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## HOW TO USE ABM TO SELL LARGE EXHIBITORS

By John M. Coe, VP of Business Development

### What's ABM?

In the last five years Account Based Marketing (ABM) has swept through the B2B world like a Tasmanian devil to where **65% of B2B firms are now using this strategy** to sell large/key target accounts. As you may well recognize, ABM has its roots in Strategic Account Management that B2B sales staffs have been utilizing for decades to sell and retain key accounts.

While not a new selling strategy, marketers recently “discovered” it, and quickly adopted ABM as a **new approach to improve lead generation** results. One of the main drivers was that B2B marketers were under increasing pressure to deliver leads that sales actually wanted. There **existed a gap** (some would say canyon) between the “qualified” leads (MQL) marketing sent to sales, and what sales thought of those “leads” (No Good). I won't go into the gory details here, but needless to say sales were not happy as the leads were seldom from the accounts they wanted to crack – usually the larger accounts. ABM to the marketer's rescue!

By **collaborating with sales to identify these key accounts** and then generating engagement with these accounts marketing finally did align with what sales actually wanted. It has worked so well that 92% of B2B firms are implementing ABM (see Engagio's Outlook Report <https://resources.engagio.com/account-based-marketing/abm-outlook-survey-2018>).

### How Should Organizers Adopt ABM to Sell Large Exhibitors?

Large potential exhibitors are on all sales groups target list. Prior sales effort has obviously taken place, but not succeeded to date. So implementing an ABM approach will give new life to selling these large exhibitors. It's here where your marketing talents can help the sales staff.

There are books and many white papers written on ABM, and this blog is not intended to be a rehash on how to do it. We suggest you read up on this strategy, but in the meantime here are the **generally accepted 7 steps to implement ABM&S** once you're committed to go forward.

#### 1. Target the large potential exhibitors

- a. Input for targeting should not be exclusively from sales
- b. Once input is complete, pick a list of accounts – no more than 100 for this first effort.



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2. **Identify the buying process** as to who are the functional individuals involved in making the exhibiting decision. There might be 4-6+ individuals in large accounts and titles/functions are likely to be:
  - a. Trade show manager – the obvious key contact
  - b. Executive who the trade show manager reports to – typically the VP of marketing and in large companies it could be one level lower
  - c. Sales VP and/or other sales executives
  - d. VP Product Management – new product introductions at trade shows are very important and logical and critical to this functions success
  - e. Economic buyer – typically a purchasing and/or CFO type
  - f. Most senior level executive that is aware and/or participates in the industry conferences as a speaker, industry expert etc.
  
3. **Gather the contact data** on these individuals via direct or indirect means – this data is mailing address, email and phone number plus LinkedIn profile/connection
  - a. Don't rely solely on internal or external lists – confirm by actual contact with the company
  - b. Some of the outside data sources to investigate are as they claim to have deep coverage in their database plus emails and direct phone numbers:
    - **SalesIntel** <https://salesintel.io>
    - **Synthio** <https://synthio.com>
    - **ZoomInfo** <https://www.zoominfo.com>
    - **DiscoverOrg** <https://discoverorg.com>
    - **InsideView** <https://www.insideview.com>

I've had some recent experience with SalesIntel and can vouch for the depth of their contact data with emails and direct phone numbers. It's not perfect (no list is), but better than any other data provider I've experienced.
  
4. **Develop the most relevant value proposition** for each target account and individual functional responsibility
  - a. It may be different for the prospect exhibitor's industry segments.
  
5. **Develop personas and key benefits** for exhibiting at the show for the functions in the buying process. Educate the marketing and sales team on these personas and benefits.



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6. **Plan a communication cadence** that teams the marketing and sales group together and divides the roles and responsibility. Here's the traditional cadence:

**Monday:** Arrival of the **impact mailing** (that means sending it on Friday via overnight mail). If the mailing is sent to more than one individual, reference them all, but identify the person who will receive the follow-up. This will create an internal discussion between those who received the package and that's good.

**Tuesday: E-mail** all individuals referencing the mailing package and offer. Note in the email that you will be calling the identified individual the following day. Include an opportunity for response, and if the offer is acted upon, you should know who responded so that can be mentioned in the follow-up phone call

**Wednesday: Call** the individual selected referencing the mailing package, email and reinforcing the offer in the voice mail you are likely to leave. Typically only 1 or 2 out of 10 calls will be answered by the individual so repeat calls are likely needed.

**Thursday – Friday:** Assuming no connection or call back, **continue to call**.

**Next Week:** Stay with it and **use a combination of e-mail and phone calls** to initiate the first conversation. This process will not always work, but using a multi-touch and multi-media approach will greatly increase response and engagement rates.

7. **Execute and measure results** for both short term and long term payoff.
  - a. Give it time to work, as you are selling large accounts and decisions do not move quickly

#### **To Sum Up:**

Exhibitors are challenged to justify all marketing and sales expenses more than ever, as they evaluate new technology solutions for lead generation and branding. This brings into focus the large trade show budgets, their value and ROI. Thus, **you will need to not only sell harder, but more in depth at large clients to convince them to exhibit at your show**. Fortunately, the new ABM strategy is available for organizers to steal from other B2B shows. It will be the smart organizers who use this strategy that will win!



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### **Direct Hit Marketing**

Direct Hit Marketing (DHM) based in Longmont, CO has been providing data analytics to the trade show industry for 26 years with its **360 Registration Data Analytics Program™**. This data service starts with the show's registration data and combines it with the targeted mail, email and phone communications that were used to drive registration, and returns to the organizer up to 35 reports of what worked and what did not. **The cost savings in mailings alone typically more than offsets the data analytic fee plus provides insight in how to improve future marketing programs.**

### **John M. Coe**

John has partnered with Direct Hit Marketing and is responsible for adding new trade show clients and thought leadership. John is also President of B2BMarketing.com. His background includes experience in both sales and marketing. On the sales side, John was a field salesman, national sales manager and executive in charge of both sales and marketing for three major B2B firms. On the marketing side, he was president of a B2B direct marketing agency for 10 years, was National Campaign Manager at IBM, Sr. VP of B2B at Rapp Collins Worldwide and President of Protocol B2B. John is also the author of *The Fundamentals of Business-to-Business Sales & Marketing*, published by McGraw-Hill. **John's next book co-authored with Steve Juedes, President of DHM is titled *Data-Driven Trade Show Marketing & Sales for Organizers and Exhibitors* is due for publication in 2019.** He can be reached at [johnc@directhitmarketing.com](mailto:johnc@directhitmarketing.com) or by phone at 602-402-6588.