ABM: Selecting and Prioritizing Target Accounts

Implementing ABM starts with selecting **the right target accounts**. This is essentially the ICP process taken to the next level of specificity. Let's examine the step-by-step approach.

Step 1: Identify High-Value Target Accounts.

Begin by determining which accounts you will focus on. Typically, these are chosen based on a combination of **fit, value** and **other influencing factors**.

Criteria	Description	Example
Fit	Does the account align with your ICP in terms of industry, size, geography, or need? Are they likely to adopt and benefit from your solution?	A logistics tech firm with 200+ employees actively hiring sales roles and using cloud-based tools.
Value/Potential	Could this account generate significant revenue, or bring strategic advantages like brand credibility or expansion potential?	A well-known telecom provider expanding into B2B services that could roll out our platform company-wide.
Other Factors	Look for factors that boost your chances of engagement, such as existing relationships, recent interactions with your brand, or indicators from their tech stack that suggest they may be open to switching.	A company that just switched from on-premise software and recently viewed our case study on LinkedIn.

Start by assessing **fit** – does the company closely align with your Ideal Customer Profile in terms of industry, size, and demonstrated need? Are they realistically likely to benefit from and adopt your solution?

Next, consider **the value or potential** of the account. Could this customer generate significant revenue, either due to their size or because of strategic impact?

Finally, take into account **other influencing factors**, such as buying intent signals or even their current tech stack – if they're using a competitor's product, they might be a strong candidate to win over. Again, companies usually tier these identified target accounts. For enterprise targets, highly targeted campaigns make the most sense, whereas for many mid-market targets, a slightly more scaled approach can be mixed in.

Step 2: Research Each Account Deeply.

Once you have the list, **become an expert on each account**. This involves several things you need to do. Some companies even assign "account owners" whose job is to gather intel on each target and keep an account updated.

- **Reading annual reports, press releases, news articles about the company.**

Start by reviewing publicly available materials like annual reports, press releases, and news articles. These sources give you insight into the company's priorities, recent achievements, and challenges.

- **Understanding their business model and strategy.**
  E.g., if you sell a supply chain tool and a target is a retailer, find out if they're expanding online, or opening new stores – anything impacting the supply chain.

Dig into how the company operates and what drives its growth. For example, if you sell a supply chain software and your target account is a retail brand, find out whether they're expanding their online operations, opening new stores, or shifting their logistics model. These details provide valuable context that directly informs how your product can help.

- **Identifying key initiatives or challenges.**
  Are they going through a digital transformation? Mergers? Layoffs? New regulations? These contextual factors can create needs for solutions.

Look for any major changes or pressures the company is facing. Are they going through a **digital transformation**, a **merger**, **layoffs**, or navigating **new regulations**? These events often signal pain points that create a need for new solutions. Referencing these initiatives in your messaging shows you understand their world – and that your outreach is not generic.

- **Mapping their organizational structure.**
  Who are the decision makers? An ABM approach will create a map of roles at the account: e.g., for a software sale, decision-maker might be CIO, influencers might be IT managers and department heads, procurement might be involved, etc.

ABM requires a clear picture of the people involved in the buying process. Build an organizational map of decision-makers, influencers, and stakeholders within each account. The CEO might be the ultimate decision-maker, while IT managers and department heads act as influencers, and procurement oversees contracts. Use LinkedIn, company websites, and other tools to gather names, titles, and reporting lines. In large enterprises, understanding the buying center – who are the users, approvers, and budget holders – is crucial to targeting your messaging effectively.

- **Checking technographics.**
  What systems do they use? If your ABM target already uses a competing SaaStool , that's key information. Or if they have complementary systems your product integrates with, that's a talking point.

Next, check what tools and platforms are they currently using? This "technographic" data can be gathered from **job postings**, **customer case studies**, or platforms like **BuiltWith**. If your target account is already using a competing tool, that's an opening for a competitive angle. Alternatively, if they use a system your product integrates well with, highlight that in your pitch.

- **Looking for trigger events.**
  For example, a new CFO hired (maybe open to new vendors), recent funding (means budget and growth), negative news (data breach = likely to invest in security solutions)

Finally, stay alert for events that create sales opportunities. A new executive hire may signal openness to new vendors. Recent funding often means budget availability and a push for growth. Even negative news, such as a data breach, could create urgency for solutions like yours. These trigger events help you prioritize outreach timing and personalize your message based on what's happening now.

Step 3: Define Account-Specific Goals and KPIs.

Let's continue with the third step. For each account, clarify what you want to achieve and how you'll measure progress. Obviously the end goal is to win the deal. But interim KPIs would include:

- Key contacts engaged
- Meetings or demos completed.
- Or proposal or trial stage reached.

Setting these helps track if your ABM efforts are making headway. It also helps you decide when to keep pushing on an account or when an account might not be responding and perhaps should be de-prioritized.

Step 4: Tailor Your Value Proposition to the Account.

The fourth step is tailoring the value proposition to the account. Based on your research, determine the **key value messages** for this account. Sometimes you will essentially create a mini "pitch" unique to that account.

Step 5: Develop Personalized Content and Outreach Plan.

Now the tactical plan: decide on **the multi-channel campaign for the account.** ABM uses a mix of channels, let's take a look at them.

**Personalized Emails/Letters**

First, there are highly customized emails or letters to key stakeholders. Possibly written as if one-to-one from a senior executive in your company to a senior executive in theirs.

Account-Specific Ads

Then we have account-specific ads. Many ABM platforms like **Demandbase**, **6sense**, or **Terminus** enable targeting ads just to the IP addresses of target accounts or cookie-based targeting of people from those companies. You can prepare display ads or LinkedIn ads that are literally just seen by that account's employees. These ads can be customized with visuals or messaging that reflect the account's industry, challenges, or terminology—making them feel relevant without directly naming the company.

Direct Mail
Physical present
Custom content

As discussed previously, sending something physical can be a powerful ABM tactic. This might be a well-designed package with a personalized note that creates a memorable first impression.
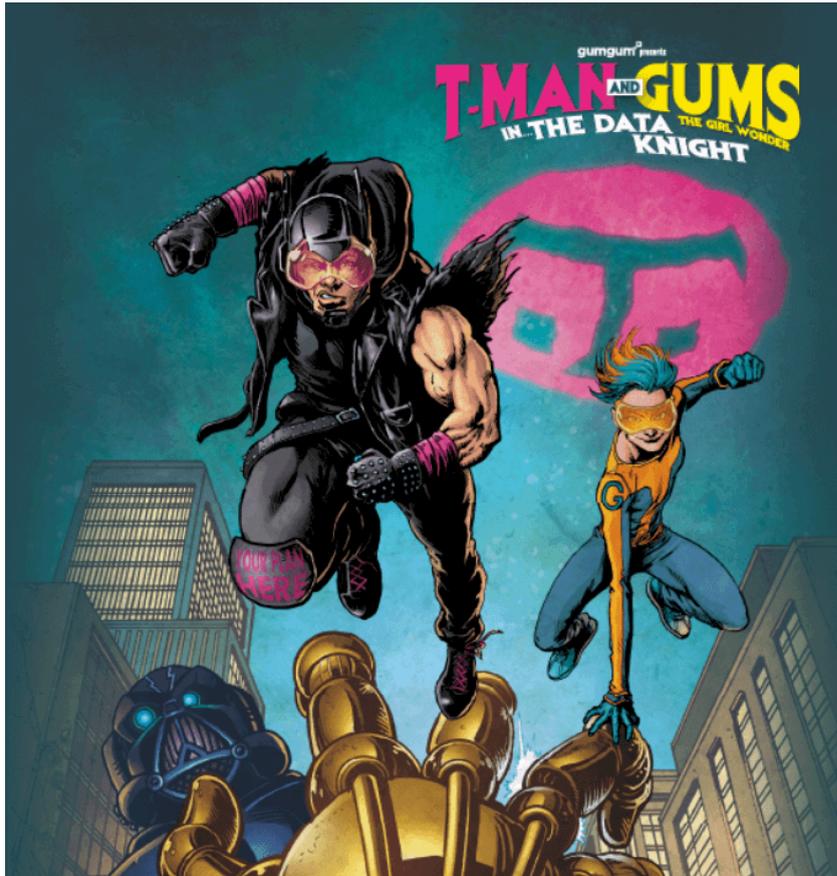
One standout example is GumGum's campaign targeting T-Mobile. Instead of a generic pitch, they created a custom comic book starring T-Mobile's CEO as the main character. The comic creatively illustrated how GumGum's solution could support T-Mobile's goals. This unique gift played a key role in winning a multi-million-dollar deal. It shows that going the extra mile with personalization and creativity can truly set your outreach apart.

Next, you can create a custom content like a **whitepaper or brochure just for a specific account**. This kind of content shows extreme dedication and insight - it often impresses the prospect. Another example is making a custom demo or microsite for the account. Some SaaS companies even build a small prototype using the prospect's data if data is public or can be simulated to show, "here's what our analytics would look like with your data.

Webinars or Events for One

Finally, we have hosting events specifically for the account. Companies invite their prospects to a private workshop or dinner. If multiple people in the account are involved, organizing a roundtable with them can be effective.

The outreach plan should schedule a sequence of these touches over weeks or months. It might look like: Week 1 – send introductory email from sales rep, serve LinkedIn ads. Week 2 – make a follow-up call, send a direct mail package. Week 3 – executive sends LinkedIn InMail or a personal letter. Week 4 – invite them to a VIP webinar featuring. And so on.

It's orchestrated so that the account sees a **coordinated, consistent narrative** across channels. Each interaction should build on the previous. Okay, let's move on - just two steps remaining.

Step 6: Execute and Monitor Engagement

The sixth step is launching the campaign and keeping a close eye on responses. Track if target individuals are opening emails, clicking links, visiting the website. If you notice engagement, that might trigger the sales representative to reach out immediately with a phone call. ABM is often about **quick reaction** when an account shows interest, because you have such a small list you can afford to be very attentive. If after multiple touches an account is radio silent, the team can huddle to tweak the approach: maybe the message isn't landing? Or maybe the timing is wrong? It's a bit like a pursuit – you calibrate as you go.

Step 7: Prioritize Accounts and Re-allocate as Necessary.

Over time, some accounts will progress and some may remain unengaged. As you prioritize and re-allocate accounts, metrics play a crucial role in guiding your decisions. While I introduced KPIs earlier to track progress within individual accounts, here we use those same indicators like account engagement scores, number of meetings booked, or pipeline generated to evaluate performance across your entire target list. These metrics help you identify which accounts are showing real momentum and deserve continued investment, and which ones may need to be paused or deprioritized.

So, we've talked about strategies and tactics. In the next video, we'll discuss the platforms and software that help execute these outbound and ABM campaigns at scale.