

THE DATA STRATEGY BLUEPRINT SERIES

ACCOUNT-BASED ENGAGEMENT

dun & bradstreet

salesforce data.com

“It’s time to recognize that we’re not marketing and selling to a lead, we’re marketing and selling to an account.”

– Jon Miller, CEO and Co-Founder, Engagio

Welcome to the third eBook in The Data Strategy Blueprint Series: Account-Based Engagement.

- [In our first installment](#), we talked about the importance of establishing a structurally sound data quality foundation for growth through customer and prospect insights.
- [In our second installment](#), we mapped out a data-informed territory management floor plan to align sales across your account base for customer loyalty, efficient motivated sales people and a funnel for profitable growth.

Now we focus on bringing data, technology, sales and marketing efforts together for well-appointed Account-Based Engagement (ABE). While Account-Based “Marketing” is a mainstream term in the B2B world, we think “Engagement” is a more accurate description for how a company’s sales and marketing teams should interact with their customers. The shift in orientation is from selling to a broad base of individuals to targeting specific accounts. And within those accounts, the task is to engage the multiple stakeholders along an increasingly non-linear online and offline buying path, through channels owned by sales, marketing and other groups in your company.

ABE can be sales and marketing professionals’ direct path to customer growth and loyalty. But incomplete data can distort the big account picture. One-off customer interactions, when disjointed from a well-connected account strategy, can result in impersonal customer experiences and irrelevant, self-serving content that can sabotage your carefully architected plans.

Today’s B2B buyers are clearly in charge of their path to purchase. While individuals at companies make purchasing decisions, the business foots the bill. Rarely does a single person have the power to unilaterally invest in a complex business solution. In large enterprises, whole departments are dedicated to procuring capital and services, looking for reasons to throw up red flags or block purchases. So, the more you know about your account’s business model, stakeholder dynamics, goals and interests, the better your ability to provide solutions and develop meaningful relationships with them.

This eBook will help you put the finishing touches on your data strategy blueprint, using an account-based approach to buyer experiences that will build revenue growth and long lasting relationships. This method relies on quality business and account data to build the plan that will have your customers coming back to buy again and again.

THE DATA STRATEGY BLUEPRINT SERIES

Building a structure to bear the load of a successful business requires an intelligent plan. Structural plans start with a foundation and frame: solid, high-quality data that strengthens the walls of the business, connects power throughout the organization and pipes in insights about your customers and prospects.

This series is focused on helping you design that blueprint, with guidance from the data architecture experts at Data.com and Dun & Bradstreet.



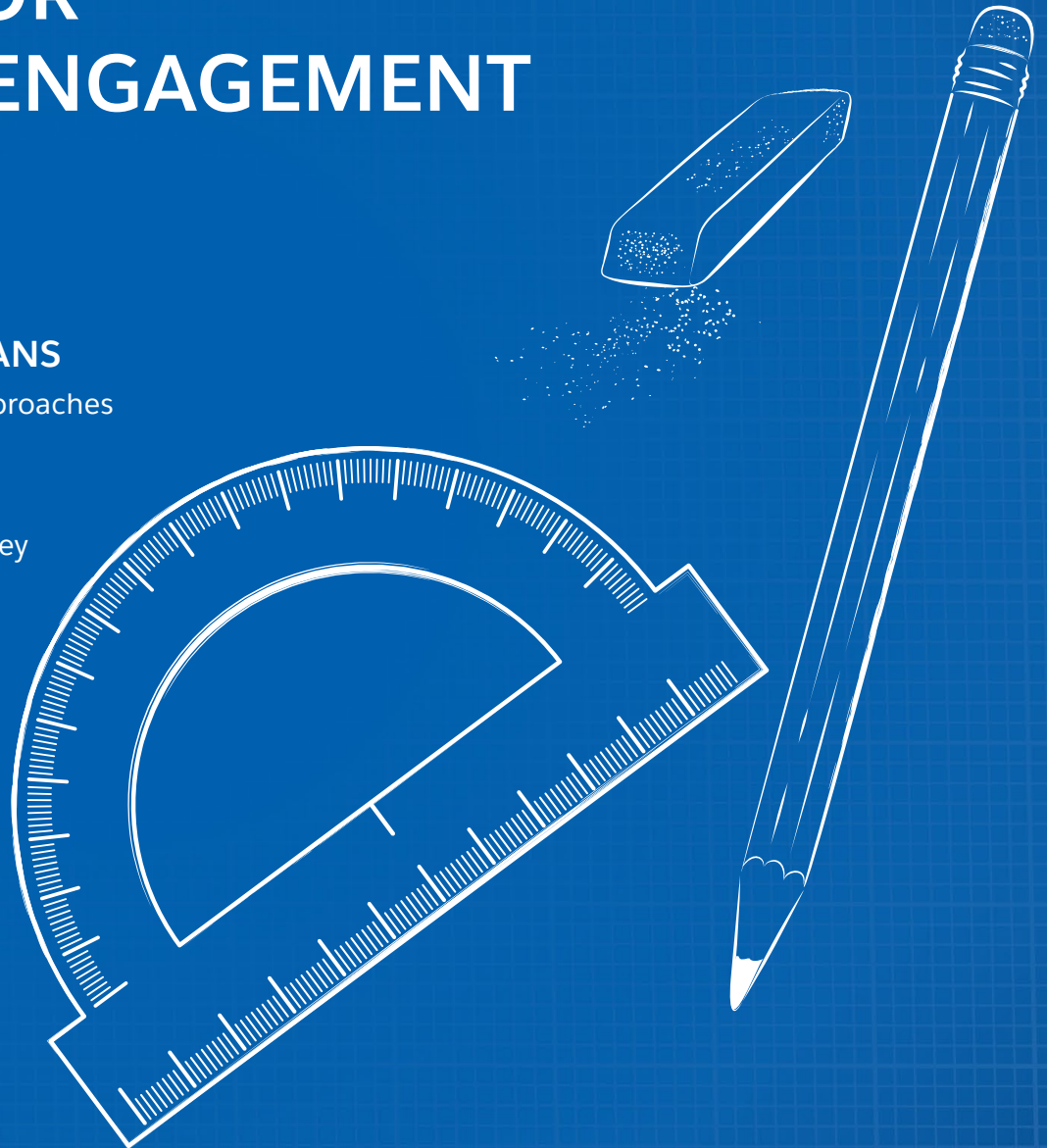
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THE BLUEPRINT FOR ACCOUNT-BASED ENGAGEMENT

- 1 DISCERNING ACCOUNT SELECTION**
Evaluate advanced insights to focus your efforts
- 2 COLLABORATIVE ENGAGEMENT PLANS**
Create custom sales and marketing account approaches
- 3 BUYER EXPERIENCES BY DESIGN**
Personalize interaction along your buyer's journey



DISCERNING ACCOUNT SELECTION

The decisions you make about the accounts you engage with are like designing rooms inside your carefully constructed home. Form and function need to reflect your lifestyle. So too, your company has carefully built products or services for the customers who need them most.

But Who Are Your Best Customers?

In this Gallup article, “the definition of a (B2B) ‘customer’ is more elusive (than B2C). This is because several decision-makers from different functional areas in a B2B company usually jointly make decisions to purchase products or services.

Activating data and analytics for selecting and engaging the right accounts and the corresponding set of contacts is vital for planning your ABE approach. It takes a deliberate commitment to establish a high-quality customer profile enhanced with third-party data that your sales and marketing teams can use to inspire their customer engagement techniques.

In Dun & Bradstreet’s [2016 Marketing Data Report](#), survey respondents were asked, “How do you utilize demographic and firmographic data to improve success?”

Answer: 58% utilize data to model best customers and identify best audience segments.

You can run all kinds of analysis scenarios, but it’s critical to align your business based on what the results reveal – building a virtuous cycle from your learnings and adapting your ABE approach.

Choosing accounts based on key data insights will help your sales and marketing teams design personalized experiences that will have buyers knocking at your door.



BEST PRACTICES

Following is a five-step pyramid for data-informed Account-Based Engagement.

Integrating your first-party CRM data with trusted third-party firmographics about your accounts lies at the foundation. But that's just the start. As you become increasingly strategic, you gain more sophistication in evaluating risk and opportunity to help you focus on the right accounts. Advanced analytics, predicting customers' future behavior and having a strong understanding of the market landscape drive growth with your target accounts.



COLLABORATIVE ENGAGEMENT PLANS

Can you imagine your house builder saying you have three laminate kitchen countertop options - white, brown and black - and you must come into the showroom in person to make your selections?

The face-to-face, one-on-one, buyer-seller model has been turned on its head. It has everything to do with customers and their ability to take increasing ownership over their path to purchase.

- According to a study from the [Corporate Executive Board](#), **57% of the buyer's journey is complete** by the time he or she reaches out to sales.
- Even more, according to [the research](#) published by CEB, **5.4 people** have to formally authorize each purchase, complicating sales and marketing for the seller.

You must adapt to your customer's ownership of the selling process with proactive approaches that are relevant and efficient. Once you've done the data analysis to identify your priority targets, you can build sales and marketing teams that offer white-glove treatment to defined accounts.

ACCOUNT TEAM SUCCESS CONSIDERATIONS

Factors:

Assigning and aligning dedicated resources is a costly investment



Agreeing to shared team goals and resource commitments is a must



Creating great customer engagement means everyone is engaged and dedicated



Actions:

Make sure you're focused on the right accounts

Do this before you execute tactics

Solicit input from customer service and sales for marketing plans, make content available to sales

Building an account plan with team members who participate in the evaluation, comparison and selection from strategy to tactics results in a coordinated design where the entire team can thrive.



HOW IS LEAD GENERATION DIFFERENT FROM ABE?

Account Based Engagement is not like a traditional sales and marketing strategy. Marketing programs have been hamstrung by the necessity of proving results through leads to their sales teams - a technique that requires massive quantities of potential prospects entering the top of the funnel, from which a few worthy buyers emerge.

B2B buying decisions are made differently than in the past - and it's much more than a raw numbers game to convert leads to sales.

“However, labeling ABM as a marketing program is a misnomer. It’s really a business initiative that requires marketers to partner more closely with other teams, including product, sales, IT and customer service.”

[Five Steps to Lay Out Your Landscape Like an ABM Pro](#)

ACCOUNT-BASED ENGAGEMENT GOES BEYOND “LEAD GEN”

| QUESTION | TRADITIONAL MARKETING | ABE |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| What does it deliver? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low effort, high volume of leads • Waterfall of leads that result in relatively low conversion rate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High effort and revenue upside per sale • Marketing and sales active account plan architects |
| What will it do? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start at the top of the buyer funnel • Feed the lead pipeline • Reach a broad audience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start where the customer is in the buyer’s journey • Focus on targeted accounts, coordinating personalized marketing and sales efforts • Reduce wasted efforts on low-value leads unlikely to convert |
| Who will be involved? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The marketing team creates leads and tosses them “over the fence” to sales | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core strategic ABE team: product marketing lead, sales lead, vertical specialist, account rep, events manager, product director, content director, customer service/ success lead, solution engineer (SE) • Key teams will analyze approach and results to benchmark subsequent ABE efforts |
| Where will it be applied? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad blanket approach • Individual leads within one or more lists/ or segments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliberately targeted, high propensity to buy ABE-qualified accounts |
| When will it happen? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign duration • Website form completion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anytime in the buyer’s journey and customer lifetime |
| How will it be executed? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inbound tactics • Outbound tactics • On schedule or trigger | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sales and marketing teams share ABE strategy, specific roles and responsibilities • Follow the prospect’s lead on timing, but suggest and advise on right timeline |
| How will it be measured? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response rate • New lead volume • MQL TO SQL • Qualification • Close rate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revenue • Renewals • Sales productivity • Customer upsell and cross-sell- product mix • Retention/loyalty |

This table was adapted from [Five Steps to Lay Out Your Landscape Like an ABM Pro](#)

BUYER EXPERIENCES BY DESIGN

Account research and targeting is done. The sales and marketing teams are aligned on an account engagement game plan. Now it's time to design and execute the personalized experiences you will have with your account contacts as they make their way to the place they call home.

Like most hot business buzzwords, the term "personalization" has become overused. But that doesn't diminish its importance when planning how, when and with whom to engage; using data to guide the approach; and investing in technology to take action against the plan.

A TREND TOWARD PERSONALIZED EXPERIENCES

60%

of B2B companies plan to invest in Account Based Marketing Tech

2015 State of Account-Based Marketing (ABM) Study.
Sirius Decisions

64%

of people value experience over price

64% of people say the customer experience is more important than price in their choice of a brand.
Gartner, 2014

52%

of marketers focus on specific buyer personas

52% of marketers support two to four roles and buyer personas with dedicated content.
LinkedIn Marketing Community

Delivering personalized engagement may feel complicated and laborious. Moving the needle to better customer experiences can happen quickly by adjusting the language in your core messaging based on what you know about your audience. Think first about customizing your approach using your broad business segments like industry and company size as a guidepost. When speaking to customers or prospects, recognize the level of awareness they have about your company and offerings. Once you see results, you can test your message with different audience iterations, for example combining multiple segments or adding behavioral/buyer's journey filters.

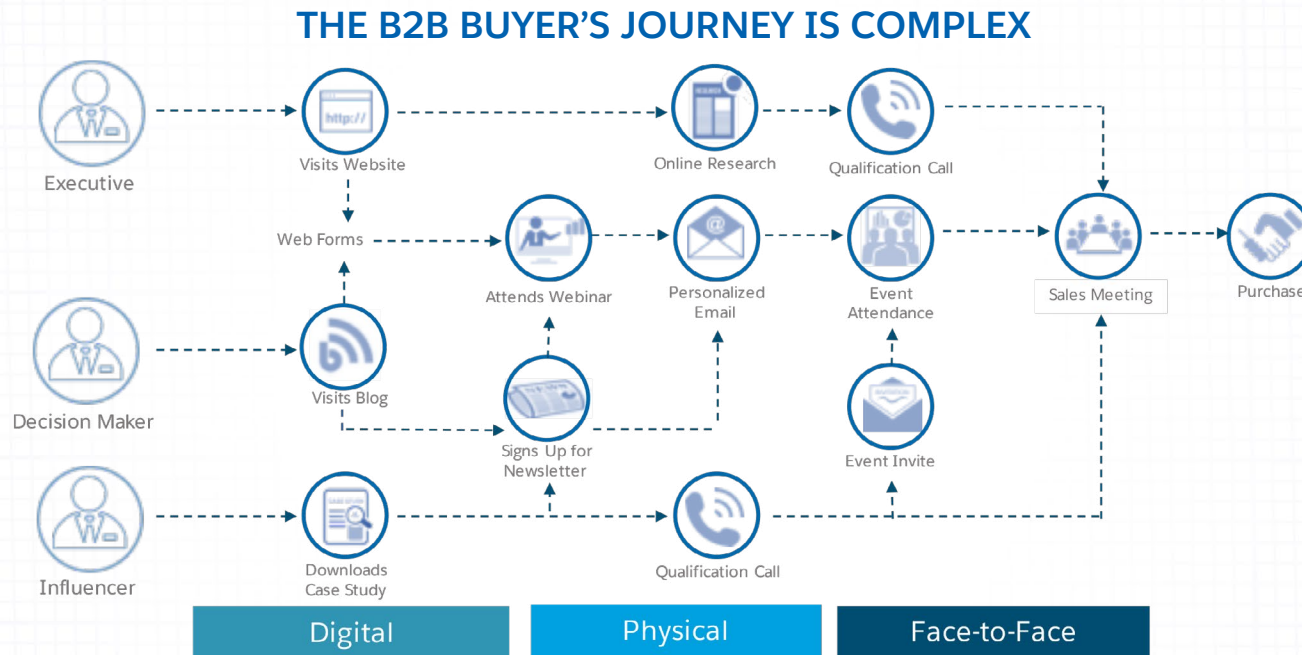


B2B EXPERIENCES MUST BE OMNICHANNEL

Pinterest, Houzz, smart phone apps, website searches, home expos, online reviews, showroom visits...These are just a few ways today's home buyers make orchestrated design selections.

So too, the classic business funnel/lead generation model is quickly evolving to an omnichannel engagement model. The B2B buyer's journey

is much more complex than a B2C buyer's path. Multiple contacts for one account are coming and going along a non-linear variety of online and offline experiences. Successful ABE means meeting your customers along their journey, no matter which paths they choose, in an order that makes sense to their buying styles.



OMNICHANNEL, FRICTIONLESS, FLUID

Once again, data plays a critical role in designing a successful outcome. You need data and analytics about those customer touch points to:

- Analyze and model successful accounts and engagements to identify ideal-fit prospects and tactics.
- Deliver relevant online content, present account-specific offers and/or have meaningful live conversations when and where your customers choose to engage with you.

- Tie all these connections together to continually improve experience and engagement with a given account.
- Measure effectiveness of sales efforts and ROI of marketing investments.

Remember that ABE isn't linear. Pivot ABE tactics as needed, and share with the entire team as new information is uncovered.

ACCOUNT-BASED ENGAGEMENT DELIVERS CUSTOMER SUCCESS

A well-designed customer engagement plan is your best opportunity to communicate the value of your products and services to your target market and create success for your company and your customers.

Your customers have taken ownership over their buying process. Multiple influencers are involved, and they spend time both online and offline to inform their decisions. It's imperative you embrace how your customers learn and buy. You need to understand how they use your solutions, recommend you to others and alert you to when they're ready for more that you have to offer.

Data is the key to knowing who, how, when and where to engage with your accounts. It also tells you how effective your sales and marketing efforts have been, and how to improve ongoing.

ABE is not yesterday's lead management cookie-cutter construct. It's today's carefully crafted, customer first blueprint, backed by quality data.

To effectively engage with the right accounts you need to:

1. Rely on world-class B2B data joined with your first party data to understand what your best customers and prospects look like.
2. Use those customer insights for sales and marketing teams to build well-appointed accounts plans.
3. Make every touch-point with your customers count as they travel their buyer's journey that ends with a purchase and a customer for life.

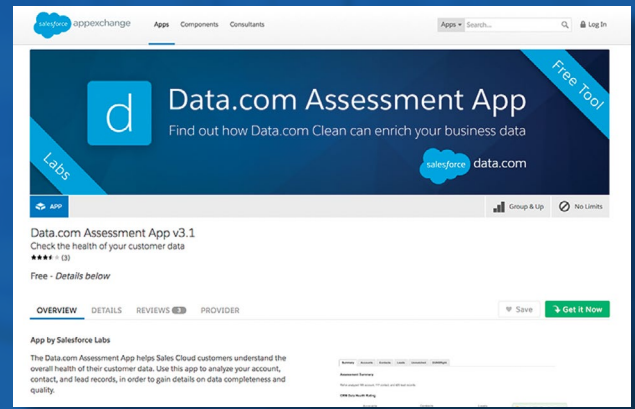
Invest the time upfront with thoughtful due-diligence about what your best customers care about. Then design the processes and acquire the tools to be able to deliver an impactful experience. You will reap the rewards from your data-framed account designs.





HOW HEALTHY IS YOUR DATA?

Download the free Data.com Assessment App from the AppExchange. You get a complete picture of your data health, with details on record completeness, duplicates, and field level accuracy. Plus, we'll show you how Data.com can immediately improve your data to super charge your Sales and Marketing processes.



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