration stage
Middle-of-the-funnel (MOFU)

At this stage of the journey the prospect is considering a specific solution and have come to you for advice.

Deliver solution-centric content such as live demos, free trials, fact sheets to introduce the prospect to your service as a potential solution.

Decision stage
Bottom-of-the-funnel (BOFU)

At this stage of the journey the prospect is ready to choose a solution.

Deliver product-centric content such as product webinars, case studies, FAQ articles and consultations to help the prospect make a decision.

▽ Brightvision

6 steps to getting started with inbound marketing

We've listed six key stages that will help you deploy a successful inbound marketing campaign and generate new leads.

1. Define your goals

Just like ABM, your inbound strategy starts with defining your goals. <u>What do you want to achieve with your inbound campaign?</u> These goals will inform your inbound strategy and make sure that your marketing team is aligned throughout the lifetime of the campaign.

Your inbound goals need to be tangible and realistic:

▶ Increase website traffic by 15%

▶ Increase blog traffic by 35%

▶ 1,500 eBook downloads by end of month

▶ 5,000 new subscribers to email newsletter

▶ 8,000 TOFU leads by end of month

If you're just getting started with inbound marketing, focusing on one goal is a good place to start. Once you feel that your workflow and processes are in place, you can expand your goals.

2. Identify the buyer's journey

The buyer's journey is split into three stages: awareness, consideration and decision. Inbound marketing uses relevant content that caters to prospects throughout each stage of the buyer's journey.

You need to understand what your prospects need at each stage of the journey in order to move them closer to a purchase.

Awareness

Your prospects are experiencing a particular business challenge and want to solve a problem. With this in mind, you create top of the funnel, educational material such as eBooks, how-to guides, blogs, and whitepapers.

Consideration

Your prospects know what their business pain is and want to assess options available. At this point, you create middle of the funnel content such as webinars, expert guides, podcasts and videos.

Decision

Your prospects are fully aware of the options available to them and are trying to decide on the best possible solution. At this point, you use bottom of the funnel content such as case studies, demos and free trials.
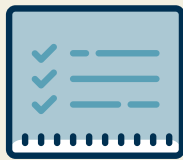
▽ Brightvision

3. Develop educational content

Content makes up the very core of inbound marketing. It's what attracts leads in the first place, keeps them coming back to you and hopefully converts them to customers.

Based on the anticipated buyer's journey, you should have a good idea of what types of content you need to produce. This includes:
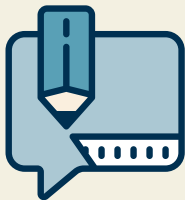
Blog posts

Checklists

Ebooks
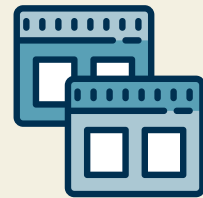
Infographics

How-to guides

Microsites

Podcast

Templates

Trend reports

Videos

Webinars

White papers

▽ Brightvision

4. Promote your content

There's two ways of promoting your content: ***organic*** and ***paid.***
Prospects can discover your content organically through word of mouth
or by using search engines. You can also choose to promote your content
using platforms such as Google Ads and LinkedIn.

Organic

Optimize all your web pages and blog posts
based on long tail keywords to rank highly on
search engine results pages (SERP).

Developing a keyword strategy is a complex
and time consuming process which needs to be
set before the production process begins.

Paid

Utilize display advertising and social media
advertising to reach your target audience in
desired contexts and locations.

Promotion shouldn't be an afterthought.
Work on your promotional strategy alongside
content development.

5. Automate your inbound efforts

In recent years, marketing automation has become the norm. If implemented correctly, the lead nurturing process requires very little manual attention from the marketing team.

Marketing automation is simply the process for which you use technology to automate marketing tasks that will nurture your eads and drive them further down the funnel.

For example, once a prospect has downloaded a piece of content, they're added to your CRM and an email workflow is triggered to send them more content based on their behavior.

Popular marketing automation systems include:

▶ ActiveCampaign

▶ HubSpot

▶ Marketo

▶ Pardot

▶ SharpSpring

The point of marketing automation is to save time and resources and help your team understand and qualify leads as you guide them along in the buyer's journey.

6. Measure your campaigns

As with any marketing strategy, you'll need to measure, evaluate and optimize your inbound campaigns in order to maximize results. Evaluate your campaigns using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data.

You'll want to look at the following:

▶ Website traffic

▶ Blog traffic

▶ Bounce rates

▶ Search engine ranking

▶ Visitor-to-lead conversion

▶ Content downloads

▶ Ad spend

▶ CTR on ads

▶ Cost-per-lead (CTL)

The benefits of inbound marketing

Educates prospects

Inbound marketing and content is about educating your prospects and helping them make more informed decisions during their buying process. This will results in high-quality leads and higher conversion rates.

Increases trust and credibility

Inbound marketing operates based on the buyer's terms and lets them consume content at a time that's convenient for them. This will help you gain their trust and place your business top-of-mind when the time comes to make a purchase.

Low cost per acquisition

Inbound marketing often benefits from a high volume of leads and thereby a lower cost per acquisition for those leads. Inbound marketing costs 62% less per lead than traditional outbound marketing channels. Do keep in mind that the average cost per lead varies by industry.

Generates high volume leads

The amount of leads you can generate through inbound marketing is only limited by the amount of content you can produce and the promotional efforts you can put behind said content. This results in a database full of leads that's ready to enter your nurturing workflow.

The future of inbound

Inbound marketing is the primary marketing strategy for many B2B companies globally. With emerging technologies and marketers investing more in content and increasing their inbound marketing budgets, this is a strategy that will keep growing.

55%

Blogging will be a high priority
55% of marketers say blog content is their top inbound marketing priority.

Marketers will continue to focus on LinkedIn
93% of marketers say LinkedIn is still the favorite network.

93%

46%

Teams will have higher budgets
46% of inbound teams have higher budgets than previous year.

Automation will be a high priority
50% of marketers say automating their inbound marketing efforts is their top priority.

50%

▽ Brightvision
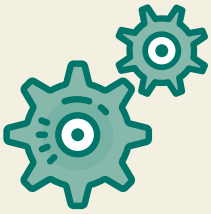
8 Your lead generation toolstack

Techonology is the facilitator that drives a successful lead generation campaign. To get the most out of your lead generation efforts you need a tool stack that fits your workflow.

We've put together the key tools to help you run performance-driven lead generation campaigns and never lose sight of your objectives.

Marketing automation tools

Marketing automation tools help you manage all your marketing needs. Automate all your repetitive marketing tasks in one place using these B2B favorites.

Hubspot is an all-in-one solution for marketing automation and CRM. Manage contacts, create landing pages, launch automated email campaigns, track website visitors, and stay on top of how your lead generation campaigns are performing.

SharpSpring is an all-in-one solution that integrates with the most popular CRM platforms. SharpSpring allows you to manage lead data across multiple platforms and provides you with custom deal stages and a useful pipeline overview.

Marketo is an all-in-one solution that helps businesses form relationships with prospective customers before they talk to sales reps. It helps you attract leads via inbound and outbound marketing, and improve the quality of the leads you get.

Pardot is a marketing automation tool created by Salesforce. It helps you create more leads, build your pipeline. You can also create landing pages, conduct A/B testing and integrate Google Adwords, create email campaigns, and set up email automation.

▽ Brightvision

Content tools

Content is the lifeblood of lead generation, especially when it comes to inbound marketing. In order to optimize your content and have an agile approach you need the right tools.

Clickfunnels is a sales funnel and landing page builder all-in-one solution. With the tool, you can select from a variety of different sales funnels, and build the process out from there.

CoSchedule is a marketing calendar tool and that unifies your team's workflow by offering an editorial calendar, headline analyzer and scheduling tools for all your distribution needs.

Kapost facilitates users to create and distribute content to increase traffic, leads and revenue. It also integrates with most marketing automation tools and has support for all content types.

Unbounce is a tool used to create custom landing pages. The platform features a drag-and-drop landing page builder as well as many pre-built templates. Opt-in popups and A/B testing are also available.

▽ Brightvision

Analytics tools

Without the right tracking and measurement in place, you won't know if you lead generation efforts are working. Keep your eyes on everything from traffic to conversions with these tools.

Google Analytics allows you to track traffic, behavior and demographic across all your websites. Google Analytics integrates with Google AdWords to help you analyze your campaign with deeper data, and Google Tag Manager lets you create better tracking.

Heap lets you automatically track any action taken by your website visitors. You can manually select the events and track individual user's behavior to create funnels. Everything is available for preview in your dashboard.

Hotjar is heat map tool that helps you understand how your website visitors are interacting with your website, their scrolling behavior, and where they click on. It helps you understand where conversions happen or don't happen so that you can optimize your funnels.

KissMetrics helps you understand how customers interact with your website or product to help your improve engagement and conversion rates. It also enables you to create A/B tests to see how updates to your website or product can affect your results.

▽ Brightvision

Advertising tools

Paid advertising is a key component of many lead generation campaigns. By using hyper-targeted campaigns B2B marketers drive traffic to landing pages and content.

Ad form is a full stack ad-tech platform for all your advertising needs. AdForm handles everything from display and social ads, ot programmatic and native advertising. It includes automation and insights so you can create performance driven campaigns.

Google Ads lets you put ads in front of your prospects when they search for related terms. Google AdWord campaigns benefit from being both timely and relevant as they appear in the search results. Setting up Google campaigns is free and you only pay when someone clicks.

LinkedIn Ads lets you create ads and sponsored content that directly reaches your desired audience with detailed targeting. It allows you to use persona based targeting, rich demographic data and interest filters to target your audiences with precision.

Facebook BUSINESS offers campaign-level objectives and an audience creation tool to help you reach decision-makers out of the office hours. Use their Lead Generation specific ads to collect leads directly in Facebook without asking them to go to an external website.

▽ Brightvision

Sales enablement tools

Sales enablement tools such as outreach and prospecting tools help you connect and keep track of prospects and leads throughout the sales pipeline.

LinkedIn Sales Navigator is LinkedIn's own tool for finding prospects. The tool includes an advanced search filter for finding prospects and displays more detailed information for prospects at a glance, lead saving, lead recommendations, and InMail credits.

Sitecore delivers personalized customer experiences.. It works on both online as well as offline channels and is capable of meaningful interactions across them. It is a tool that can enable one-on-one engagements across the sales funnel.

Qualaroo is mostly known as a customer research tool, but it offers lead generation assistance too. If you're looking for both leads and customer feedback, this is a great two-for-one tool.

Drift helps you deliver a helpful and personal service to customers by having a conversation with them. This lead generation tool can help you wow your customers, and it includes a free level.

Remember, every tool has its advantages and strengths. It's up to you to choose the right tools for your lead generation needs and make informed data-driven decisions to run successful campaigns.

9 The sales development process

The sales development process is crucial in driving B2B business growth. Whether it's about lead mapping, lead qualification or picking up the phone and initiating a conversation with a prospect – sales development fuels growth. The sales development team has all the intel, insights and most importantly–direct access to leads.

In this chapter we take closer look at the sales development process, the role of SDRs and why phone dialogue is key to driving leads further down the funnel.

What's sales development?

A lot of marketing and lead generation efforts can be automated, and as a result you'll see leads pouring into the top of your funnel. But then what happens? <u>How do you move them further down the pipeline?</u>

While automation is great tool, it can never completely replace the human touch in the lead qualification process. This is where sales development comes into the picture.

Sales development is the function that sits between marketing and sales and focuses entirely on the front end of the sales cycle. This is one of the most important processes a business can build to create a sustainable growth model.

The sales development team is a phone-based team consisting of Sales Development Representatives (SDRs). Their job is to identify, engage, and qualify leads to ensure that you don't waste resources on the wrong people.

▽ Brightvision

Modern day telemarketing

Telemarketing has come a long way since its inception in the late 70s. Back then, telemarketing relied on little to no strategy and focus was on picking up the phone to make as many calls as possible. During these calls, salespeople often deployed a standardized script in hopes of closing a deal.

Today, telemarketing looks very different.

The days of standardized scripts and pushy salespeople are long gone.

Today, SDRs focus on nurturing relationships and having qualitative dialogues with prospects.

SDRs are brought in to the sales development process with one job: start the conversation with leads and take them through the early stages of the pipeline using helpful and educational content that's relevant to them and their business.

Let's talk more about the role and responsibilities of an SDR.

What's an SDR and what exactly do they do?

Sales development representatives (SDRs) are the key players in your sales development process. Their job is to remove bad leads from the pipeline, move good leads further down the funnel and turn warm leads into hot leads before they are handed over to sales.

Marketo accurately defines the role as "passing the baton between marketing and sales." Needless to say, SDRs play a crucial role in the sales and marketing of an organization.

Let's take a closer look at what it is they actually do.

Responsibilities of the SDR include:

▶ Outbound calls to Ideal Client Profiles (ICPs)

▶ Lead qualification - Follow up and qualify inbound leads

▶ Lead nurturing - Follow up on previous conversations

SDRs identify if leads are ready to be handed over to sales or if they have no intention of buying at all. If the lead shows no interest as this stage, they are passed back to marketing for nurturing. If a lead shows no interest but still has a lot of potential, SDRs might take ownership and create a personalized nurturing journey to increase chances of conversion, rather than handing them back to marketing.

The autonomy of a multi-touch campaign

When prospecting you can no longer rely on a single channel. Prospecting today requires a multi-channel approach to drive growth. First of all, you have to look at prospecting as an integrated campaign that requires various touchpoints to get through to the prospect.

Today, phone, email, and social, are the main channels, but direct mail and personalized videos are on the rise.

Here's what a multi-touch campaign could look like:

Conversion	Qualify	Social outreach	Follow up

Personalized video email	Voice mail	Last attempt

Summary: where to invest in 2020

With constant innovations and an unstoppable technological evolution, the world of B2B marketing can sometimes be overwhelming. But the future of B2B marketing is nothing but exciting.

Here's where to invest in 2019 to get the most out of your ABM and inbound strategies:

▶ Hire experienced SDRs that specialize in tech

▶ Do customer research to craft truly tailored messaging

▶ Produce premium content to grow your top-of-funnel

▶ Invest in technology to scale your lead generation efforts

▶ Foster a data-driven sales and marketing culture

Highly relevant content and tailored messaging will be more important than ever. It's the B2B marketer's job to cater to the need of the potential buyer and deliver a more personalized experience throughout the buying process.

Those that do, will not only reap the rewards in terms of lead volume and high quality leads, but they will also experience a ROI that truly has an impact on their bottom line and generates sustainable growth.

References

Rain Group - Top 10 Lead Generation Challenges

Digital Doughnut - The State of B2B Lead Generation

Content Marketing Institute - How Content Influences the Purchasing Process

HubSpot Research - Buyers Speak Out: How Sales Needs To Evolve

Redwell B2B - Content Marketing For B2B Complex Sales

Directive Consulting - Different Stages of the B2B Sales Cycle

BizzBee Solutions - 3 Of The Most Revealing B2B Lead Generation Industry Facts

Stratabeat - The Top Lead Generation Trends of 2019

Kinsta - B2B Lead Generation – 11 Tips and Strategies for 2019

Process Street - 22 B2B Sales Management Statistics, and the Processes You Need to Survive

Referral SaaSquatch - How to Develop Rockstar B2B Buyer Personas

Cintell - Understanding B2B Buyers

HubSpot - Account-Based Marketing vs. Inbound Marketing

Drift - Account-Based Marketing (ABM): A Complete Guide

SiriusDecisions - 2017 State of ABM Study Findings

Blend - Introduction to B2B Inbound Marketing

The B2B Marketing Lab - 12 Steps to Planning Your First Inbound Marketing Campaign

Impulse Creative - Inbound Marketing Sales Funnel

Digital22 - How Marketing Automation is Key to Inbound Marketing

HubSpot Research - State of Inbound 2018

Weidert - 15 Statistics That Make the Case for Inbound Marketing

HubSpot - 3 Steps to Discovering the 6.8 Stakeholders and Winning More Customers

DemandBase - 2018 B2B Buyers Survey Report

Marketo - The Definitive Guide to Sales Lead Qualification and Sales Development

Topo - The Age of Multi-Channel Prospecting: Despite The Hype, Nothing Is "Dead"

LeadFeeder - 41 Top Lead Generation Tools of 2019

▽ Brightvision

Do you want to get started with Inbound or ABM?

Get in touch to talk about your lead generation needs.

 hello@brightvision.com

 +46 (0) 31 711 63 20

brightvision.com