

# Raising the Game with ABM: 2018 ABM Benchmark Study

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# Introduction

Account-Based Marketing (ABM) is fast becoming business as usual for B2B marketing organizations. Started as a key account-focused approach by a handful of B2B pioneers in the early 2000s, ABM is now maturing into a mainstream strategy that companies are using both to win new accounts and grow existing clients of all types and sizes.

For companies now investing in ABM, programs are now taking a substantial share of marketing budgets and ABM principles are beginning to influence the way B2B firms go to market overall.

This report, based on both survey data and qualitative interviews with ABM leaders, highlights the continued investment in ABM, with ABM-ers reporting their programs now accounting for 28% of the entire marketing budget. Driving that investment is the value companies are receiving from their programs, including substantially greater ROI as well as higher levels of customer success, advocacy, and innovation.

More generally, the report provides an essential review of the current state of play with ABM, with data and insight on such issues as account coverage, sales collaboration, essential skills, tools and technology, campaign tactics, program challenges, metrics, and business benefits.

In conducting the research, ITSMA and the ABM Leadership Alliance also focused on the three types of ABM that have emerged in recent years: One-to-One, One-to-Few, and One-to-Many.

We've seen a marked increase in the number of companies adopting all three types this year, underlining the increasing popularity of blended ABM strategies that allow ABM-ers to scale their programs and optimizing their investment to achieve key business outcomes such as more engaged clients, larger pipelines, better win rates, and increased revenues.

Perhaps the best news of all? Amid both the hype and the very real results, we're still in early days for ABM and have just begun to tap the full potential of this essential strategy.

Please join the conversation by adding your questions, comments, and experiences to the mix. We look forward to talking soon!

- Bev Burgess, SVP and ABM Practice Lead, ITSMA
- Julie Schwartz, SVP, Research and Thought Leadership, ITSMA
- Rob Leavitt, SVP, ITSMA

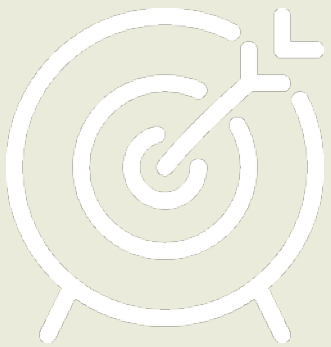
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# ABM Definition

Treating individual accounts as markets in their own right



As ABM has taken off in recent years, so too have the number of definitions. Even the sponsors of this research have used different definitions in the past.

For the purpose of this report, and with the hope of helping marketers rally around a common definition, we agree on the following:

Account-based marketing (ABM) is a strategic approach to designing and executing highly-targeted, personalized marketing programs and initiatives to drive business growth and impact with specific, named accounts.

## Core principles for ABM include:

- Strategic focus on improving business reputation, relationships, and revenue  
(if it's just about lead gen, it's not ABM!)
- Tight partnership and integration with sales  
(if there isn't active, ongoing collaboration throughout the lifecycle, it isn't ABM!)
- Tailored and personalized programs and campaigns based on deep customer insight  
(if customers get the same experience and inside-out messaging, it's not ABM!)

# Key Takeaways:

## Raising our game in 2019 and beyond



### *Believe the hype!*

- ABM continues to deliver higher ROI than traditional marketing; 45% are seeing at least double the ROI
- Broader benefits include greater customer success, more advocates, and innovation
- ABM principles are leading to more sophisticated sector marketing and demand generation campaigns

### *We're still just getting started*

- Half of ABM programs are in their first year; only 17% of programs have more than three years experience
- Top challenges reflect early growing pains: measurement, personalizing and customizing programs, and budget allocation
- Few companies are leveraging technology to its fullest potential

### *We're winning with all three types of ABM*

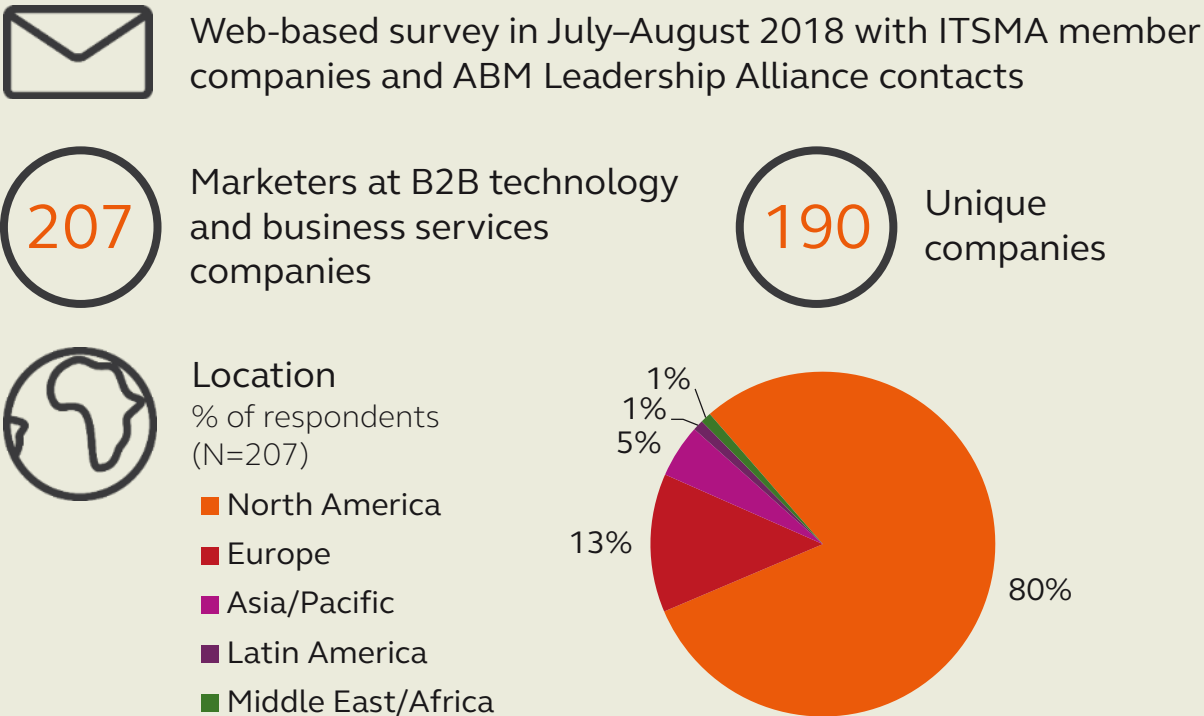
- Marketers are investing in One-to-One, One-to-Few, and One-to-Many ABM to provide breadth and depth of coverage
- ABM-ers are using all three types to address both existing accounts and new prospects
- Top tactics reflect a balance of online and offline approaches

### *Next steps emphasize program strategy and sophistication*

- ABM leaders are looking at eight specific initiatives to raise their game:
  - Increasing impact within each of the three types of ABM
  - Moving to a blended strategy with more than one type of ABM
  - Balancing coverage of new and existing accounts
  - Getting the metrics right
  - Investing in teams
  - Mastering storytelling
  - Leveraging technology
  - Orchestrating across the organization

# About the research: Qualitative and quantitative study with ABM leaders and practitioners

## Web-Based Survey



## Qualitative Interviews



\* Denotes member of the ITSMA Account-Based Marketing Council

Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018



# Believe the Hype







*“It is my view that Account-Based Marketing (ABM) is on the threshold of **revolutionizing** the marketing domain. It shows all the potential of bringing about a much-needed paradigm shift.”*

Professor Malcolm McDonald  
Emeritus Professor  
Cranfield University School of Management



# ABM has arrived: The C-Suite is on board

The rise of ABM in recent years has been dramatic. From a relative handful of large technology and professional services firms in the early 2000s, B2B firms of all sizes and across the economic landscape are now investing in ABM. And from a small group of marketing pioneers, the ranks of ABM-ers now include marketing leaders up and down the organization. Most important, ABM has gained recognition across the C-suite as a powerful business strategy to drive growth, innovation, and customer success.

*“Two years ago, I was sitting here by myself, wondering where this was going to go. Now, here we are on stage with our executives talking about ABM.”*

Natalie Mendes, ABM Program Manager, Asia Pacific, SAS

*“Our CMO says there are two strategic things that are going to change the way our business works, one is building customer advocacy and the second is ABM.”*

*“We have our CMO backing this program. So we know that if we call for help, we will get it, because it’s so high on the corporate radar.”*

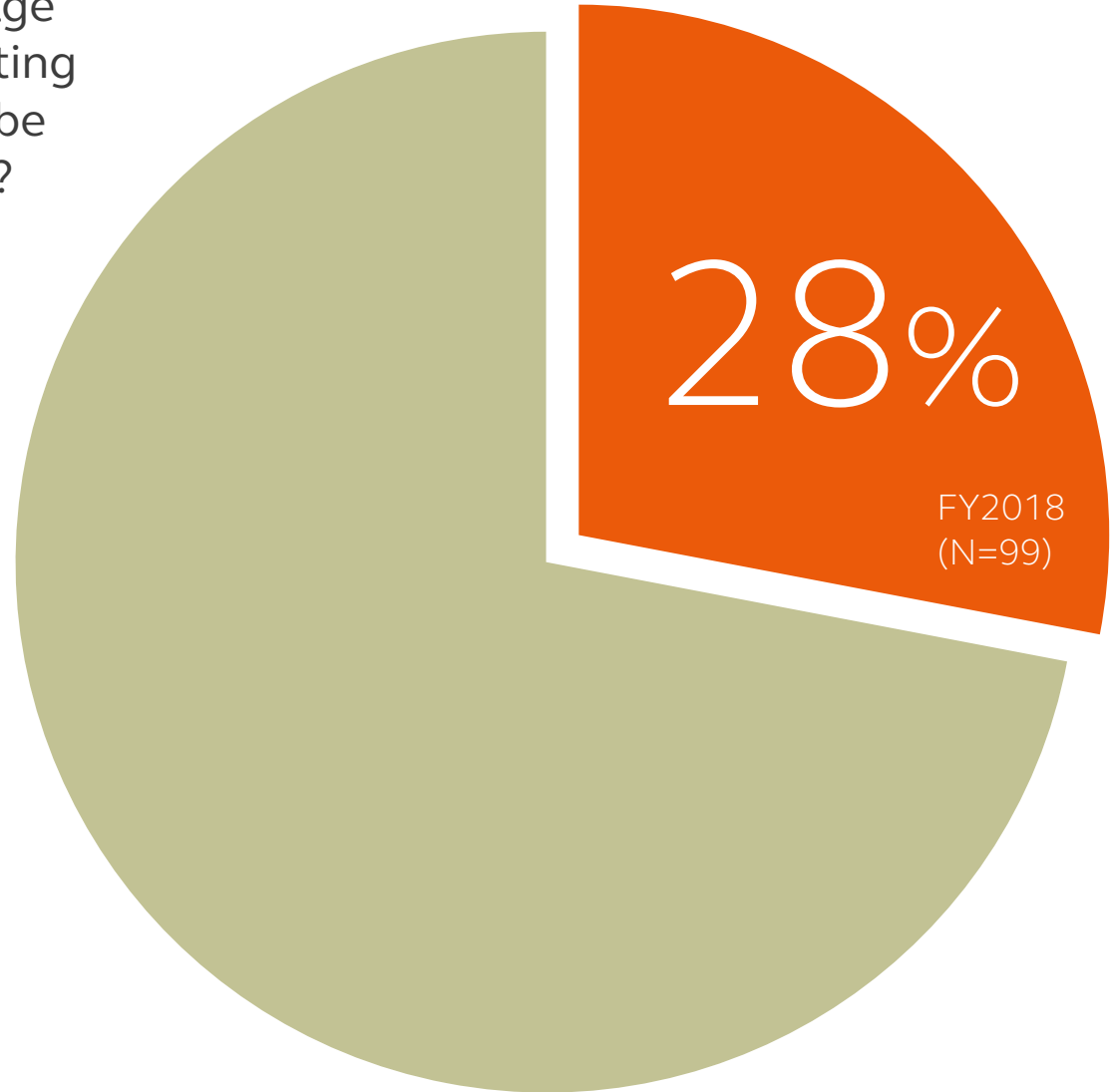
Dorothea Gosling, Director, Global Marketing Programs, Pursuits & Demand, DXC Technology

## Companies investing in ABM are dedicating more than a quarter of the marketing budget

The growing importance of ABM to marketing and business strategy is reflected clearly in the budget. Five years ago, companies practicing ABM dedicated 15% of their marketing budgets to ABM. Today, that percentage has nearly doubled to 28%.

Approximately what percentage of your marketing budget is/will be spent on ABM?

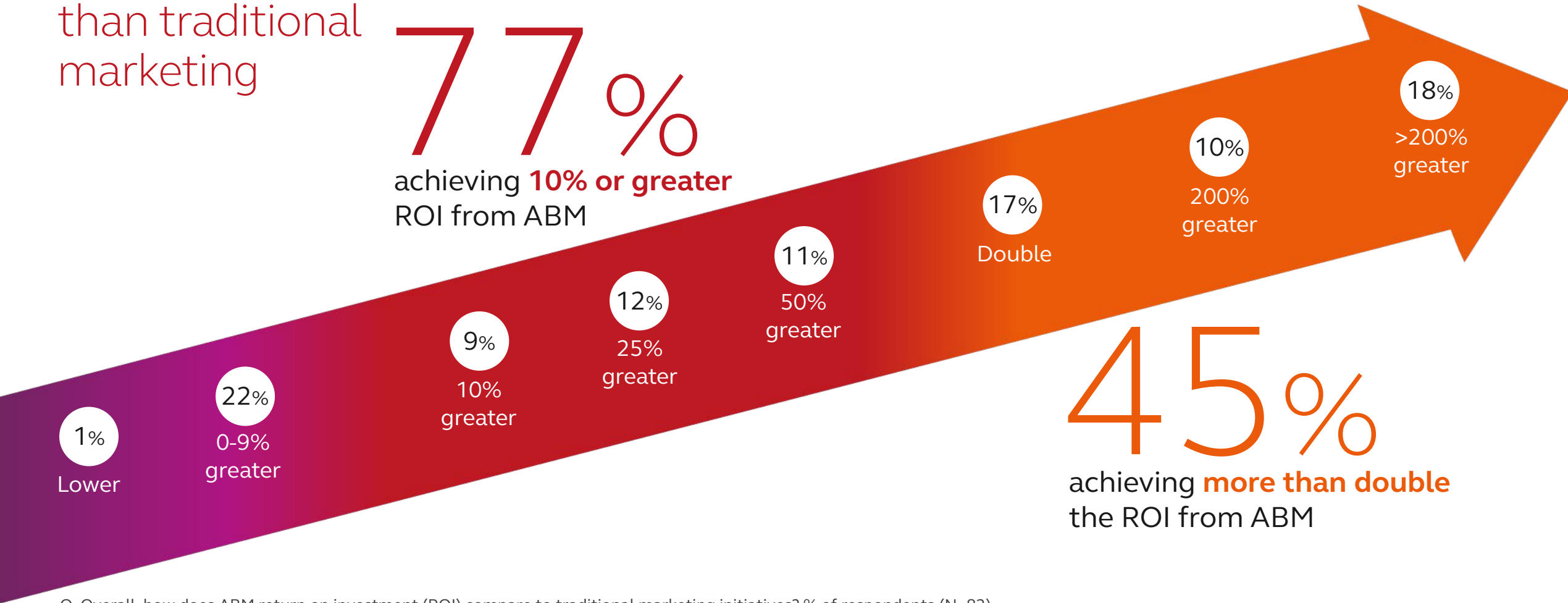
(Mean %)



Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018

ABM delivers substantially higher ROI than traditional marketing

ITSMA research has long documented the fact that ABM delivers higher return on investment (ROI) than all other types of marketing programs. This year's study digs deeper, and shows that ABM programs are most often generating substantially higher returns; with almost half of ABM leaders generating more than double the ROI of other marketing efforts.

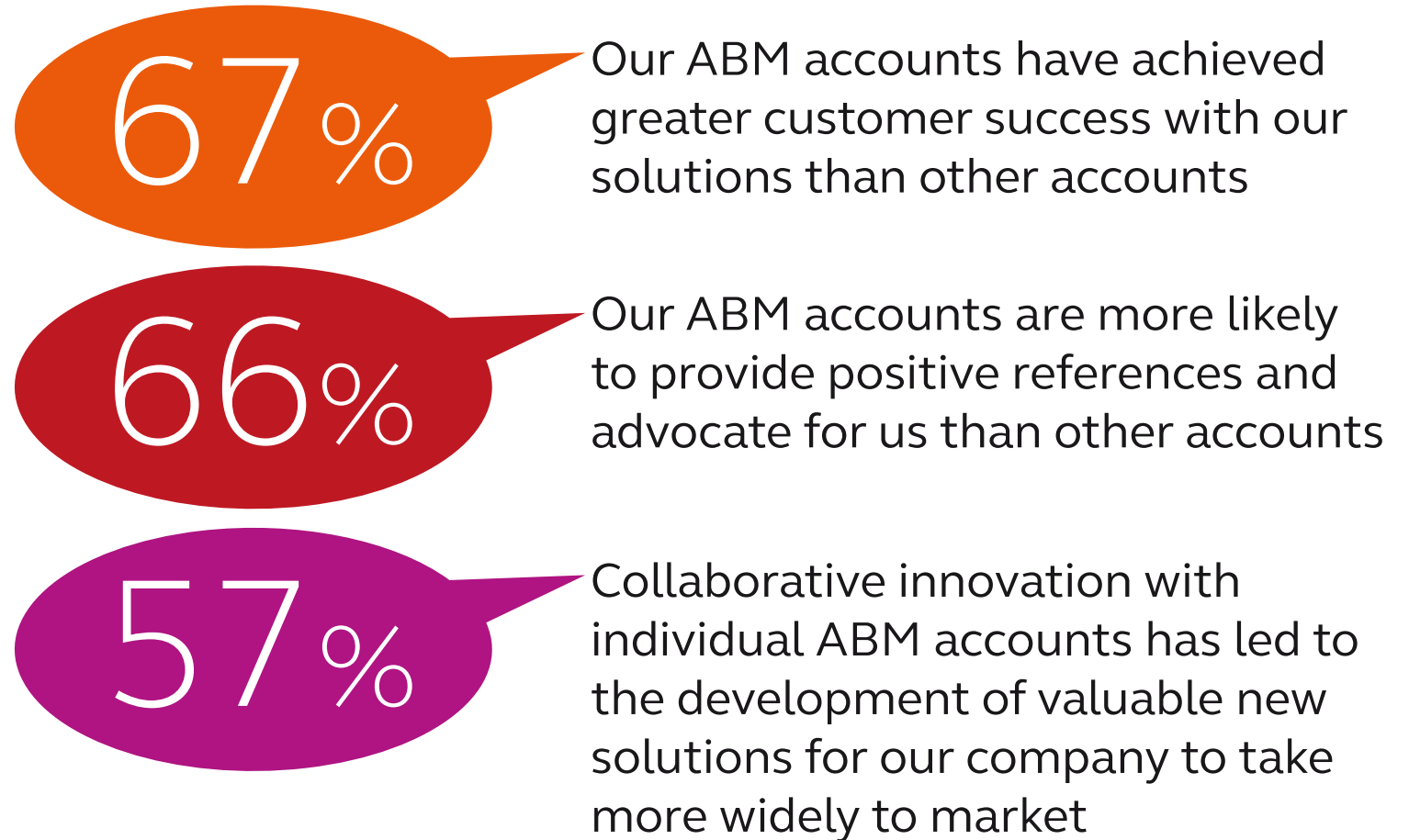


Q. Overall, how does ABM return on investment (ROI) compare to traditional marketing initiatives? % of respondents (N=82)

Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018

## And, ABM delivers great business outcomes beyond revenue

As a strategy for long-term growth, ABM contributes to the business even more than direct revenue. Substantial majorities of ABM programs are generating additional strategic benefits, including customer success, references and advocacy, and business innovation.



Note: % agree or strongly agree with each statement. (N=111, 107, and 111 respectively)  
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018



# ABM principles are influencing the way we go to market

As ABM continues to take root, the principles of focus on the most important accounts, customer-centricity, sales integration, and customized campaigns are beginning to drive marketing strategy as a whole.

“ABM is a re-orientation of the company from the outside-in. In other words, ABM is about orchestrating the entire firm for the benefit of the client. This has to cut across functions, departments, and internal silos. By focusing on this framework of collaboration, ABM begins to drive changes in corporate strategy and culture, for the mutual benefit of the company and its clients.”

Bev Burgess, Senior VP, ITSMA

*“I wouldn’t say we have an ABM program, it’s just our go-to-market strategy. It’s not like we have this ABM strategy, and this non-ABM strategy. It’s all melded together.”*

Mitch Causey, Director of Marketing, Lessonly

*“Our products business is starting to do campaigning in a One-to-Many ABM style. The added value is in using technology to identify insight and do predictive analytics, and therefore improve targeting and engagement.”*

Andrea Clatworthy, Head of Account Based Marketing, Fujitsu EMEA

*“By aligning our sector and account marketers, the ABM leads bring better sector-specific insights to their programs, while the sector marketing leads gain deeper insights on the accounts’ needs as input to their segment marketing programs.”*

Genevieve Erb, Marketing Director, Capgemini

*“I can foresee in the future, our industry marketing team will blend over into One-to-Few ABM.”*

*“Our Human Resources leader has looked at what we are doing with ABM and sees some very clear applications for recruiting.”*

Michael Rutkowski, VP Marketing, InsideOut Development



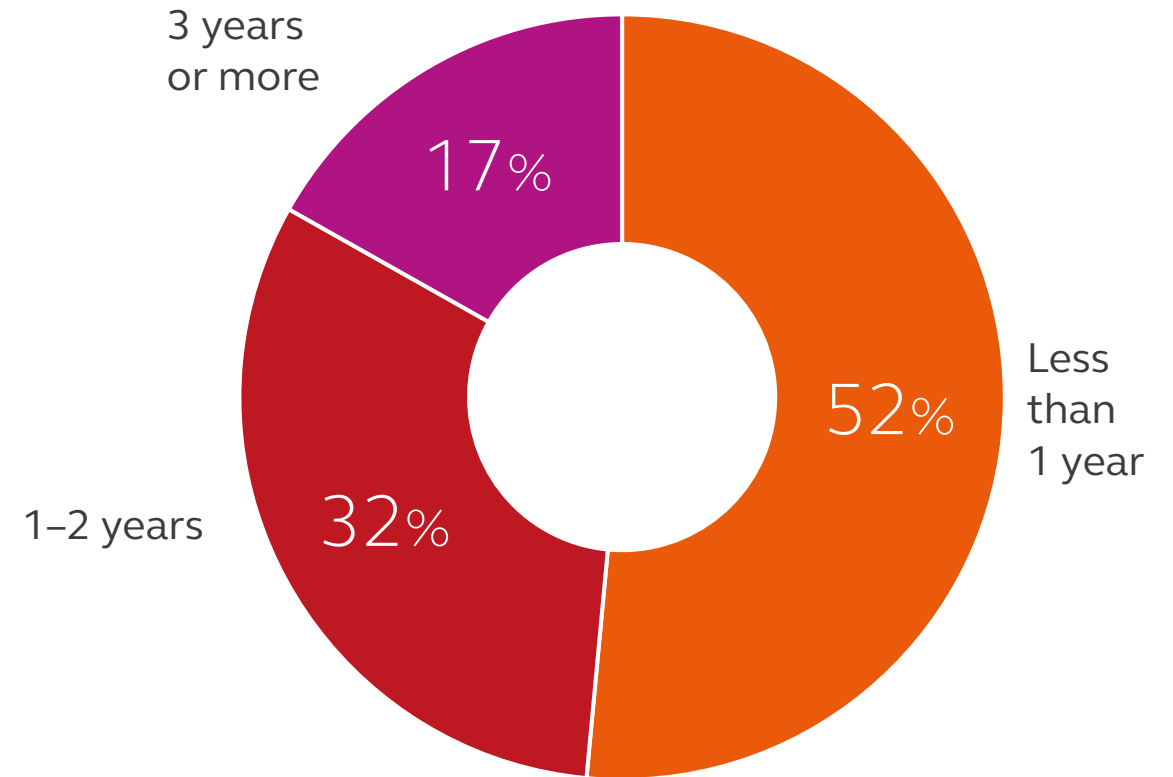
# We're Just Getting Started

# It is still early days for ABM: Most companies are just getting started with their programs

The good news for organizations just getting started? You're not far behind! Amid all the ABM hype, the reality is that most companies are still in early development with their programs. Only about one in six B2B marketing organizations have three or more years of experience with ABM.

How long have you had an ABM Program?

% of respondents (N=127)



*“Although we are making progress, we’re not using the full ABM toolkit yet in terms of segmentation, refining the ideal customer profile, content creation that speaks to different personas, and even campaign tactics.”*

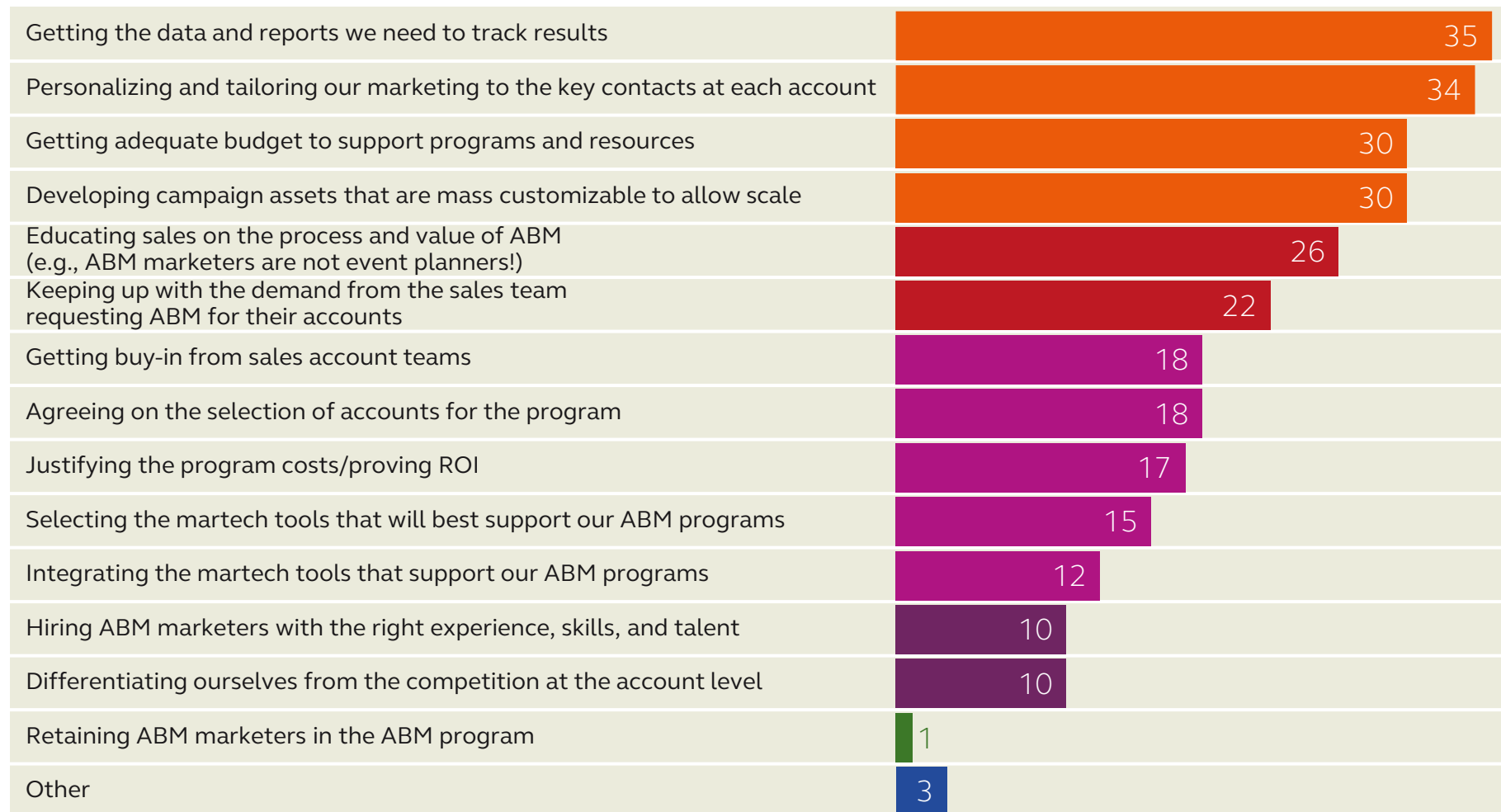
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018

# Top ABM challenges include measurement, personalization, budgets, and mass customization

The top challenges that ABM-ers cite reflect the relatively early development of their program: Measuring results, personalizing engagement, funding program development, and operationalizing an efficient approach to customization at scale.

What are the top challenges your organization faces in your ABM programs?

% of respondents  
(N=142)



Note: Up to three responses allowed.  
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018

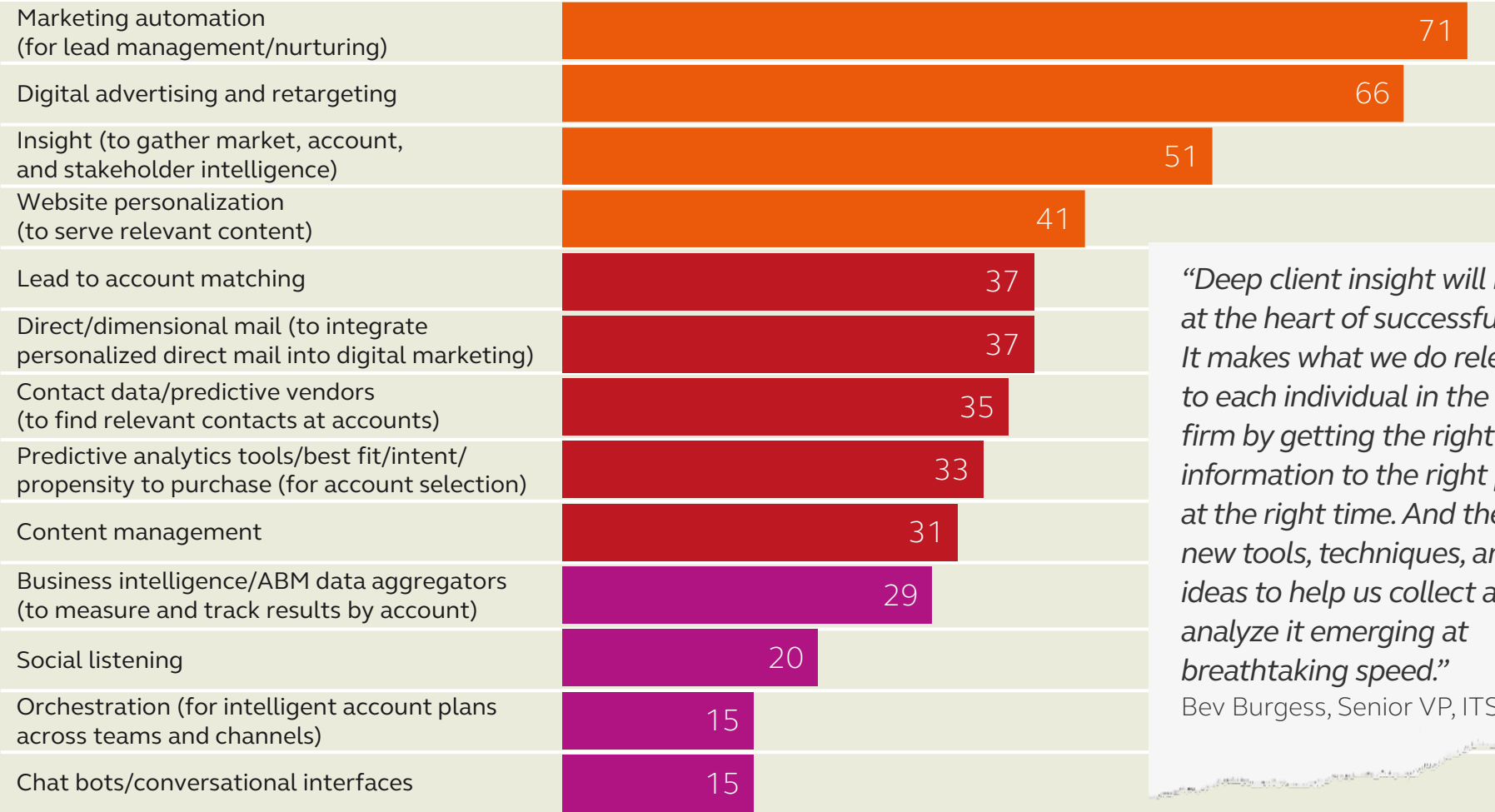


# Few companies are leveraging the full power of ABM technology

For all the promise of ABM-related technology, most programs are still working to strengthen and adapt their martech foundations to support account-based approaches. Less than half are taking advantage of website personalization, lead to account matching, or predictive analytics, among other ABM-oriented tools.

Which types of technology platforms do you currently use to support your ABM programs?

% of respondents (N=121)



*“Deep client insight will remain at the heart of successful ABM. It makes what we do relevant to each individual in the client’s firm by getting the right information to the right person at the right time. And there are new tools, techniques, and ideas to help us collect and analyze it emerging at breathtaking speed.”*

Bev Burgess, Senior VP, ITSMA

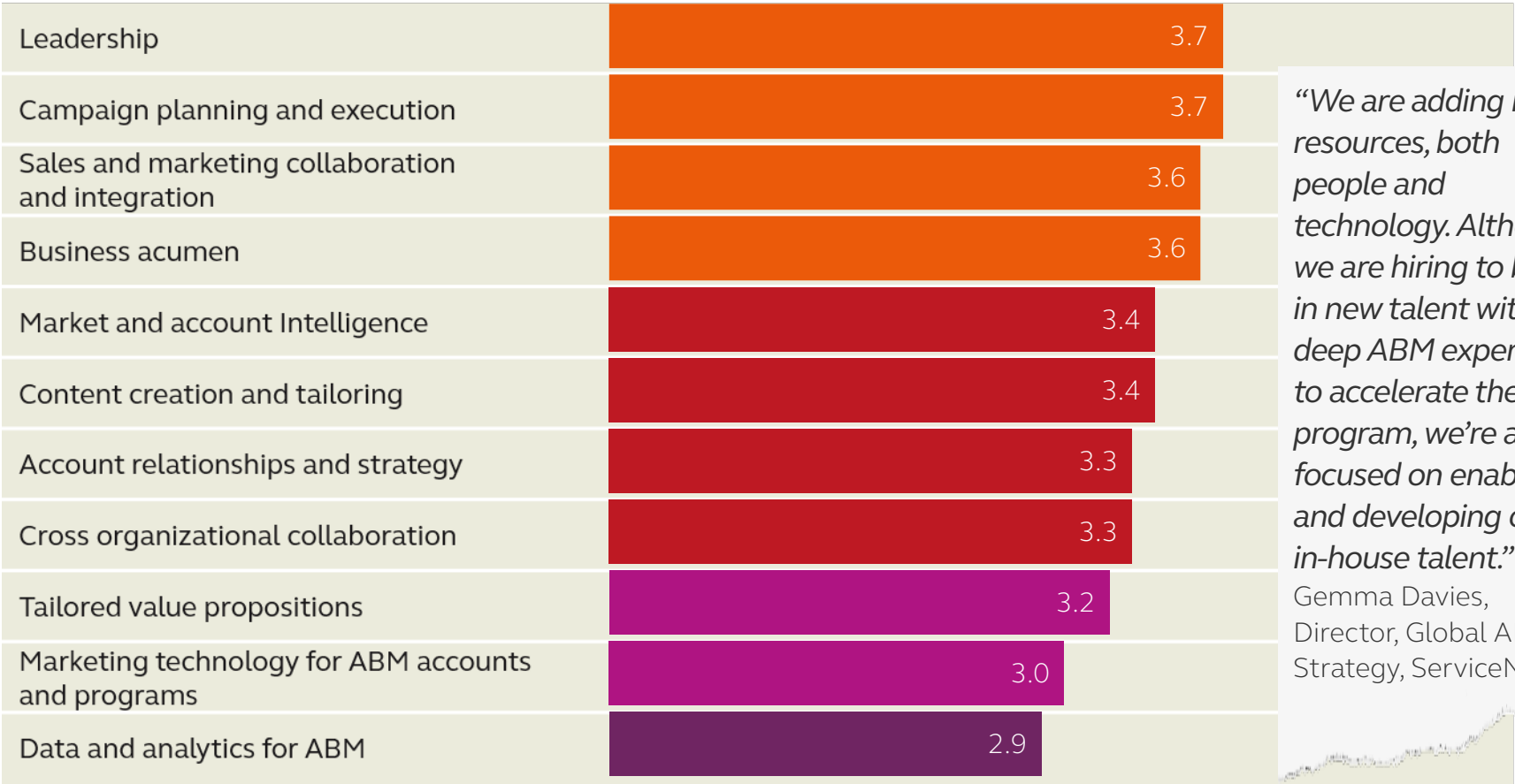
Note: Multiple responses allowed.  
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018

# Few teams have mastered the full complement of required skills

As companies continue to invest in ABM, the demand for relevant skills grows dramatically—and many marketing organizations are constrained by competency gaps across their teams. ABM-ers are relatively comfortable with skill levels in some areas but proficiency ratings for a number of essential capabilities, including value propositions, martech, and data and analytics, are well below what’s necessary for continued success.

As a group, how proficient are your ABM marketers in the following competencies?

Mean rating (N~142)



*“We are adding more resources, both people and technology. Although we are hiring to bring in new talent with deep ABM experience to accelerate the program, we’re also focused on enabling and developing our in-house talent.”*

Gemma Davies,  
Director, Global ABM  
Strategy, ServiceNow

Note: Mean rating based on a 5-point scale where 1=Not at all proficient and 5=Have mastered this skill area.  
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018

Not at all proficient      Mean rating      Have mastered this skill area

# Sales collaboration is solid but can certainly improve across the lifecycle of ABM activities

ITSMA's new ABM Sales Collaboration Index, which aggregates ratings for each of the seven steps of ABM execution, documents strong progress among ABM-ers in building the essential partnership with sales. Continuing to strengthen collaboration should be a priority as programs develop, especially in the relatively weaker areas of value propositions and measurement.

“We need strong, senior marketers who can embed themselves within the account team.”

Isla Chalmers-Tait, Director, Sales, PwC UK

## ABM Sales Collaboration Index

To what extent do your marketers collaborate with sales across the different steps of the ABM process?

Mean rating  
(N~142)



Note: The ABM Sales Collaboration Index spans all three types of ABM and is calculated using a mean rating based on a 5-point scale where 1=No collaboration with sales and 5=A great deal of collaboration with sales.  
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018

# Implementing the Three Types of ABM Today

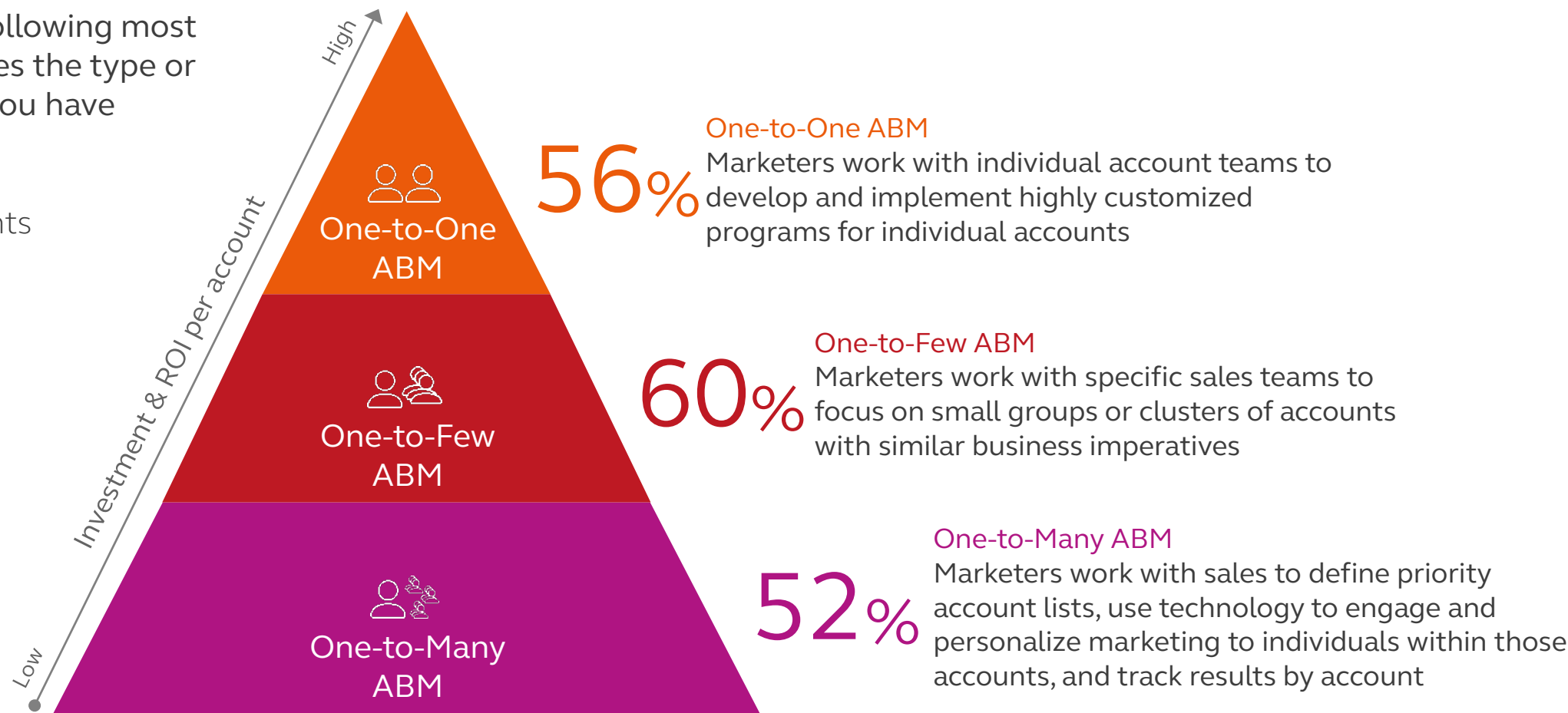


# Marketers are investing in all three types of ABM to provide depth and breadth of account coverage

B2B marketers have developed three distinct types of ABM in recent years and companies are working to develop programs and competencies in all three types. Ideally, the different types align directly to growth potential and sales coverage for different types and tiers of existing customers and prospects.

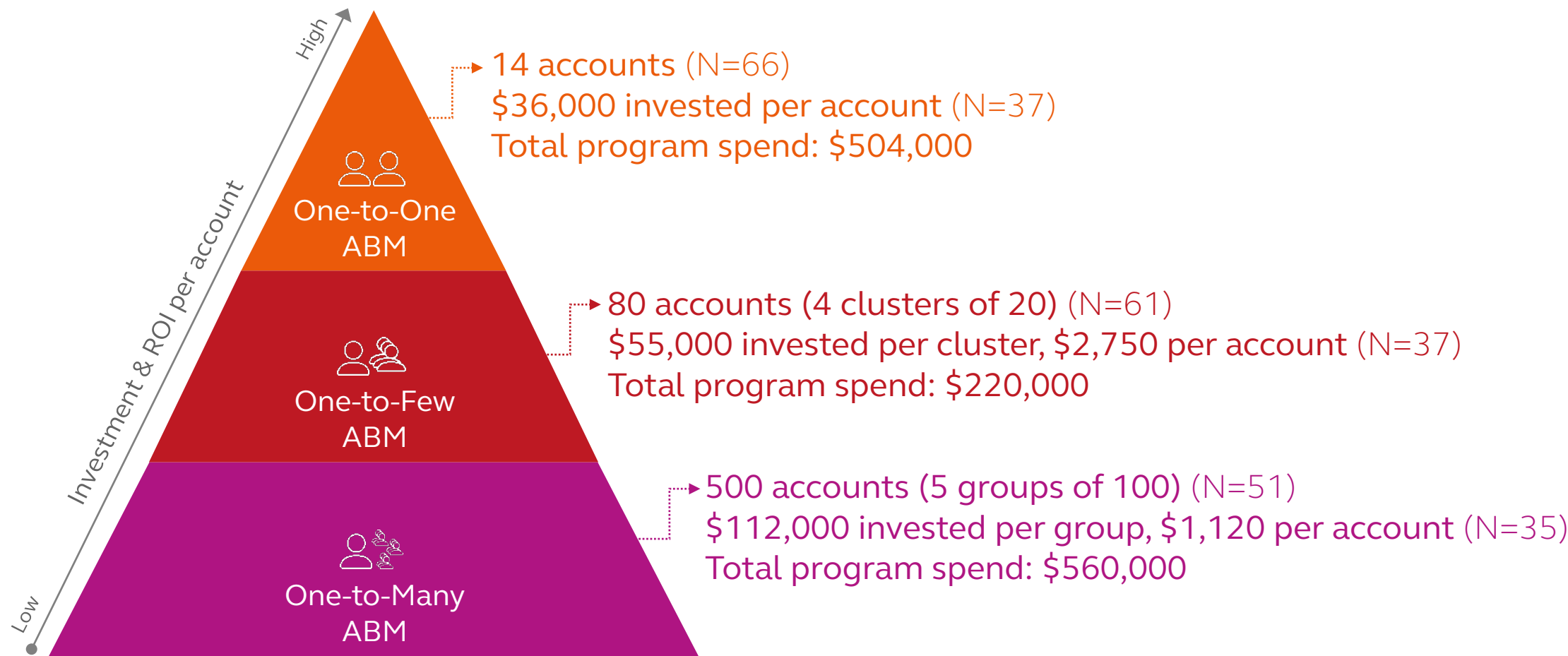
Which of the following most closely describes the type or types of ABM you have implemented?

% of respondents  
(N=143)



# Program scope and investment varies by type of ABM

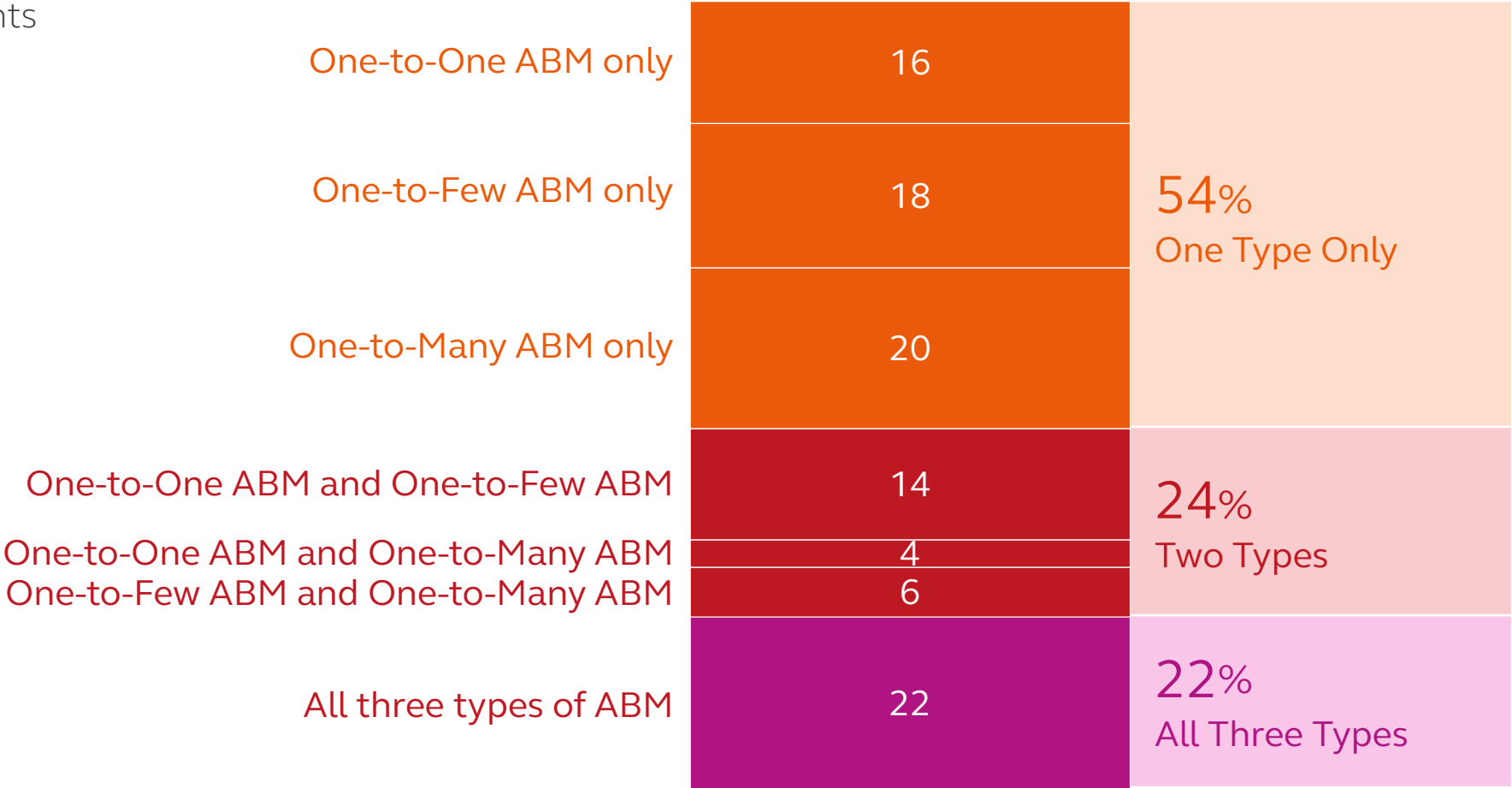
Reflecting the different levels of potential return for different types of accounts, ABM-ers are investing more and less per account across the three types of ABM. In all, companies are investing similar amounts in program execution for One-to-One and One-to-Many programs, but much less on One-to-Few.



More than half use just one type of ABM today; less than a quarter use all three types

Not surprisingly, given the newness of many ABM programs, about half of ABM practitioners are implementing just one type. But almost half are developing a “blended strategy,” using more than one type to provide differential levels of coverage for different types of accounts. Less than one quarter of programs are using all three types.

% of respondents  
(N=142)



Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018

One-to-one ABM is about getting personal with your most important clients and prospects

As the earliest incarnation of ABM, One-to-One ABM typically includes deep-dive research into a small number of key accounts, long-term programs to strengthen competitive position and open substantial new opportunities, and a labor-intensive mix of customized programs and activities. Historically focused on the most strategic existing accounts, ABM-ers in recent years have increasingly looked to apply the approach to top prospects, as well.

Account focus: 61% existing clients, 39% new accounts  
Campaign tactics: 52% online, 48% offline

Most effective tactics for One-to-One ABM



One-on-one, face-to-face meetings



Executive-to-executive relationship programs



Account-specific (bespoke) thought leadership development and dissemination



Direct mail



Custom collateral/  
videos/  
podcasts/  
webinars

What specific ABM program tactics are most effective for One-to-One ABM accounts? % of respondents (N=68)

Note: Up to five responses allowed.

Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018



One-to-Few ABM is about targeting new and existing clients with common issues

One-to-Few ABM, the newest of the three types, takes the research-based principles of One-to-One and applies them to small groups or clusters of priority customers and prospects with similar business issues and attributes. Companies often develop a One-to-Few approach either to scale initial One-to-One programs or to go deeper with key clusters of accounts compared with broader-based One-to-Many programs.

Account focus: 46% existing clients, 54% new accounts  
Campaign tactics: 61% online, 39% offline

Most effective tactics for One-to-Few ABM



Email marketing



Direct mail



Custom collateral/  
videos/  
podcasts/  
webinars



Web personalization



Roadshows/  
events

Q. What specific program tactics are most effective for One-to-Few ABM accounts? % of respondents (N=60)

Note: Up to five responses allowed.

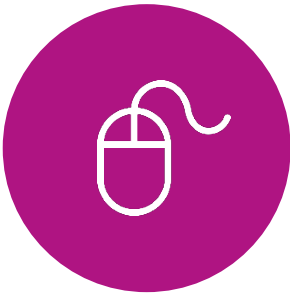
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018

# One-to-Many ABM is about using insight to target accounts at scale

One-to-Many ABM emphasizes account targeting and personalization at scale, relying on technology and analytics to target the right accounts and provide relevant messaging, content, and activities to engage and nurture the most relevant leads and opportunities. Investment per account is much lower than the other types of ABM but coverage is much broader so overall business impact can be just as great.

Account focus: 37% existing clients, 63% new accounts  
Campaign tactics: 76% online, 24% offline

Most effective tactics for One-to-Many ABM



Email marketing



Reverse IP/targeted digital ads/content/retargeting



Roadshows/events



Direct mail



Account-based content syndication



Intent data to trigger campaigns and context for reps

Q. What specific program tactics are most effective for One-to-Many ABM accounts? % of respondents (N=50)  
Note: Up to five responses allowed.  
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018



# Raising Our Game in 2019 and Beyond

# As companies gain ABM experience, ROI and non-financial business benefits increase dramatically

Like most sophisticated marketing approaches, ABM takes time to achieve full potential. Although many companies see results with ABM quickly, fully integrating new ways of working, new tools, and new metrics often takes several years or more. Programs with more experience, for example, cite greater proficiency in key areas such as account strategy and cross-organizational collaboration. And the payoff is substantial: A full 80% of companies with three or more years of ABM experience are realizing “significantly higher” ROI compared with less than half of those with less experience.

Overall, how does ABM ROI compare to traditional marketing initiatives?\*

% of respondents

Doing ABM  
Less than 3 years  
(N=62)



Significantly  
Higher  
ROI

Doing ABM  
3 years or more  
(N=10)



Doing ABM  
Less than 3 years  
(N=79)



% agree or strongly agree with each statement

Our ABM accounts have achieved greater customer success with our solutions than other accounts have.\*

Doing ABM  
3 years or more  
(N=17)



Our ABM accounts are more likely to provide positive references and advocate for us than other accounts are.\*

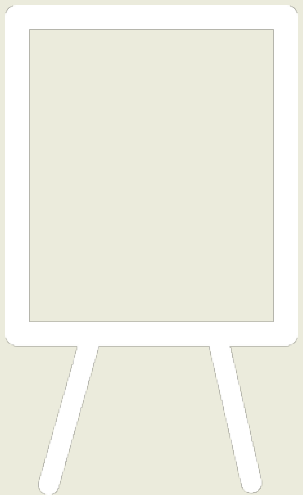


Collaborative innovation with individual ABM accounts has led to the development of valuable new solutions for our company to take more widely to market.



Note: Multiple responses allowed. \* Indicates a statistically significant difference.  
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018

## Raising our game: Eight initiatives to consider



As companies look toward 2019, our study suggests eight specific initiatives they should consider to increase ABM impact and further elevate their programs as key contributors to corporate growth:

1. Increasing impact within each of the three types of ABM
2. Moving to a blended strategy with more than one type of ABM
3. Balancing coverage of new and existing accounts
4. Getting the metrics right
5. Investing in your teams
6. Mastering storytelling
7. Leveraging technology
8. Orchestrating across the organization



# Increasing impact with One-to-One ABM: Executive engagement and co-creation

Leaders in One-to-One ABM are focusing especially on two approaches to strengthen account relationships and solidify long-term growth.

## Executive Engagement

*“Our executive engagement program sits across both ABM and advocacy. All ABM accounts have designated senior executives—someone from the board. Our CEO is aligned to two ABM accounts. It’s completely wedded.”*

Stephanie Deane, Head of Account Based Marketing & Customer Advocacy, O2

## Co-creation

*“Our digital transformation workshops are highly facilitated. Prior to the workshop, we work with the client to identify a problem and agree who should be in the room. At the end of these highly interactive sessions, all ideas and potential solutions to the problem are written up and shared within 24 hours.”*

Andrea Clatworthy, Head of Account Based Marketing, Fujitsu EMEA

Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018

# Increasing impact with One-to-Few ABM: Needs-based clustering and buyer personas

Leaders in One-to-Few ABM are taking a more sophisticated approach to clustering target accounts and engaging with key buyers within those accounts.

## Buyer Personas

*“We have five segments and three personas that we target—so 15 areas of focus/messaging. It makes it more scalable. We do the research and use customer stories from within the industry segment to frame them and create the content. We also repurpose content from our top tier accounts.”*

Luiz Piovesana, Head of Marketing, Sensedia

## Needs-based Clustering

*“We group predominantly by sectors, but sometimes we have been able to cluster by drivers and challenges if organizations have synergy around a similar goal.”*

Stephanie Deane, Head of Account Based Marketing & Customer Advocacy, O2

Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018

# Increasing impact with One-to-Many ABM: Customer profiles and curated content experience

Leaders in One-to-Many ABM are sharpening their approaches to identifying account target lists and creating more customized experiences to engage and nurture potential buyers.

## Ideal Customer Profiles

*“One to many is not just targeted marketing, its more sophisticated. The difference is you identify the companies that fit your ideal customer profile. You then build a cadence of outreach. You’re going after the exact companies you want to work with.”*

Miles Williams, CMO, JW Player

## Curated, Customized Content

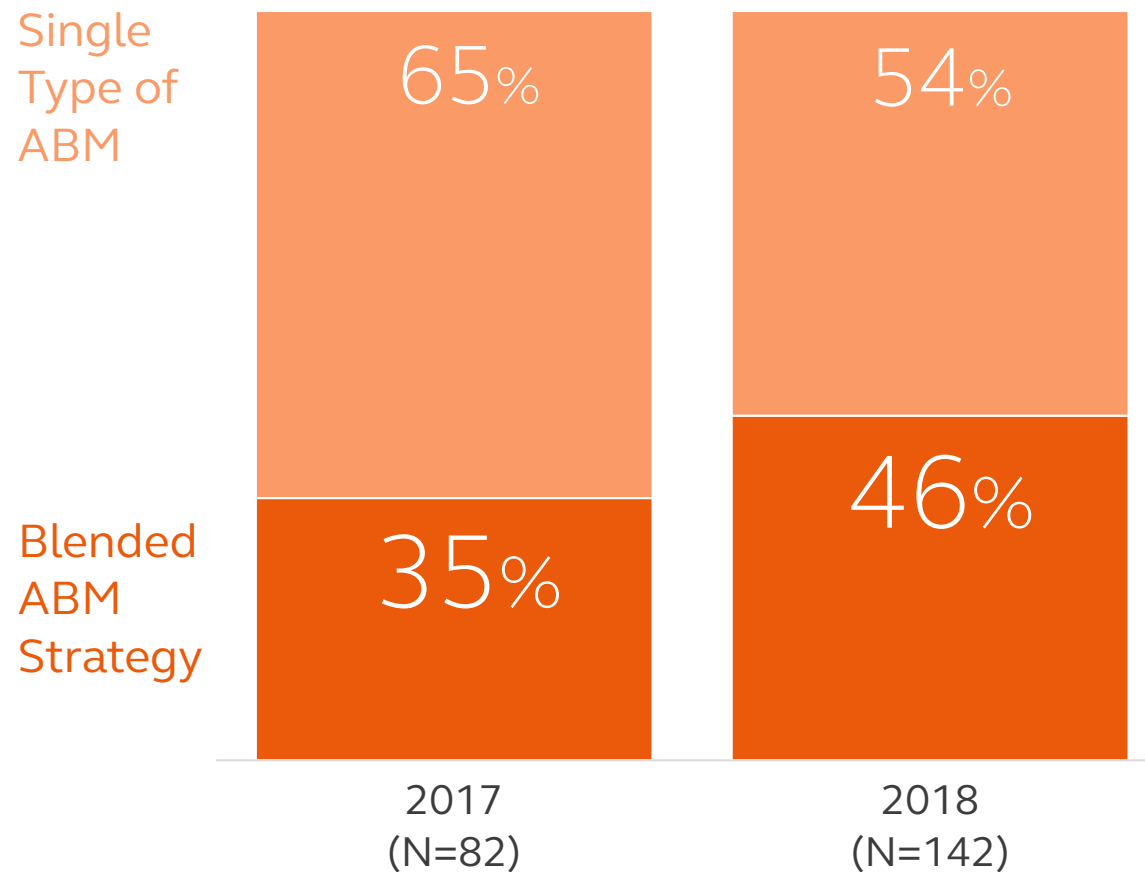
*“We do a lot of content curation, taking the content engine created for broad-based demand generation, and curating that content, adding third party content if needed. Tag lines, display ads, retargeting, sponsored content and calls to action are all customized. It’s a curated content experience for our target accounts.”*

Daniel Day, Director, Account Based Marketing, Snowflake

Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018

## Adopt a blended ABM strategy to broaden and deepen account coverage

The growing interest in “blended” ABM strategies—using different types of ABM for different types of accounts—reflects an important maturing of the approach. Few companies can afford to invest in true One-to-One ABM programs for even a large fraction of their accounts. But most companies have at least a handful or two of absolutely critical accounts. Similarly, second- and third-tier accounts often have great potential for growth that can be missed with simple demand generation or customer success programs. Blended strategies enable marketers to align investment more closely with sales priorities and coverage while providing targeted investments to support corporate imperatives such as entering new markets, rolling out new solutions, and engaging new types of buyers.



**58%**  
plan to scale ABM  
by adopting a  
**blended strategy**

Q. Which of the following most closely describes the type of ABM you have implemented or are piloting?

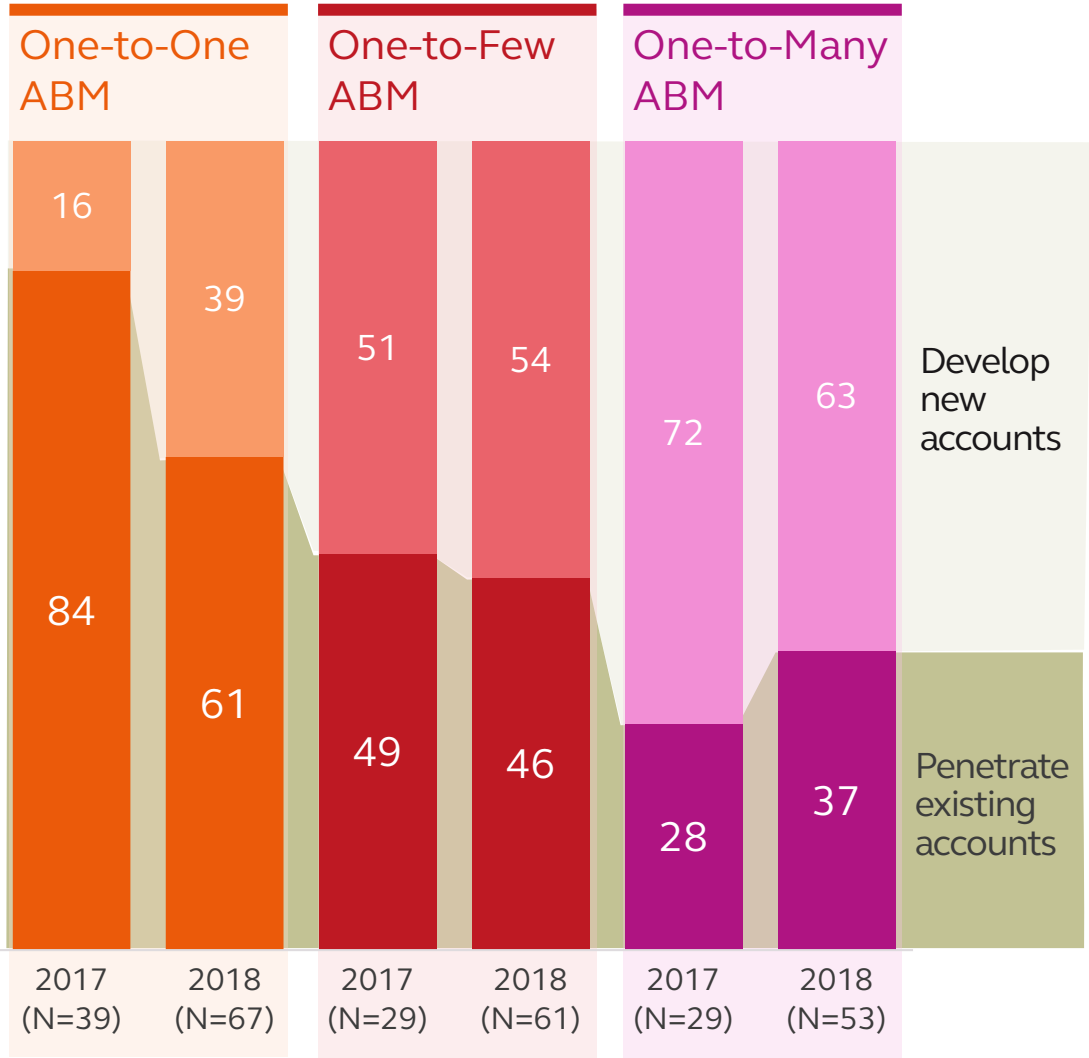
Q. What approach are you taking to scale your ABM programs? (N=128)

Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018

# Use ABM for new and existing accounts, not just one or the other

One of the most important changes we have seen over the past few years is a more balanced approach for ABM across existing and new accounts. Historically, marketers used One-to-One ABM mainly with existing accounts and One-to-Many ABM mainly for new logo acquisition. More recently, companies have used One-to-Few ABM for both existing and new. In 2018 we are now seeing a growing number of companies using all types of ABM to achieve objectives with both existing and new accounts.

## Balance of new and existing account focus



*“Our ABM has been a deal-based approach to support on winning new business which has been enormously successful. Coming into this year, we have started to expand on this approach to focus on existing accounts, which has enabled us to recognize cross and up sell opportunities.”*

Catherine Dutton,  
Vice President Marketing, Atos

*“We’ve proven our competency in the new account ABM. Now we have to follow them through the full lifecycle to solidify retention and expansion. What is marketing doing to keep them engaged once they’re a customer?”*

Michael Rutkowski  
VP Marketing, InsideOut Development

What is the distribution of your ABM accounts by primary objective? % of accounts  
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018



# Get the metrics right: Measure what matters most

The rise of ABM has inspired an important shift for marketers from focusing mostly on top of the funnel metrics such as awareness and leads to a more revenue-centric approach. Most recently, we have also seen a convergence of focus on engagement metrics with all three types of ABM as a key indicator of relationship development and longer term opportunities.

Which five metrics are most important to measure the success of your overall ABM initiatives?

## Top ABM Metrics



### One-to-One ABM

- Pipeline growth (increase in sales funnel)
- Win rate/deals closed
- Revenue growth
- Engagement (events, meetings, opt-ins, downloads, etc.)
- ROI



### One-to-Few ABM

- Pipeline growth
- Win rate/deals closed
- Revenue growth
- Engagement
- Total revenue



### One-to-Many ABM

- Pipeline growth
- Win rate/deals closed
- Revenue growth
- Engagement
- Total revenue

Note: Up to five responses allowed.  
(N=63, 59, and 49 respectively)  
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018



Don't forget the 3 R's:  
Reputation, Relationships, and Revenue!

# The 3Rs: Reputation and Relationships are just as important as Revenue

“We have to go one step further and strengthen engagement as a key metric for ABM practitioners. Filling the pipeline and growing revenue remain critical measures, however, it is impactful engagement that will make that crucial difference to our client relationships.”

Bev Burgess, Senior VP, ITSMA

*“The thing that I’ve struggled with since I came on board is a problem that everybody has, which is, how can you prove that what you did in marketing impacted the bottom line? Then, what is the balancing act between brand building and revenue generation? Both are important and you can’t prioritize one at the expense of the other.”*

Josh Soto, VP Marketing, Pindrop

*“We need a consistent way to measure engagement within ABM. We developed a couple of key metrics based on a rolling 90-day period measured monthly. The first is Brand Reach, which we define as the % of accounts within our total addressable market that visited our website. The second metric is one we are working towards: Average Account Penetration. It is the average number of unique users per account that visit our website.”*

Renny Fidlon, VP Marketing, Optymyze

## Invest in your teams: Top three competencies to build in 2019

Skill and team development remains a top priority for many ABM programs, especially as they continue to scale. Most organizations rely on training but selective outsourcing and partnering can fill essential gaps, as well.

62% Data and analytics

53% Sales and marketing  
collaboration

49% Content creation  
and tailoring

82%  
will skill up  
by training  
existing marketers

Note: Up to two responses allowed. % of respondents (N=143)

Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018

# Master storytelling in all its forms

Creating relevant, compelling messaging and content at scale is one of the top challenges for ABM success. Developing and strengthening your storytelling skills and approach provides a strong foundation for ABM engagement at every level.

*“I think about the notion of strong content being a currency in today’s world. ABM-ers have to be really good story tellers. They have to be able to synthesize the complex down to bite size, compelling content that can be leveraged by the teams and absorbed by our clients.”*

Craig Rones, VP of Marketing, NTT DATA Services

*“Creating content that addresses executives’ top-of-mind concerns is the best way to gain their attention and build an opportunity for engagement.”*

Robin Tobin, Head of Executive & Experiential Marketing, North America, Adobe

*“It’s about ideas and creativity. With ABM you’re not just writing the story, but multiple stories. Everything has to be tailored and targeted. The team has to come at it from different angles.”*

Elmira Abushayev, Director of Marketing, Constellation

Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018

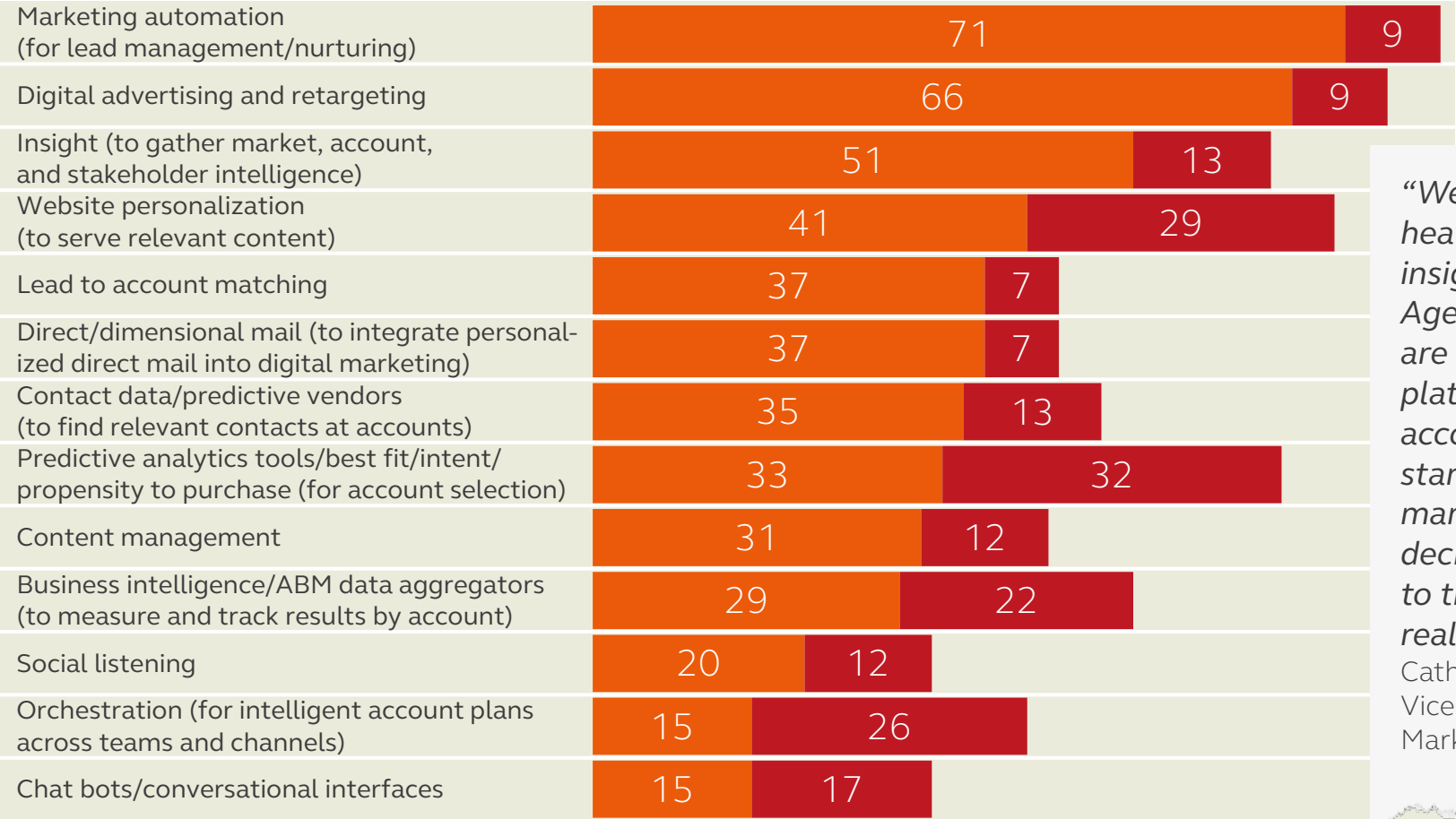
# Leverage technology— it's a key enabler

Most ABM-ers today are relying on a handful of core tools and platforms to support their programs, including marketing automation, digital advertising, and insight tools. A host of specialized tools can add important new capabilities as teams solidify strategies and programs. Needless to say, take the time to integrate and adopt new tools to ensure effective use.

Which types of technology platforms are you using currently/ planning to add to your ABM technology stack in the next 12–18 months?

% of respondents (N=121)

Note: Multiple responses allowed.  
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018



■ Use currently ■ Planning to add in next 12-18 months

*“We’ve invested heavily in client insight. We work with Agent3, where we are utilizing the platform on over 100 accounts. This is starting to drive the marketing and sales decisions in relation to the accounts to really focus on.”*

Catherine Dutton,  
Vice President  
Marketing, Atos

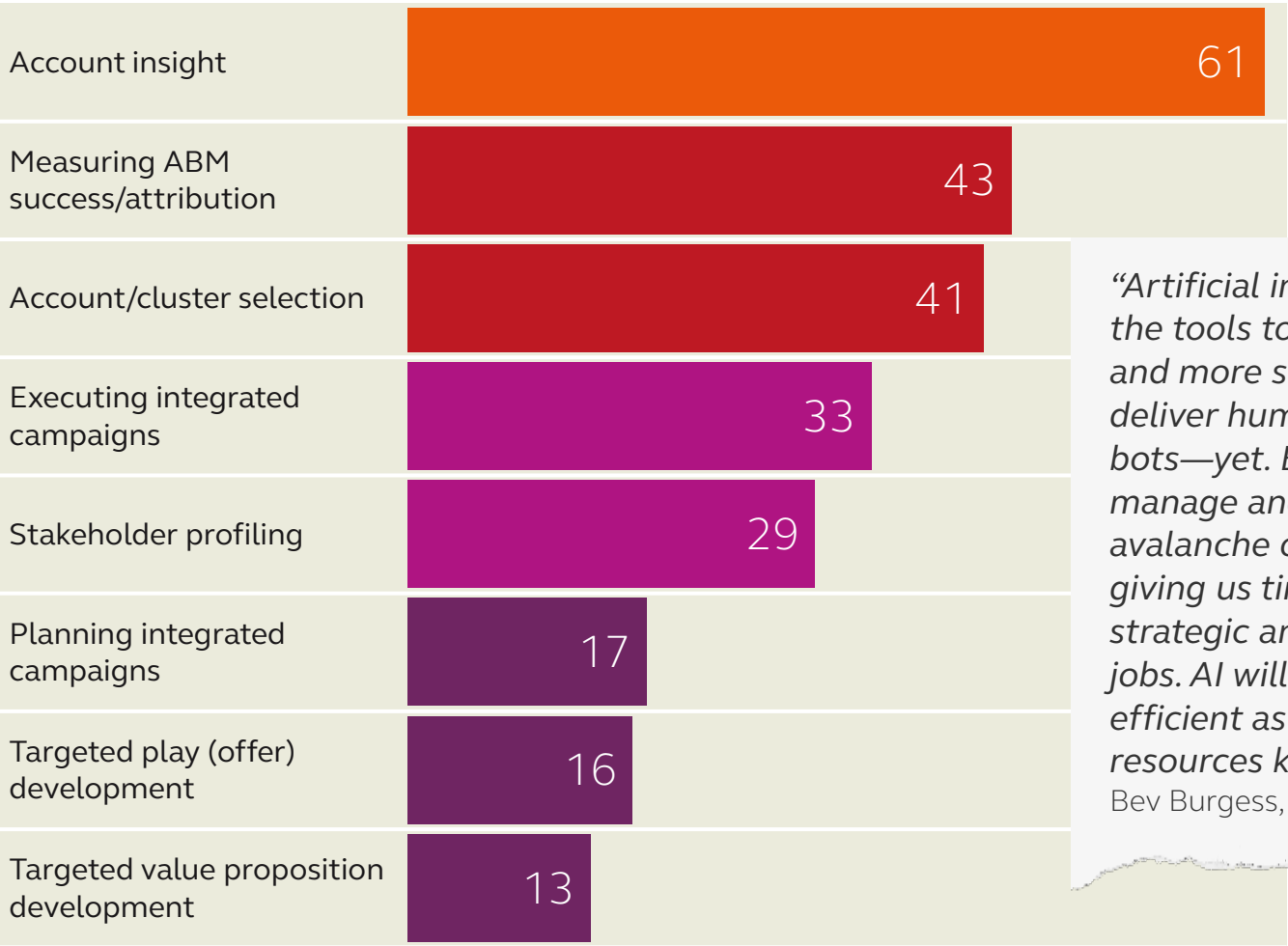


# AI is coming: Explore its potential for account insight and more

Artificial intelligence (AI) is one of the shiniest new tools in the ABM toolbox, and marketers are looking to invest for ABM impact over the next several years. ABM will remain as much art as science, but AI holds great potential to accelerate success, especially in the most data-driven elements of ABM strategy and program development.

For which ABM processes  
are you most likely to use  
artificial intelligence to  
drive more impact over  
the next 2–3 years?

% of respondents  
(N=133)



*“Artificial intelligence (AI) will give us the tools to make ABM faster, smarter, and more scalable. No, we can’t deliver human-like conversation with bots—yet. But technology will help us manage and manipulate the avalanche of data we collect while giving us time to focus on the more strategic and creative aspects of our jobs. AI will also make us more efficient as budgets get squeezed and resources kept constant.”*  
Bev Burgess, Senior VP, ITSMA

Note: Up to three responses allowed.  
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018

# Collaborate and orchestrate across the organization—and beyond

The final area for raising our ABM game is both the most significant and the most challenging: Building true cross-organizational collaboration. The most effective ABM programs are marketing-led but fully integrated with sales, delivery, service, customer success, and even R&D and finance. Getting the entire marketing organization on board is just first step; taking the time to build confidence, trust, and integrated ways of working typically takes much longer. Marketers should get started and take coordinated action with a set of key stakeholders—and build on those wins. In the pursuit of the ultimate goal of lock-step coordination, incremental progress is to be celebrated.

*“If there’s one thing I’ve learned about ABM, it has nothing to do with the tools or tactics. It has everything to do with collaboration across teams and getting teams aligned.”*

Josh Soto, VP Marketing, Pindrop

*“The accounts or deal teams have to give us access to data and information. They have to make us part of their team. It has to be an eye-level conversation and executed in sync and lockstep.”*

Dorothea Gosling, Director, Global Marketing Programs, DXC Technology

*“We are heavily involved in making sure that our data is available to the entire organization—sales leaders, sales operations, finance. We ‘open-source’ that information for things like territory planning, hiring of sales reps, and then actual account selection itself.”*

Daniel Day, Director, Account Based Marketing, Snowflake

*“A highlight for me is the opportunity to meet with customers and executives that previously we hadn’t had a relationship with. Taking time to explain the concept of an ABM program and the value to them helps develop deep decision maker relationships.”*

Gemma Davies, Director, Global ABM Strategy, ServiceNow

*“There are some great assets within Microsoft, they just needed to be orchestrated. We want to create synergies so people don’t work in silos. For instance, we have our events, technology centers, executive briefing centers, executive sponsorship program, content, and web/social assets. We create customer specific assets with our Account Based Engagement program, and we also leverage all existing programs and assets.”*

Rudy Dillenseger, Director of Worldwide Account-Based Engagement, Microsoft

# Recap:

## How to Raise our game in 2019 and beyond



### *Believe the hype!*

- ABM continues to deliver higher ROI than traditional marketing; 45% are seeing at least double the ROI
- Broader benefits include greater customer success, more advocates, and innovation
- ABM principles are leading to more sophisticated sector marketing and demand generation campaigns

### *We're still just getting started*

- Half of ABM programs are in their first year; only 17% of programs have more than three years experience
- Top challenges reflect early growing pains: measurement, personalizing and customizing programs, and budget allocation
- Few companies are leveraging technology to its fullest potential

### *We're winning with all three types of ABM*

- Marketers are investing in One-to-One, One-to-Few, and One-to-Many ABM to provide breadth and depth of coverage
- ABM-ers are using all three types to address both existing accounts and new prospects
- Top tactics reflect a balance of online and offline approaches

### *Next steps emphasize program strategy and sophistication*

- ABM leaders are looking at eight specific initiatives to raise their game:
  - Increasing impact within each of the three types of ABM
  - Moving to a blended strategy with more than one type of ABM
  - Balancing coverage of new and existing accounts
  - Getting the metrics right
  - Investing in teams
  - Mastering storytelling
  - Leveraging technology
  - Orchestrating across the organization

# About ITSMA and the ABM Leadership Alliance

**ITSMA** For more than 25 years, ITSMA has led the way in defining, building, and inspiring B2B services marketing excellence. With a dedicated focus on services and solutions for the connected economy, we provide our corporate member community with insight, advice, and hands-on help to strengthen reputation, increase revenue, and deepen customer relationships.

ITSMA pioneered the concept of account-based marketing in 2003 to help marketers stop generic sales pitches and zero in on the essential needs of their most important clients.



The ABM Leadership Alliance unites industry-leading technology partners to educate B2B marketers about how developing and deploying an ABM strategy can help them improve their reputation, strengthen relationships, close bigger deals with target accounts, and increase pipeline velocity.

Members include Bizzabo, Demandbase, Engagio, InsightSquared, LeanData, ON24, PathFactory, PFL, Radius, Salesforce, SalesLoft, Sigstr, and Vidyard.

## More info

- [ITSMA.com](https://www.itsma.com)
- [abmleadershipalliance.com](https://abmleadershipalliance.com)