



2019 STATE OF
**ACCOUNT-
BASED
MARKETING**

Key trends and insights to keep you ahead in 2020

FlipMyFunnel

terminus

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zoominfo
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Table of Contents

Introduction	3	ABM Technology and Org Focus	23
Respondent Breakdown	4	ABM Technology	24
Key Findings	7	Today's ABM Tech Stack	25
Overview	8	Consolidating Your Tech Stack	26
Adoption Trends (2016-2019)	9	Org Focus	27
Barriers to Adoption (2019)	11	ABM vs. Outbound	28
Program Goals	12	Measuring Results	29
Trends for Lead Gen in Advanced ABM Programs	13	2019 KPIs	31
A Note on Brand from our Friends at LinkedIn	14	Conclusion	32
Brand and Demand	15	About Our Contributors	33
Early Stage vs Advanced Program Successes	16	About Our Partners	34
New and Ongoing Challenges	17		
Additional Challenges (2019)	18		
Trends for ABM Challenges by Stage	19		
Confidence with ABM (2019)	20		
Early Stage vs Advanced ABM Program Confidence	21		
Establishing Greater Confidence	22		

Introduction

Account-based marketing has officially moved beyond the buzz. While the strategy is as old as B2B itself, the new technology emerging to support the growing demands of today's B2B landscape is becoming more standardized as practitioners solidify their ABM strategies and KPIs become more normalized.

ABM is mainstream (goodbye early adoption phase)

14.7% of 2018 survey respondents reported running ABM programs at their current companies for more than three years.

45% of 2019 survey respondents with active programs have been practicing ABM for over 3 years (and virtually no respondents have no experience at all).

As the market continues to mature, ABM programs are becoming more advanced and experienced ABM practitioners will continue to grow in demand. This indicates that if you are not running at least a small ABM program to establish learnings for your company or personal career — you're falling behind (and may struggle to catch back up).

A Newton's cradle with three silver spheres hanging from thin wires against a teal background. The spheres are in motion, with the middle one having just struck the other two, creating a slight blur and reflection on the surface below.

As ABM as a practice continues to evolve, ABM programs are becoming more sophisticated and experienced leaders will be able to leverage their learnings to scale new programs in emerging markets even faster.



RESPONDENT BREAKDOWN

Respondent Breakdown

To better understand the state of account-based marketing in 2019, FlipMyFunnel, in collaboration with Terminus, Sigstr, and ZoomInfo, conducted a survey over three weeks in October 2019. With questions focused on how successful B2B practitioners use ABM to generate more qualified demand and drive more reliable revenue for their business, the State of ABM Survey sought to collect information about why, how, and how well marketers use account-based strategies and what advanced practitioners were doing differently from early stage practitioners.

The following responses came from 231 sales and marketing professionals from organizations that range from SMB to large enterprise, across a range of industries.

A note on exclusion:

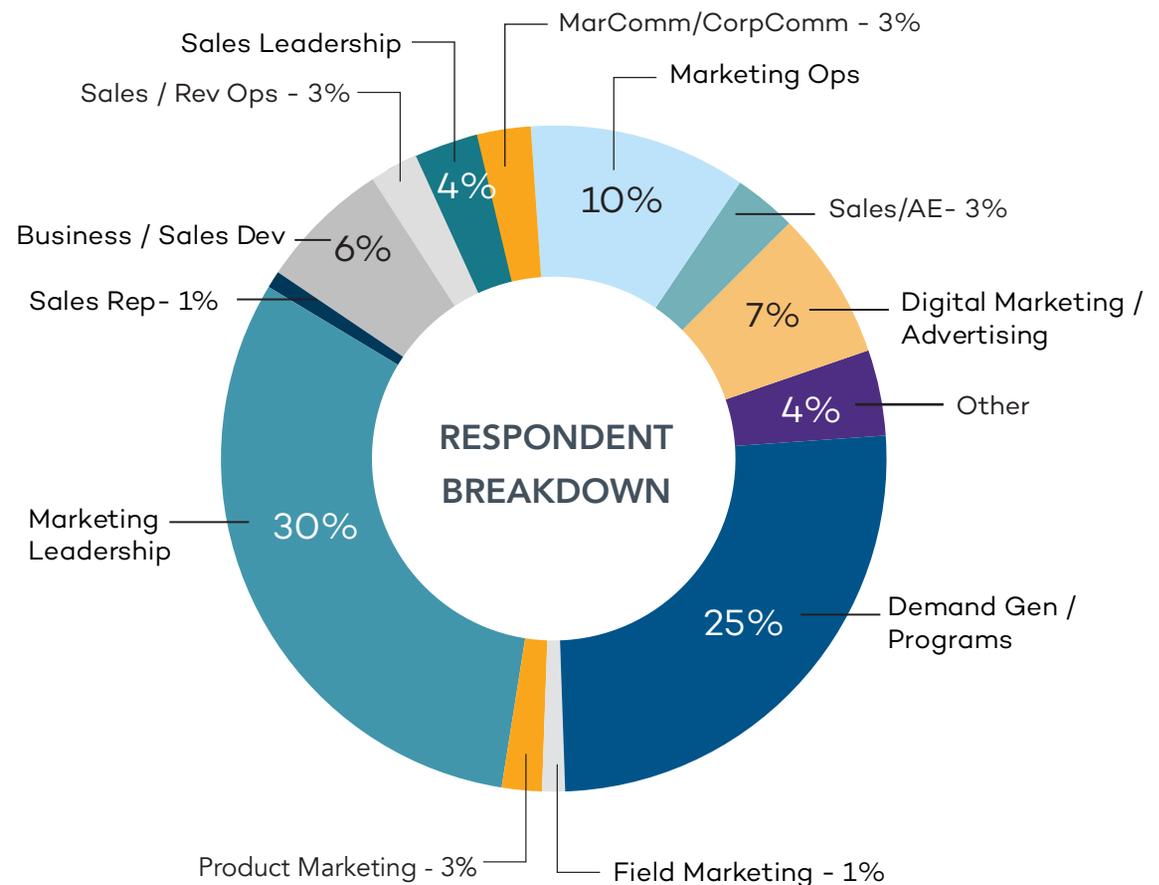
For ABM adoption and maturity trends, we included all 231 respondents in our analysis.

For ABM execution and strategy trends, we excluded respondents without an active ABM program, reducing the count to 154.

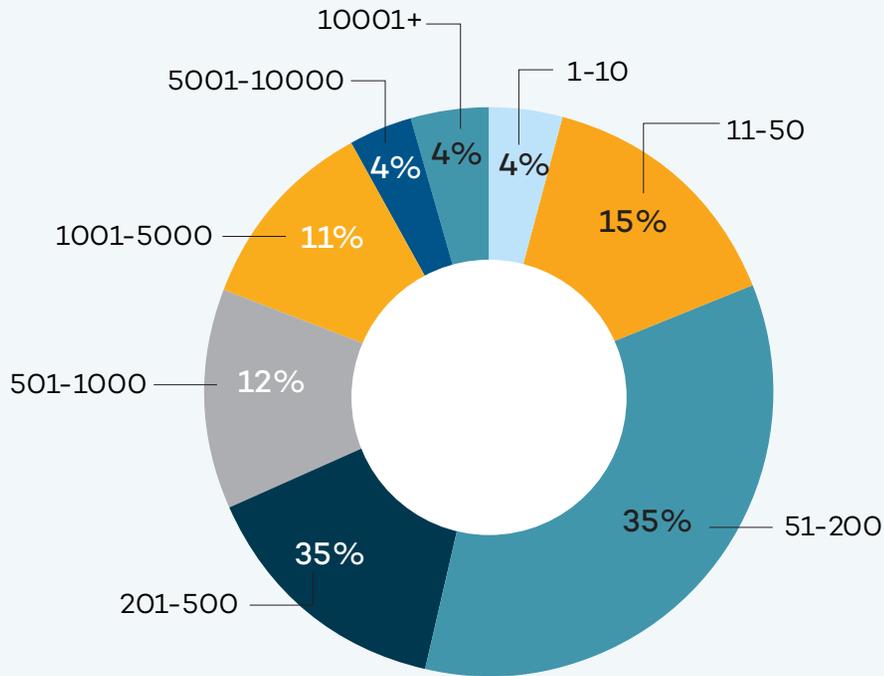
This was to ensure that trends on implementation and KPIs were represented only by true ABM practitioners.

Our survey questioned majority marketing and demand gen leaders who were moderately to extremely knowledgeable about ABM.

Which function most closely matches your role?

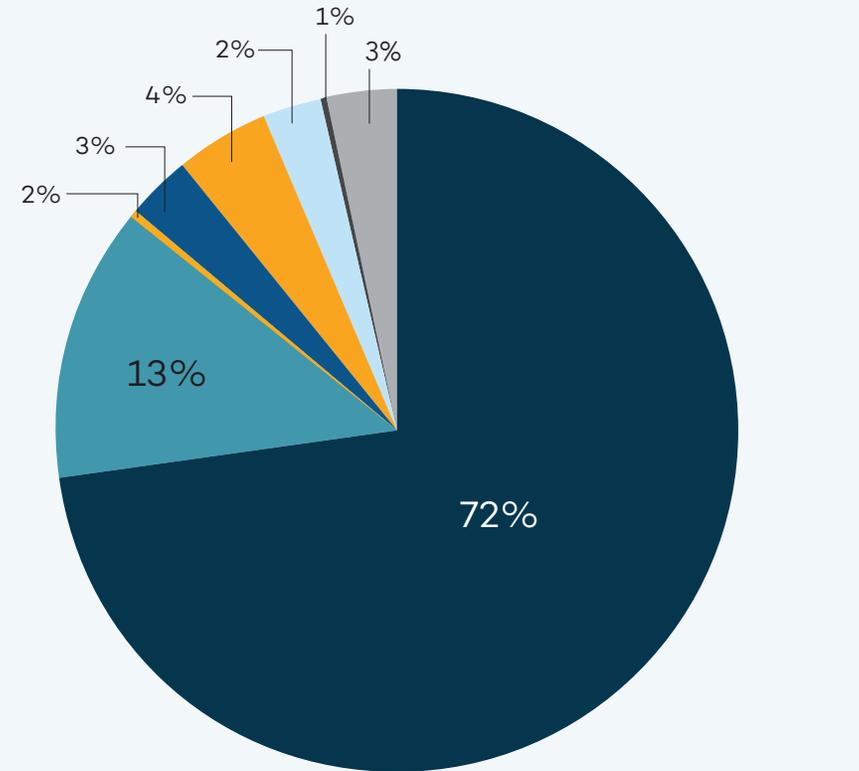


How many folks work at your company?



More than half of surveyed companies with active ABM programs are SMBs and mid-market.

In what industry is your company best categorized?



The majority of surveyed active ABM practitioners were from technology or software companies followed by business services or consulting.



KEY FINDINGS

Key Findings



The largest barrier

to further ABM adoption is having enough personnel with the necessary experience **(41%)**.



The tech stacks

of those who had confidence in their ABM programs were most likely to support these features:

Account-based analytics **(79%)**

Account-based advertising **(73%)**

Account-level web engagement insights **(58%)**



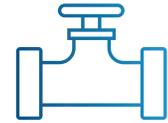
Acquisition was the top priority

for ABM practitioners, with lead gen declining as a focus.



Having the right content

for an account-based approach was listed as the biggest challenge for ABM practitioners **(44%)**.



Pipeline generated

was listed as the most important KPI to measure ABM success.

ABM Adoption Trends (2016-2019)

In 2019, **67%** of sales and marketing professionals reported having an active ABM program at their company, versus **49%** in 2016. Nearly **52%** of currently active practitioners report that their active ABM programs are either broadly implemented or advanced with only **48%** reporting early-stage programs.

In a major shift from last year's results, there were no respondents who listed themselves as having completed a pilot *without launching an early-stage ABM program*. This further indicates that as the market moves beyond the early adopter phase, most companies will hire experienced ABM practitioners who do not need a pilot to launch a robust ABM program.

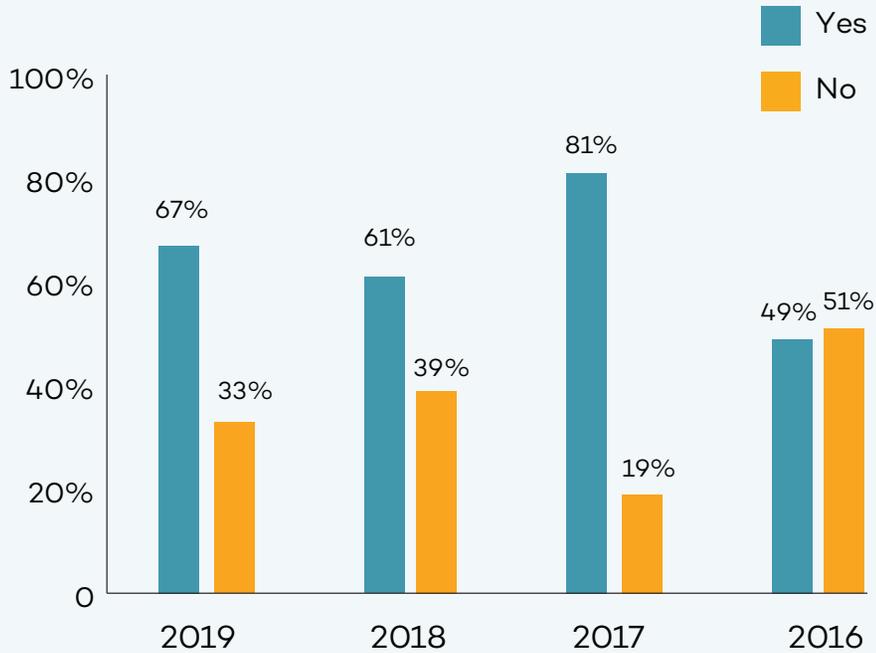
2020 Prediction:

As B2B sales and marketing teams become more experienced in ABM, these maturing (and more successful) programs will replace current inbound/outbound marketing programs. This will allow both sales and marketing teams to focus on full-funnel activity from top to bottom for a select set of target accounts.



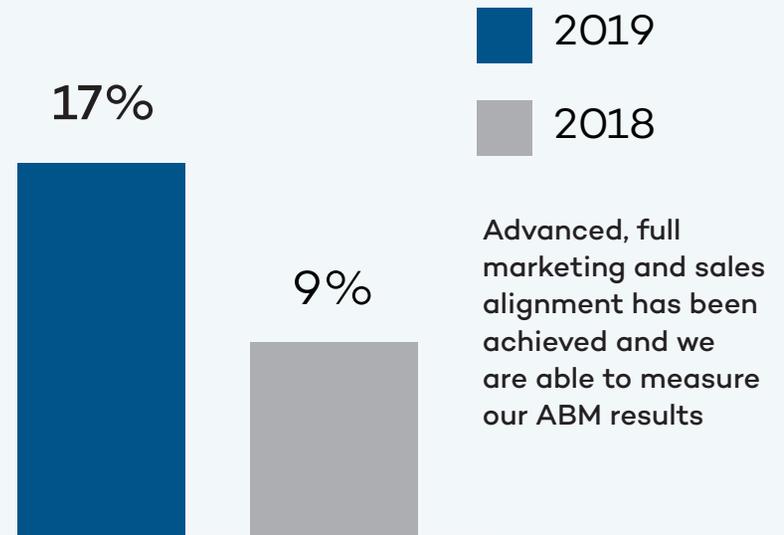
ABM Adoption Trends (2016-2019)

Are you currently practicing ABM?



The hype machine was in full force in 2017 with many companies launching nascent account-based programs without the technology or experience to support marketing and sales alignment or a sophisticated ABM strategy. This led to a sharp decline of programs in 2018 — coinciding with Gartner’s trough of disillusionment — followed by a rebound in 2019 as new technology helped stabilize and sustain the practice.

How would you classify your organization’s stage of ABM implementation?



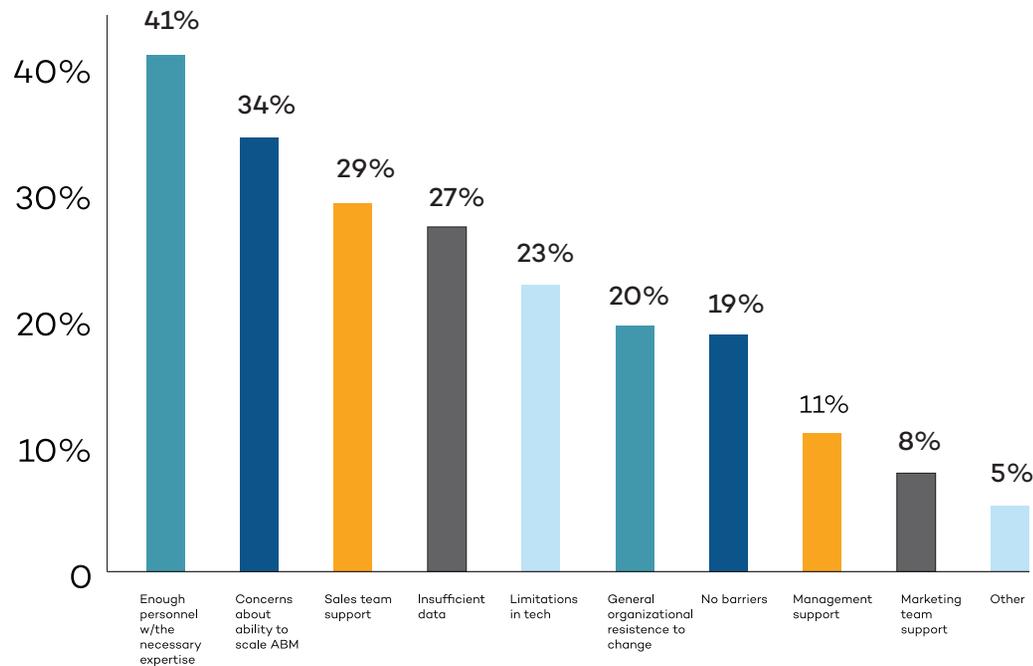
Those companies who stuck with their ABM programs were rewarded with new technologies and more experienced practitioners — resulting in the doubling of advanced ABM programs in the market. [This indicates we are past both the early adopter phase and Gartner’s trough of disillusionment.](#)

Barriers to Adoption (2019)

Are you struggling to drive greater adoption of ABM at your organization? You're not alone. If you want to launch a robust ABM program, you will need to also build the institutional infrastructure to address a few common barriers.

The top three barriers for all respondents were:

- Enough personnel with the necessary expertise (**41%**)
- Concerns about ability to scale ABM (**34%**)
- Sales team support (**29%**)



A note on scaling:

40% of early stage practitioners were worried about scaling, while only **12%** of advanced practitioners listed scaling as a concern.

Advanced practitioners listed insufficient data as the second largest barrier (**31%**) for adoption.

This is why it's critical that you define and operationalize account-based measurement practices early.

ProTip: Partner with seasoned ABM professionals with experience scaling account-based programs to ensure the long-term success of your business.

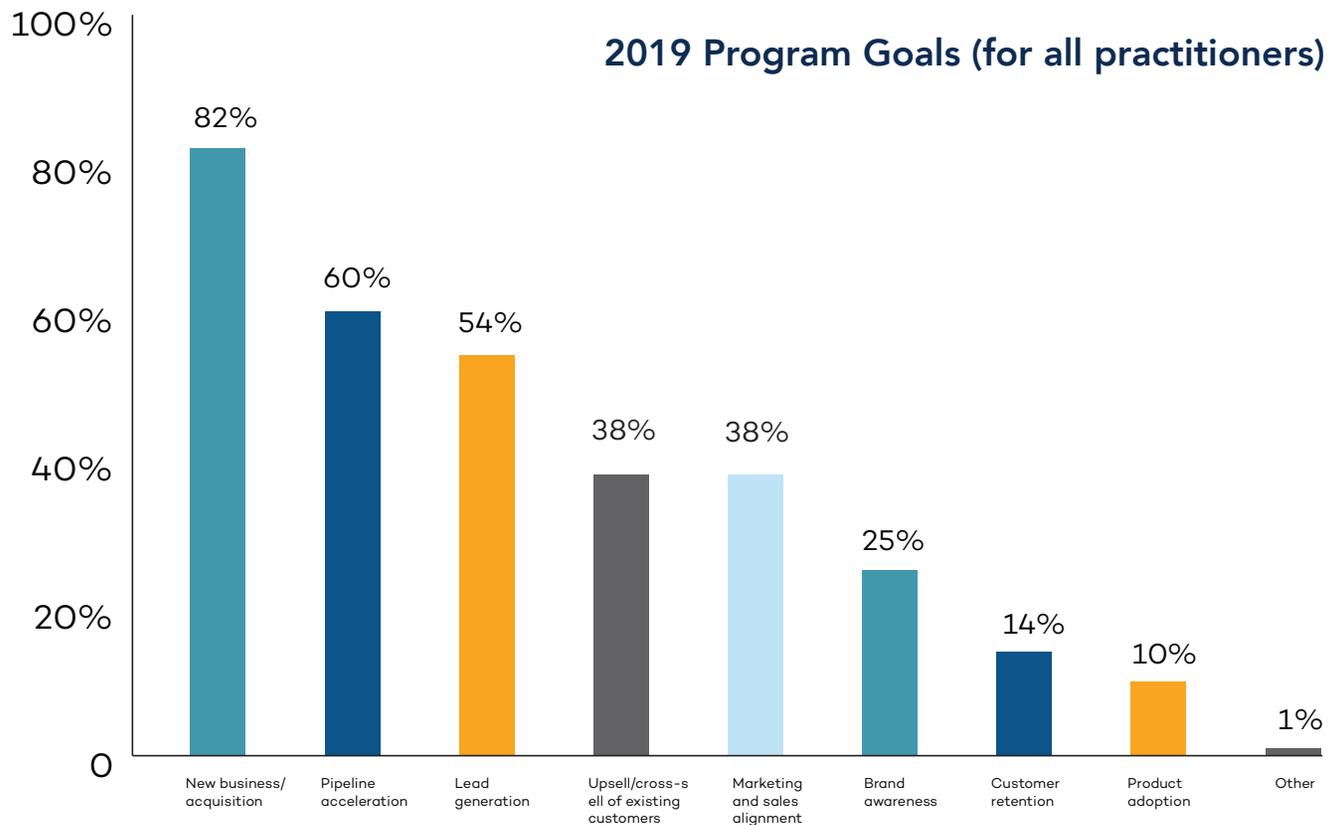
2019 Program Goals (All)

As ABM optimization efforts continue to make pipeline forecasts more predictable, the top goals have also continued to stabilize.

In 2019, the top three goals for ABM practitioners at any stage were:

- New Business / Acquisition (**82%**)
- Pipeline Acceleration (**60%**)
- Lead Generation (**54%**)

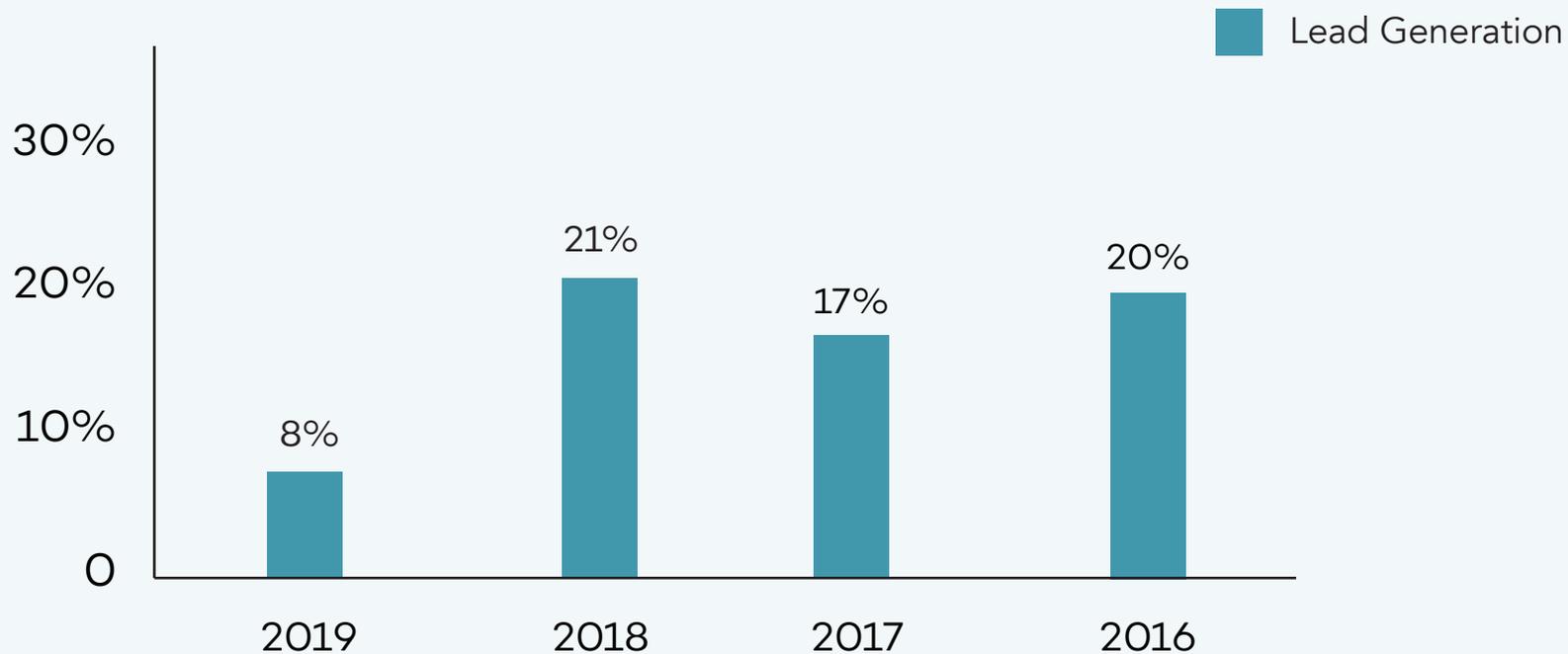
Other goals of ABM practitioners include upsells or cross-sells to existing customers and brand awareness.



Trends for Lead Gen in Advanced Programs (2016-2019)

Even with the most advanced of ABM programs, lead generation has always been an omni-present undercurrent for B2B marketers trying to generate pipeline for their sales team.

Only **8%** of advanced practitioners listed lead generation as a top priority in 2019, representing a sharp decline from 2018 (**21%**) and previous years.



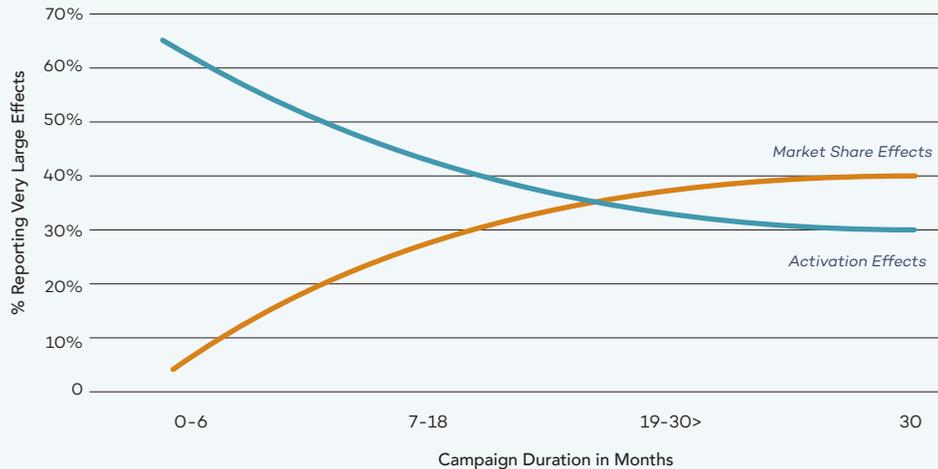
A Note on Brand from Our Friends at LinkedIn:

In a [recent study](#), LinkedIn found that a combination of direct response and brand awareness advertising delivers the best holistic campaign performance — which reinforces the fact that brand awareness activities should be included in a robust ABM strategy.

“Brand and activation work in synergy. Firms that spend too little on brand building fail to build up brand equity, and so get poor responses from their activation. Firms that spend too little on activation can build strong brands yet fail to exploit them to the full. Our analysis suggested that the optimum balance is achieved when firms spend around **60%** on brand, and around **40%** on activation.” — An excerpt from *Media in Focus* by Les Binet and Peter Field

Direct Responses Wins in the Short Run, but Brand Wins in the Long-Run

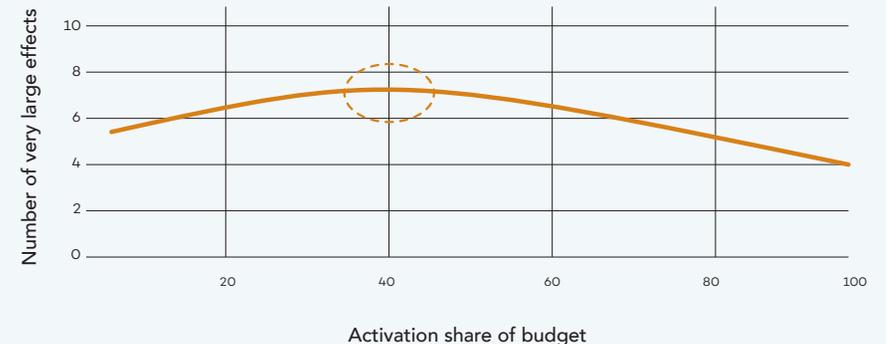
The Conflict Between Long and Short-Term Metrics



Source: IPA Study, Marketing Effectiveness In The Digital Era

Negotiate a Truce with the “60:40 Rule”

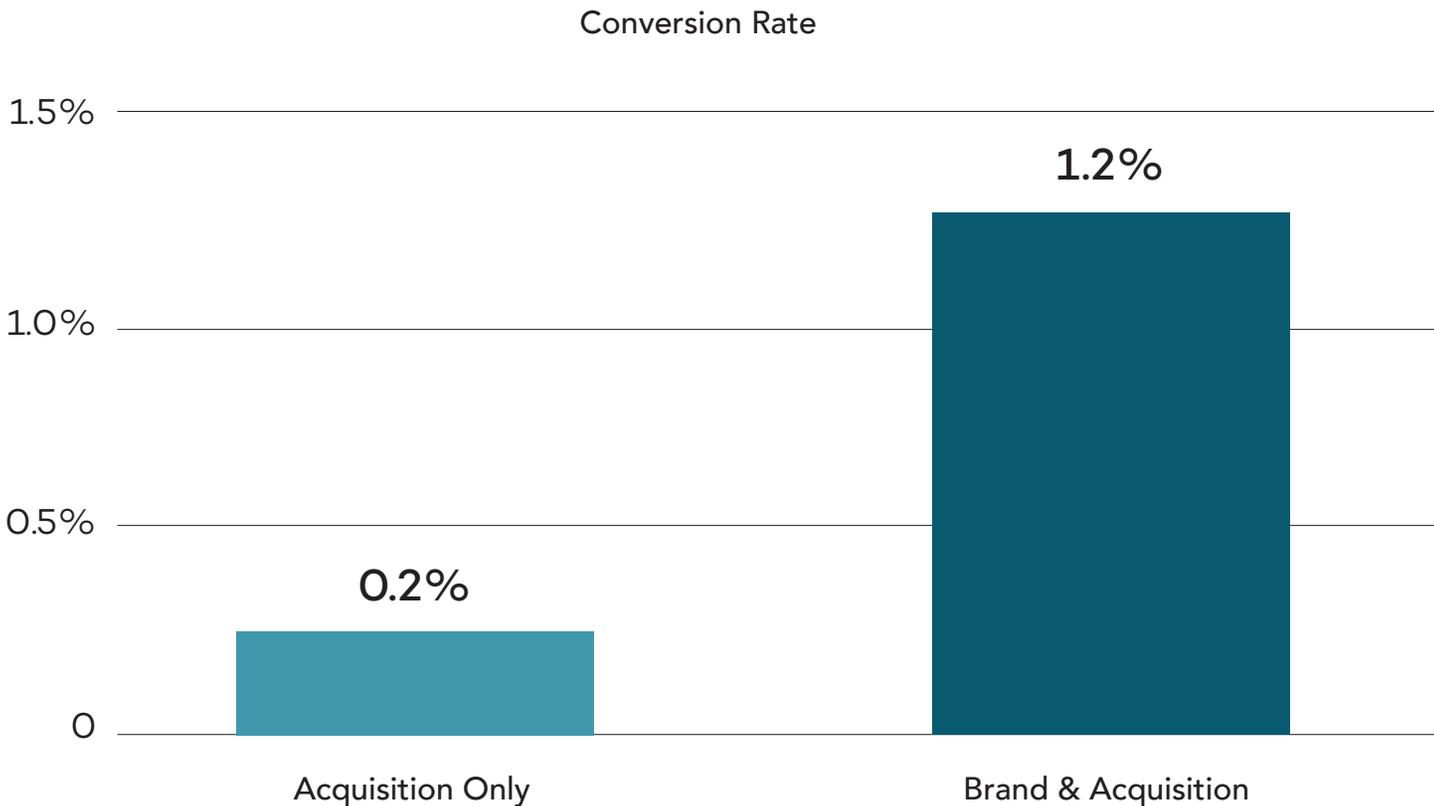
The 60:40 Split Delivers Maximum Effectiveness



Brand and Demand in Perfect Harmony Delivers Results

Direct response helps you convert the companies actively in-market, but brand awareness helps keep your organization top of mind before they enter the deal cycle. This means that when your target accounts do begin the buyer’s journey — your direct response campaigns will be more successful downstream.

Synchronize Brand and Demand To Drive Exceptional Performance



“The fact is, brands matter more than ever online. In the blizzard of information and options available, consumers still use them to aid their decision-making. Now that the internet has removed many other barriers to entry, strong brands are often the only way firms can defend their share of the market.”

— *Media In Focus: Marketing Effectiveness In The Digital Era*

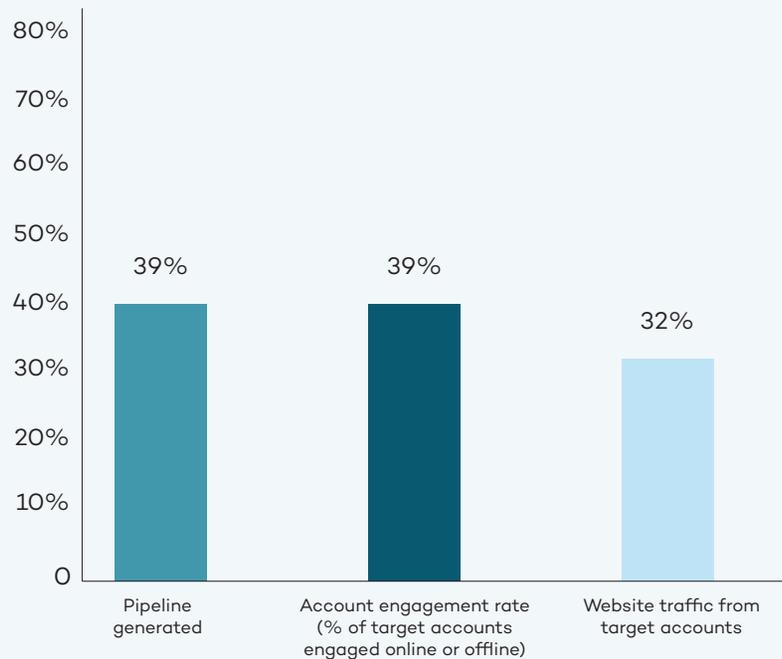
Source: IPA Study, Marketing Effectiveness In The Digital Era

ABM Successes (2019)

When asked about ABM program successes, both early stage and advanced respondents selected the following goals:

Early Stage vs Advanced Program Successes

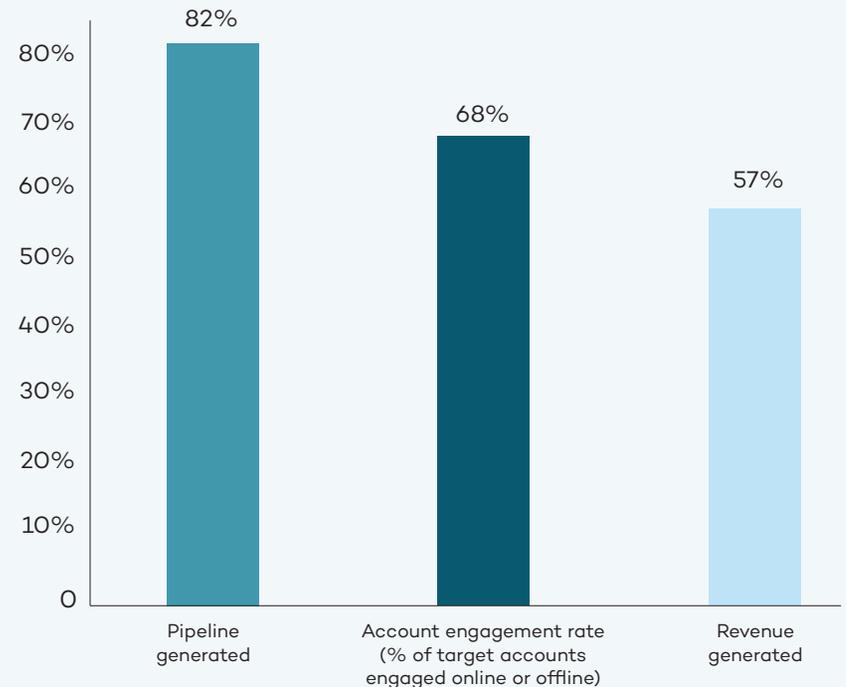
ABM Success for Early Stage Programs



Top 3 Goals Achieved:

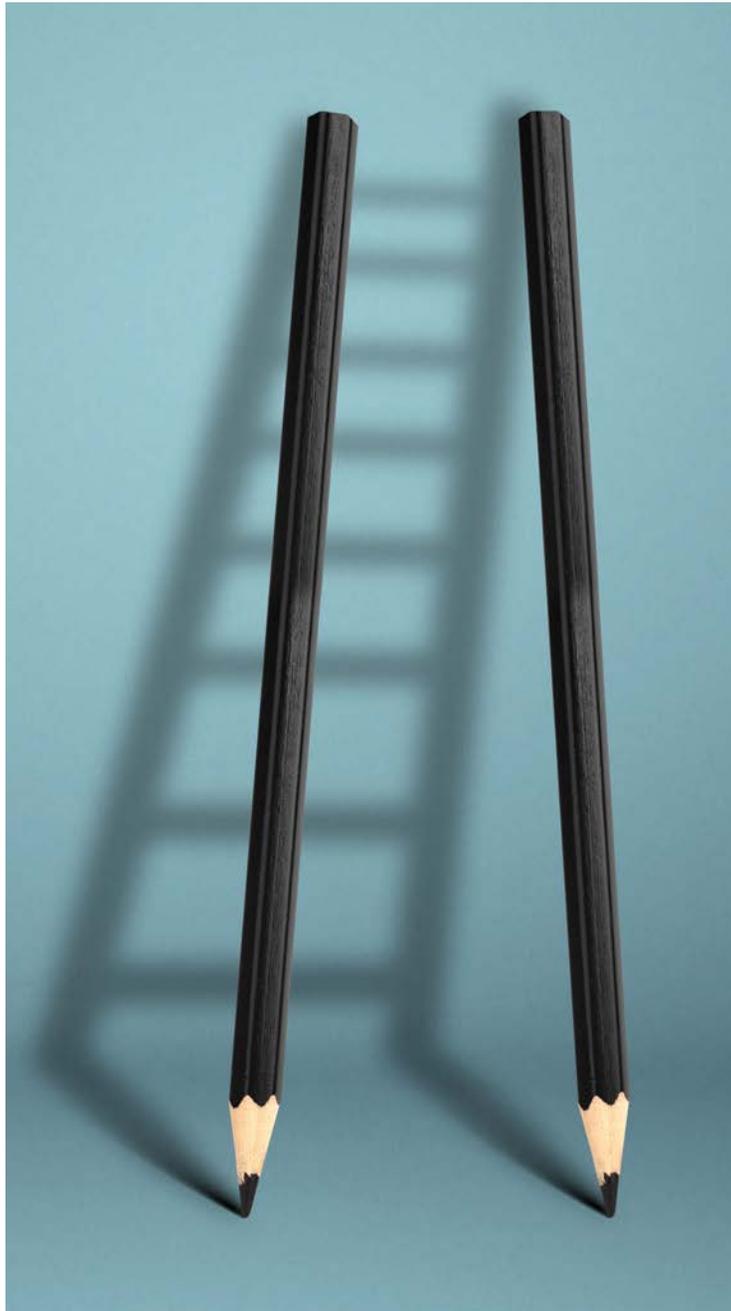
- Pipeline Generated **(39%)**
- Account Engagement **(39%)**
- Website Traffic from Key Accounts **(32%)**

ABM Success for Advanced Programs



Top 3 Goals Achieved:

- Pipeline Generated **(82%)**
- Account Engagement **(68%)**
- Revenue Generated **(57%)**



New and Ongoing Challenges

What was the biggest challenge for ABM practitioners in 2019? What are the common challenges that have persisted year after year since 2016?

As B2B sales and marketing continue to move towards an account-centric model, new and ongoing challenges — or opportunities — have started to emerge among those just launching their ABM programs as well as those with more sophisticated setups.

Content Is King (Again)

Over **44%** of all 2019 respondents — regardless of stage — listed their biggest problem was ensuring they had the right content for an account-based approach, followed closely by measurement and reporting (**39%**)

As an organization matures their ABM programs, the need for more and more personalized and bespoke content will continue to rise. As content development can represent a large amount of time and resources, advanced ABM programs will need to build the infrastructure — through additional behavioral data providers, copywriters, and sales enablement solutions — to allow for more personalization at scale.

Additional Challenges (2019)

34%

Internal Buy-In

In 2019, **34%** of respondents still in the early stages of launching their ABM programs reported struggling with getting internal buy-in, while only **2%** of those with advanced ABM program listed the same struggle.

This indicates that those wishing to launch a new ABM program need to commit to a fully-realized strategy and methodology to accommodate (and eliminate) the potential institutional resistance.

46%

Measurement and Reporting

In 2019, **46%** of early stage respondents reported that a big challenge was measuring and reporting on account-level results, indicating an ongoing need for robust and more native, out-of-the-box reporting capabilities.

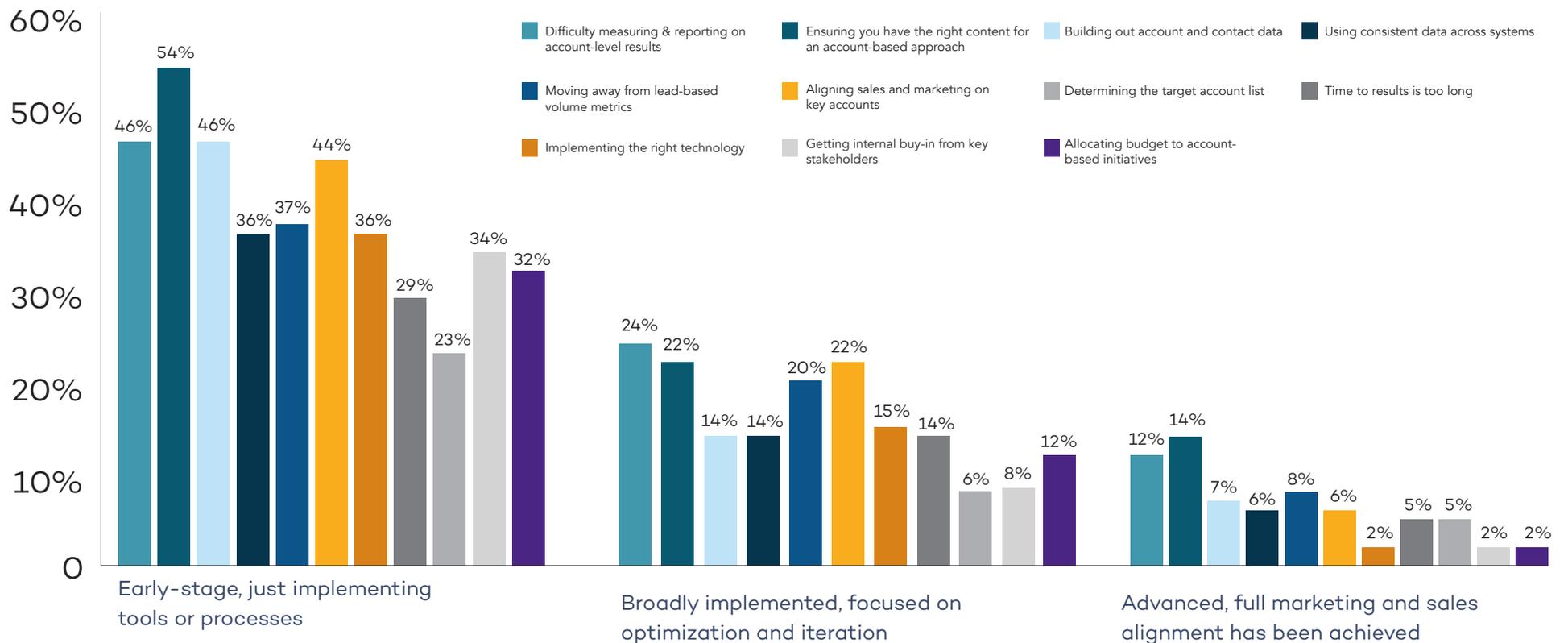
As ABM platforms continue to grow more robust, the core focus will begin to evolve to accommodate this reporting demand.

Trends for ABM Challenges By Stage

While early stage ABM practitioners are more likely to have challenges, and different challenges than those at a later stage of development, there is a clear decline in reported challenges for all ABM practitioners as their programs mature.

2019 results

What are the biggest challenges faced implementing ABM vs stage of development

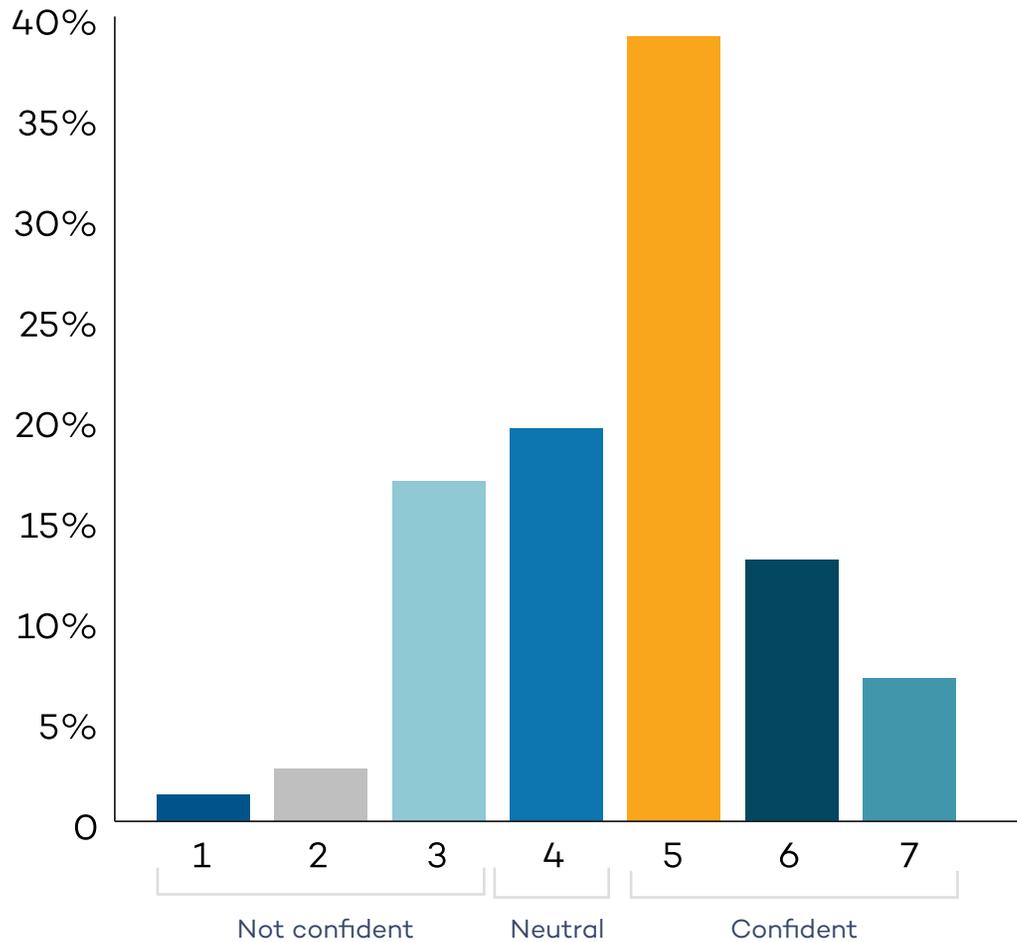


ProTip: Don't give up! All challenges generally decrease as programs become more advanced.

Confidence with ABM (2019)

59% of all ABM practitioners report that they are confident that their account-based marketing programs are effective with 21% reporting they are not confident. 20% felt neutral that their ABM programs were effective.

Level of confidence ABM practitioners feel about the effectiveness of their account-based marketing programs



Confidence with ABM (2019)

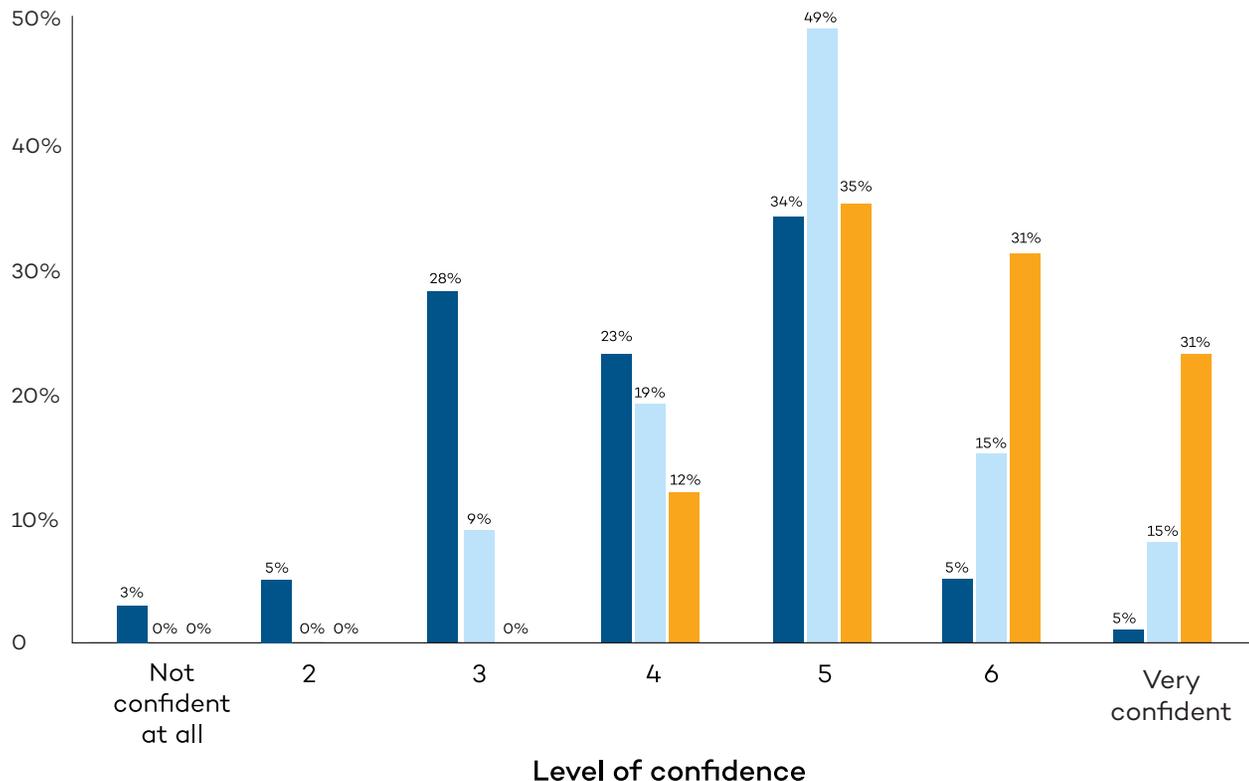
Early Stage

40% of respondents with early-stage ABM programs report that they are confident that they are effective.

Advanced

89% of advanced practitioners report they are confident in their ABM programs.

Confidence in ABM program by Stage of ABM program development



How would you classify your organization's stage of ABM implementation?

- Early-stage, just implementing tools or processes
- Broadly implemented, focused on optimization and iteration
- Advanced, full marketing and sales alignment has been achieved

Establishing Greater Confidence

KPIs Correlated With Confidence In ABM

These KPIs were the most likely to be tracked by those with confidence in their ABM program:

67% Pipeline generated

56% Revenue generated

41% Account engagement rate

What KPIs do successful ABM practitioners use?
By comparing confidence scores with KPIs tracked, we can see that more successful users track pipeline generation, revenue, and account engagement.

Tech Stack Support And Confidence In ABM

The tech stacks of those who had confidence in their ABM programs were most likely to support these features:

79% Account-based analytics

73% Account-based advertising

58% Account-level web engagement insights

57% Intent and behavioral insights tracking

Respondents who had a tech stack that supported these features were significantly more confident in the efficacy of their ABM marketing programs.



ABM TECHNOLOGY AND ORG FOCUS

ABM Technology

Emerging technology is the driving force making ABM more mainstream. It is the core infrastructure for any successful ABM program and is the key source of alignment for marketing and sales teams. Whether you deploy a consolidated ABM platform or leverage several systems and unify them through your CRM or marketing automation platform, it's critical that you have technology that is agile enough to support your goals.

2020 Prediction: Sales and marketing are going to begin working out of the same tools as goals continue to converge. The best martech and sales enablement tools will build new features with both users in mind.

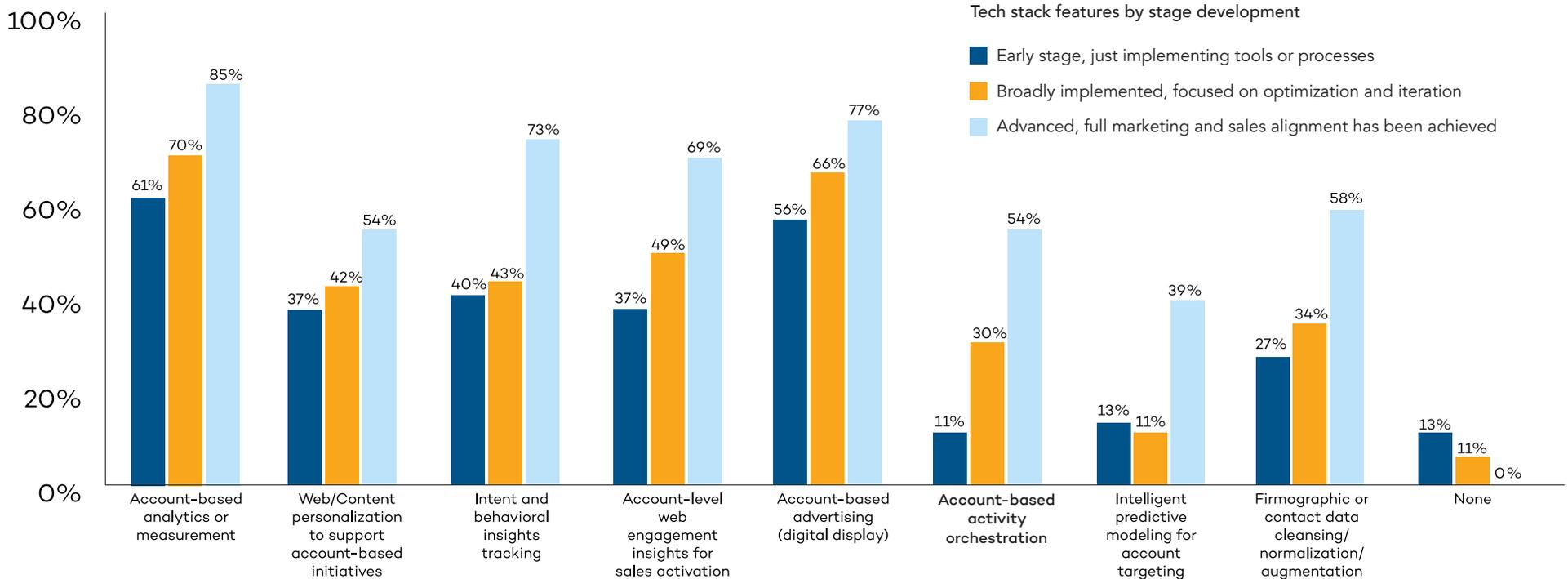
Last Year's Tech Stack

What categories of martech tools do you utilize in your organization? Select all that apply:



Today's ABM Tech Stack (2019)

2019: Which of the following capabilities does your current tech stack support?



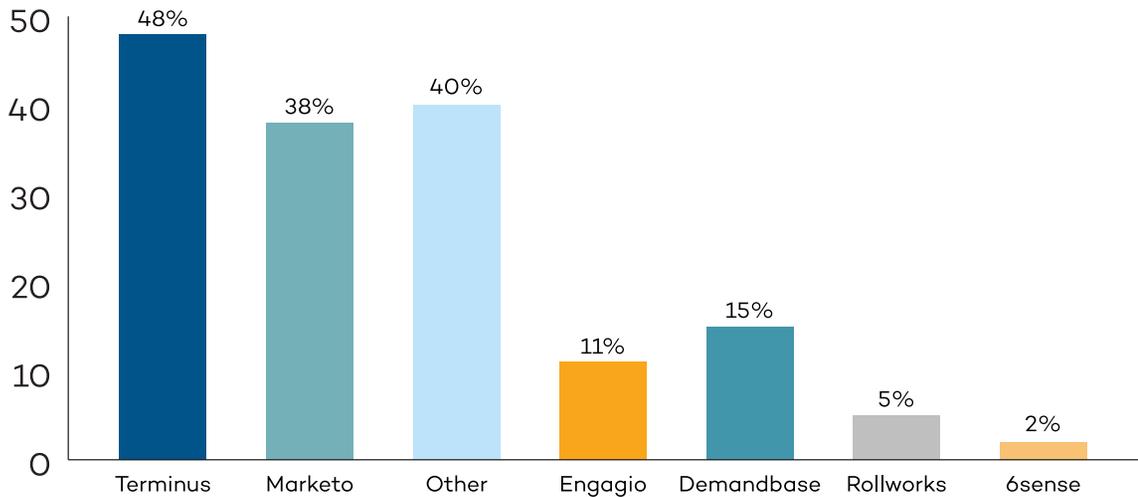
2020 Prediction:

Advanced practitioners (who also report the highest confidence in their ABM success) already have a full ABM tech stack, which includes account-based analytics and measurement, intent and behavioral data, account-based advertising and engagement for sales. As newer ABM practitioners begin to adopt these now standardized technologies, advanced practitioners will look to integrate contact-level data enrichment services as part of their ABM strategy as well as emerging content personalization tools.

Consolidating Your Tech Stack

The following are the tools most commonly used in an ABM practitioner's tech stack:

If you are using account-based marketing solutions, which of the following solutions are part of your tech stack? Select all that apply:



No matter your vendor, it's critical that you assess your goals and select the vendor who can help you achieve them. If you'd like to see if your current tech stack can support an advanced ABM initiative, use our tech stack grader at terminus.com.

Other vendors included:



Org Focus

Now that we've seen key trends impacting both early stage and advanced ABM practitioners, let's dive a level deeper and understand what organizational and technological factors are impacting ABM success.

Are they a hybrid model? Do they have a dedicated ABM team or resources? What tools do they use to execute or optimize campaigns?

In 2019, **33%** of early stage respondents dedicated between **25-50%** of their total marketing efforts to ABM, while **50%** of those with advanced ABM programs dedicated over **75%** to their account-based initiatives. In 2018, only **27%** dedicated over **75%** to ABM, indicating advanced teams are dedicating more of their efforts to ABM.

As experienced ABM practitioners grow more in demand and as programs continue to grow more advanced, dedicated personnel and technology infrastructure will continue to grow more important.

2020 prediction:

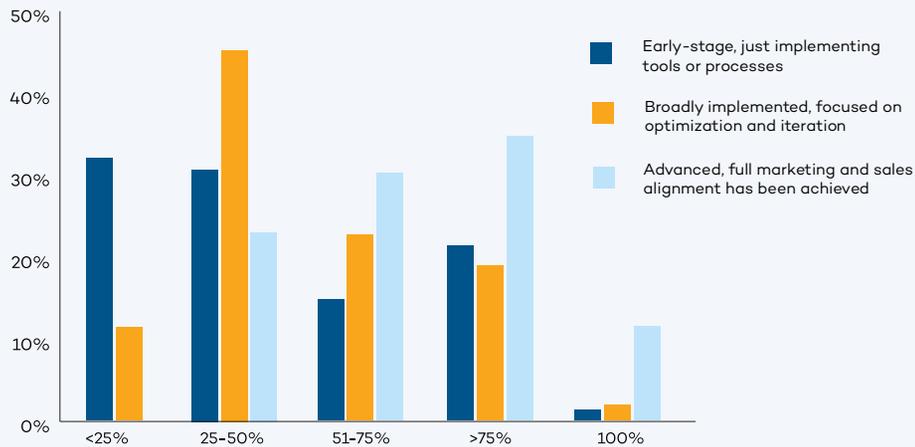
We'll continue to see transitions across the aisle between marketing and sales, with roles that look like sales (SDRs or Solutions Consultants) on marketing teams and roles that look like marketing (field marketers or AE-aligned ABM roles) on sales teams. We expect that the winners and leaders who emerge will be the ones who embrace revenue goals and make decisions on larger impact versus incremental success.

ABM vs Outbound

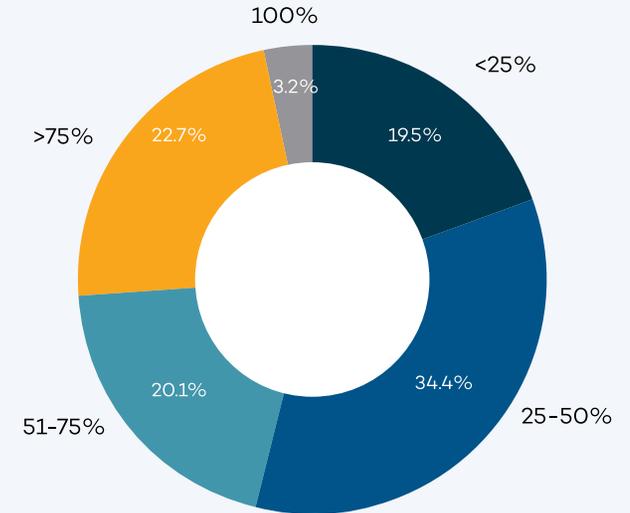
Not surprisingly, the majority of mature programs tend to focus over **50%** of their efforts on target accounts versus general outbound — though the data indicates hybrid models can be successful.

2019 Results (by stage)

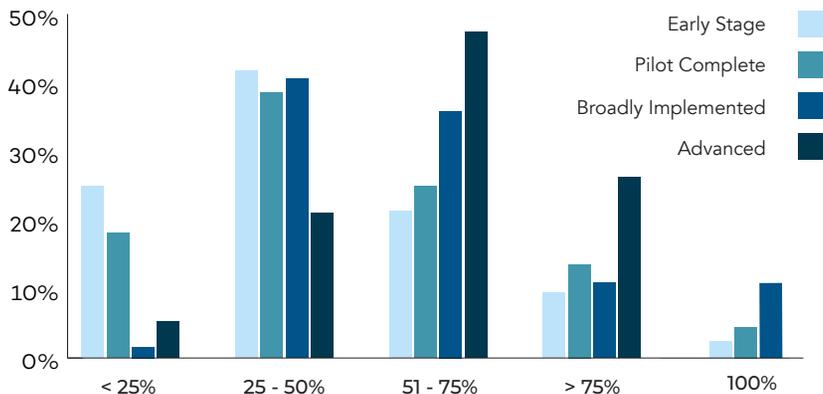
What percentage of your marketing efforts are directed toward target accounts versus general outbound efforts?



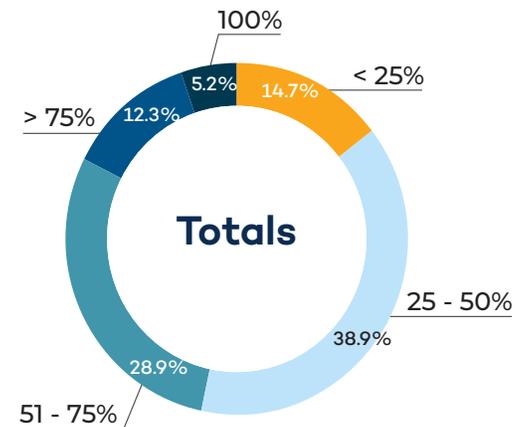
2019 Results (all)



2018 Results (by stage)



2018 Results (all)





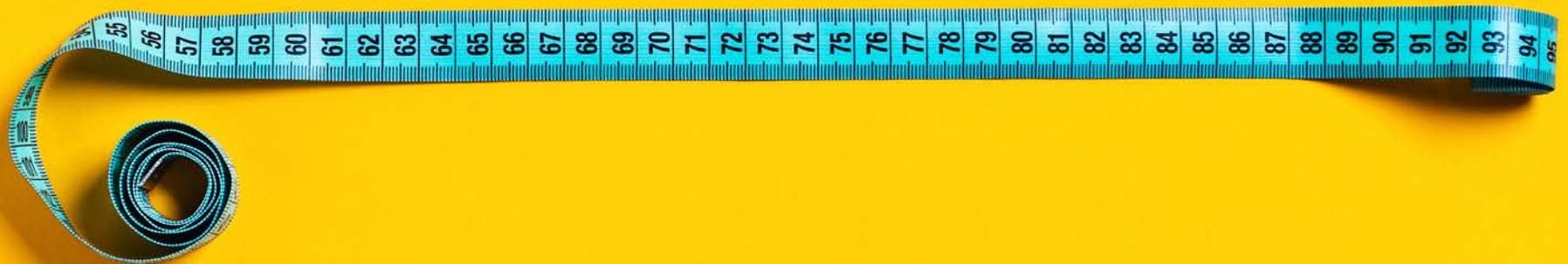
MEASURING RESULTS

Measuring Results

The most important KPIs tracked specifically for ABM programs when looking at combined choices continue to be pipeline generated (**65%**) and revenue generated (**52%**), mirroring the top two KPIs from 2018.

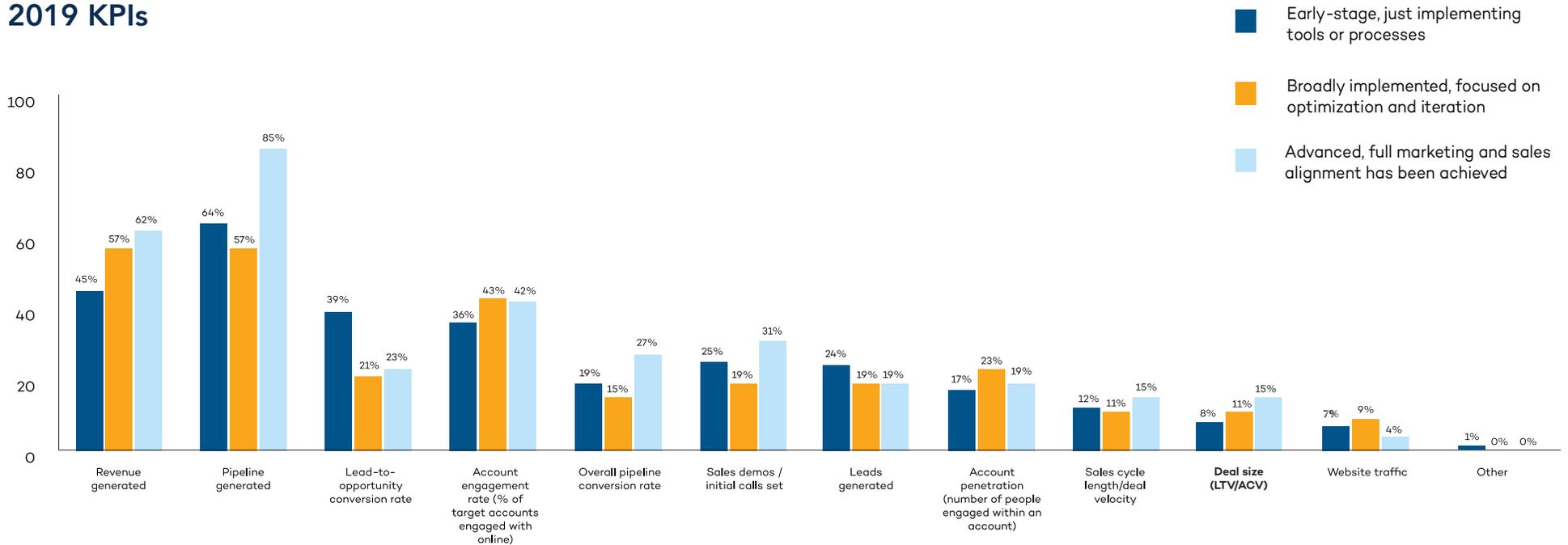
When looking at just advanced programs, **82%** of ABM practitioners are KPI'd on pipeline generated with only **57%** focused on revenue. This indicates that KPIs are standardizing across advanced practitioners with pipeline generation being the core focus.

While revenue was the leading KPI in 2018, the data indicates there is a higher correlation of ABM success for practitioners focused on pipeline generation.



What are the most important key performance indicators (KPIs) you track specifically for account-based programs today? (Select up to three KPIs.)

2019 KPIs





Conclusion

One thing that we've come to understand about ABM (and B2B selling in general), is that every organization is different. They have strengths, weaknesses, idiosyncrasies and methodologies that defy logic yet are reinforced at every turn, and thoughtful leaders pushing the boundaries so that their entire team can see both personal and professional success.

So, what takeaways can you deliver to your team as you launch and scale your account-based programs?

There is no I in ABM. ABM is a team sport, and team sports require collaboration, communication, patience, and practice. While your strategy, creativity, and product will determine the outcomes of any ABM program, the ability to measure results and inspire intelligent iterations is ultimately the job of the entire team, lead by their coach.

And any good coach should be able to see that ABM is quickly surpassing the early adopter phase. ABM teams are growing smarter, faster, and more sophisticated. As we've learned from this study, the majority of respondents have some small percentage of experience with success, and those with the most experience are leading successful ABM programs that have been optimizing for years.

Would you want to play against a team that's been training for years? Neither would we. That's why we're practicing what we preach and are optimizing campaigns and distributing our learnings to our customers every day.

A championship team isn't forged overnight, but with enough coaching, training, and experience — you'll see positive results eventually.

About Our Contributors

#FlipMyFunnel

Founded in 2014, FlipMyFunnel is a community of brave B2B professionals who challenge the status quo in their organizations to drive better business results. Our annual event, engagement platforms, and tactical content serve to empower you to do this in the best way possible.

We believe the best definition of a thriving community is one where you, the practitioner, are in the driver's seat. Your pain points are our pain points, and we are here to help you become a hero in your organization.

Terminus passionately hosts the FlipMyFunnel community. We're honored to provide a platform where you master your craft and make lasting connections with your peers.

Please join the FlipMyFunnel community: subscribe to the FlipMyFunnel [podcast](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) and [Youtube](#).

About Our Partners



Founded in 2014, Terminus is the leader of the account-based movement. We help our customers transform B2B marketing by focusing sales and marketing resources on the best-fit, most likely to buy segments of their addressable market. Our platform empowers marketing teams to easily build, operate, and measure scalable account-based initiatives that drive quality growth.



Founded in 2014, FlipMyFunnel is a community of brave B2B professionals who challenge the status quo in their organizations to drive better business results. Our annual event, engagement platforms, and tactical content serve to empower you to do this in the best way possible.



Sigstr helps the world's best marketers do amazing things with their employees' emails. Sigstr Signatures include a hyper-targeted banner ad in every one of the millions of emails your employees send, creating a massive new promotional channel for marketers. Sigstr Relationships leverages AI to map and quantify every relationship in your company, providing visibility into how accounts and contacts are engaging and creating tight alignment between sales and marketing.



ZoomInfo has combined an innovative suite of software tools with deep, high-quality data to transform and enable modern sales teams and go-to-market organizations. For over a decade, our applications have empowered globally recognized companies like Accenture, Dell and PayPal, to achieve their most important objective: Profitable growth.



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