

2020 Research Report

The State of Predictable Revenue Growth



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Introduction

Every company strives to not only grow revenue, but to grow it predictably. Yet creating a predictable revenue growth engine is no small task, nor is it one that can be done overnight.

Sales and marketing leaders seeking to improve revenue generation typically start by examining their channel mixes, toolsets, dashboards, and strategies, but what's often lost in the middle is the most important part of any go-to-market plan: customer experience.

A buyer's experience with your brand spans from their first touchpoint to customer success and renewals, and a thoughtful, comprehensive experience creates many benefits ranging from accelerated decision making to increased customer loyalty. Organizations that focus on the customer experience understand that there are 10 or more people involved in a purchase decision—and that each member of the buying committee must be continually engaged in a meaningful way.

So whether your demand generation strategy is oriented around lead generation, account-based marketing, or a blend of the two, the key question is whether you're delivering value that drives meaningful engagement throughout the customer journey.

In this research report from 6sense and Heinz Marketing, we'll uncover the key inhibitors organizations today face as they seek to engage customers and predictably grow revenue, and also offer insights on how sales and marketing leaders can work to overcome them.

Methodology

This report is based on data from a survey conducted in January 2020 and comes from 213 respondents in roles across sales and marketing, with the majority in the C-Suite. Additional titles include VPs/SVPs, senior directors, and directors. Companies surveyed range in size from SMB organizations to large enterprises and come from a variety of industries.

Functional Role | Q1 Which best describes your functional role in your organization?

Business Development 23.5%	Sales 17.8%	Operations 20.7%		Brand/ Customer 9.9%	Digital Marketing 12.2%	Demand Generation 8.0%
			ABM 4.7%		Content Marketing 3.3%	

Title | Q2 Which of the following titles best reflects the level of responsibility you have in your current role?

C-Suite 31.0%	VP/SVP 21.6%	Senior Director 18.8%	Director 28.6%
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Company Size | Q3 Which best reflects your company's size?

101-200 8.5%	201-1,000 34.7%	1,001-5,000 31.9%	5,001-10,000 14.1%	10,000+ 10.8%
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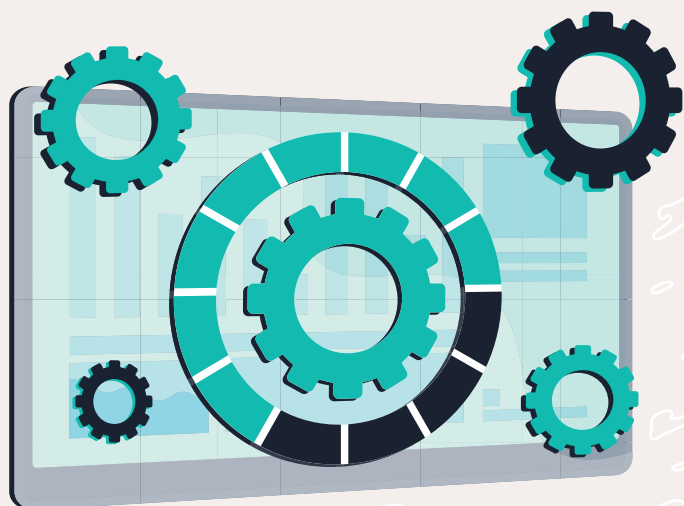
Industry | Q4 Which best reflects your company's industry?

Technology 25.8%	Financial Services 24.9%	Healthcare 12.7%		Manufacturing 15.5%	Other 12.2%
			Education 8.9%		

Executive Summary

Four Key Challenges Inhibit Predictable Revenue Growth

Our research was designed to uncover the tools, tactics, and strategies that organizations today leverage to engage customer buying teams and build predictable revenue growth engines—and to understand the level of success organizations have with those approaches. Four key trends emerged as we analyzed the results.



The (Mis)alignment of Sales and Marketing

Most sales and marketing teams rely on different datasets, work in different platforms, and track different metrics to measure success, making it nearly impossible to coordinate engagement with the right accounts throughout the customer journey.



A case of misaligned metrics:

Sales and marketing leaders are not aligned on the key metrics that matter most to predictable revenue growth, including the value of SQLs, accounts currently engaged, personas engaged per account, deal velocity, and accounts in market.

No cross-functional coordination:

Sales and marketing leaders also vary on the channels they deem most valuable to generate interest and demand. Marketers most value content and inbound marketing, website personalization, and targeted displays ads, while sales leaders place more value on events, nurture emails, and traditional cold calls.

Disagreement over target accounts:

Half of all sales and marketing leaders only somewhat agree (or don't agree at all) on their target account list. **Even 42% of organizations that are successful lack consensus.**

Realign Sales and Marketing

Today, you may not have a singular view of accounts, what they're doing, and what they care about most, and if that's the case you're likely struggling to align sales and marketing. But as described in the "Gaps and Bridges" section later in this report, there are steps you can take today to begin increasing sales and marketing alignment:

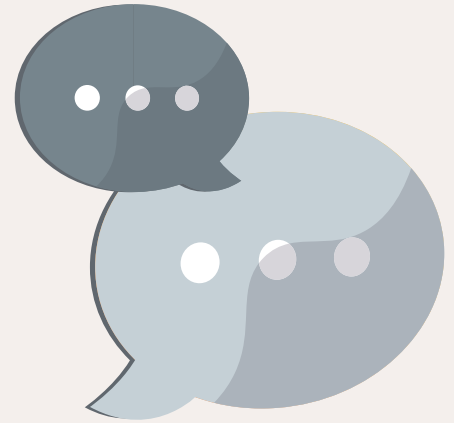
Define what success looks like for marketing, sales, and the organization at large

Align on your ideal customer profile, target account list, and lead qualification criteria

Break down the data and metrics silos within your organization

Insufficient Demand Generation

Marketing continually works to fill the funnel, but goals typically grow faster than budgets. And even companies that have adopted an ABM or account-driven strategy often struggle to meet demand generation goals because they simply don't have visibility into the full-funnel picture.



Email is an (un)necessary evil:

MAP-generated mass email is viewed as one of the least valuable channels in an organization's go-to-market plan, and MAP-generated nurture emails are only slightly more valuable. Companies have made themselves believe that email is valuable, when in reality it doesn't hold a candle to other more effective methods of generating demand.

Content experience gaps:

1 in 3 organizations believe content is the most valuable way to generate demand, **but only 48% of all respondents can deliver personalized content experiences** and even fewer (45%) even have a content hub on their website.

Gated content still persists:

Analysts agree that 70% or more of the buyer's journey is completed anonymously, so inbound lead strategies typically capture prospects that are already talking to multiple vendors. But even **53% of account-driven companies continue to gate their content**, showing that web forms are far from dead.

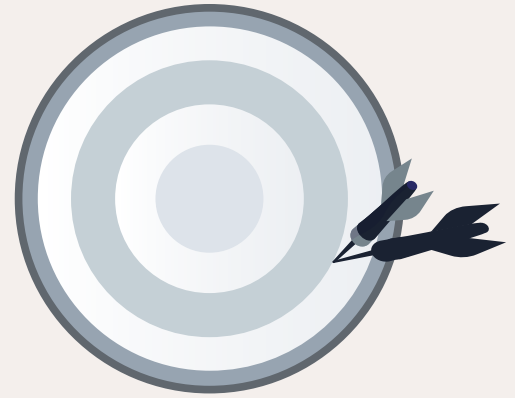
Reset Expectations and Processes

It's impossible to build a predictable revenue growth engine if your resources are exerted on junk leads, bad-fit accounts, and lackluster buyer experiences. But as described in the "Gaps and Bridges" section later in this report, there are steps you can take today to more effectively prioritize your people and budgets:

- Provide experiences that help the right leads and accounts buy
- Assess the account-based sales and marketing capabilities of your tech stack
- Arm your teams with data that eliminates guesswork

Ineffective Prioritization of Resources

Salespeople often spend too much time working junk leads and static lists of accounts that aren't ready to close—or that are too far into the buying process to influence. And at the same time, marketing spends too much budget and effort on campaigns and events that don't deliver the results the organization needs.



Ad hoc target account selection:

Half of all organizations disagree on their target account list, and **1 in 3 account-driven organizations lack a defined strategy to select their target accounts.**

Insufficient tech stacks:

From marketing automation platforms (MAPs) to point solutions, 40% of C-level respondents and **50% of all respondents believe their tech stack is too bloated, too complex, or too expensive.**

Lead-based marketing doesn't surface the best leads:

Nearly 60% of account-driven organizations are still most-focused on generating leads (MQLs or SQLs) despite the paramount role an ABM strategy plays in their marketing mix. But even with this focus, **50% of respondents believe their lead scoring processes don't even surface the best leads accurately or consistently.**

A lackluster experience:

Only 1 in 4 sales and marketing leaders prioritize great prospect experiences over generating leads and pipeline, and **60% of sales and marketing leaders say that their MAP doesn't help them create engaging customer journeys.**

Reimagine Demand Generation

If you don't yet have visibility into your complete funnel, you're likely stuck working bad leads and static account lists rather than proactively working the best accounts at the right time. But as described in the "Gaps and Bridges" section later in this report, there are steps you can take today to begin boosting your demand generation programs:

Gain visibility into buyer intent to proactively target the right accounts

Deliver the right content to the right buyers at the right time

Replace SPAM and cold calls with personalized, contextual outreach

Inability to Engage the Right Buyers At-Scale

Digital marketing teams continue to struggle to target the best accounts and orchestrate consistent, engaging experiences across channels that meet their ideal buyers where they are on the customer journey. At the same time, sales teams lack the account data and territory alignment they need to engage the best accounts.



The challenge of orchestration:

9 in 10 account-driven organizations say that orchestrating their ABM program across multiple channels and tools is challenging.

A noticeable lack of account-level insights:

Half of all marketing and sales leaders are not confident that their data enables them to either make strategic account-driven decisions or to meaningfully engage prospects at all.

Devoid of a singular view of accounts:

Today, most sales and marketing leaders lack a singular view of their accounts, including their in-market readiness as well as what they care about, **and 50% of sales and marketing leaders lack confidence in the structure and alignment of their sales territories.**

The inability to meaningfully engage at-scale:

64% of today's organizations implement ABM as at least half of their entire marketing mix, yet **over 1 in 3 account-driven organizations don't even know which messages will best engage target accounts**, what channels to reach them through, or which accounts to prioritize in the first place.

Rethink Buyer Engagement

If the experiences you deliver aren't personalized, relevant, consistent, and well-timed, your sales and marketing teams are likely struggling to get traction with the best accounts for the business. But as described in the "Gaps and Bridges" section later in this report, there are steps you can take today to better engage the right buyers at scale:

Consolidate, augment, and enrich your account data

Use data to drive meaningful buyer experiences

Augment automation with AI

Revenue Success and ABM: Finding the Formula for Predictable Revenue Growth

Predictable revenue growth is a goal that both sales and marketing leaders can agree upon; the disagreement is usually about which strategies, capabilities, and technologies are required to achieve it.

In order to understand how best-in-class companies are developing predictable revenue growth engines, we asked sales and marketing professionals to report on their success in 2019—and the extent to which an account-driven approach impacted that success.



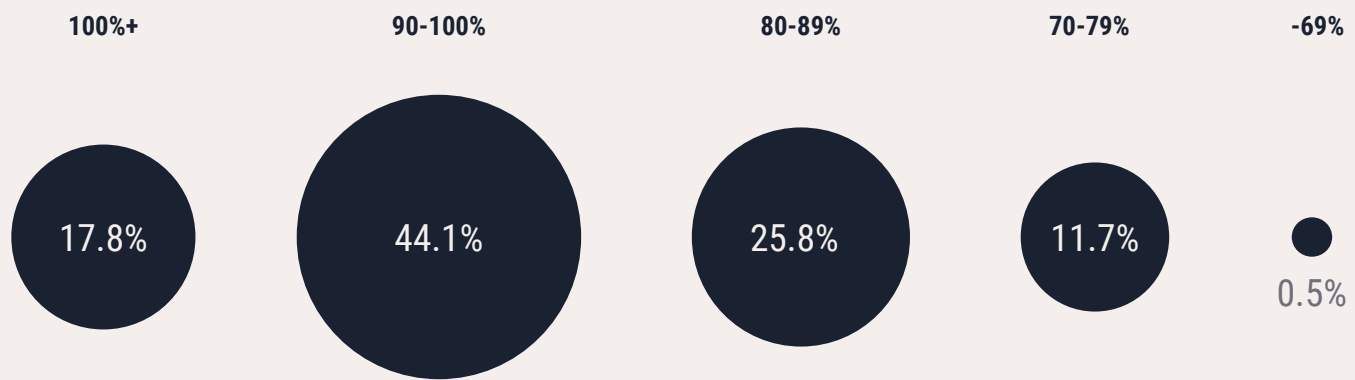
Revenue success is mixed

The first factor we wanted to understand was the state of revenue success. **Only 18% of organizations met over 100% of their revenue goals in 2019.** But while 62% met at least 90% of their goals, there's still substantial room for improvement. 26% of companies met only 80-89% of goals, and a grim 12% met less than 79% of their revenue goals in 2019.

In other words, **38% of companies didn't meet at least 90% of their goals, and more than 80% of companies failed to exceed revenue goals in 2019.**

Percent of Revenue Goals met in 2019

Q4 Approximately, what percent of your revenue goals were met in 2019?



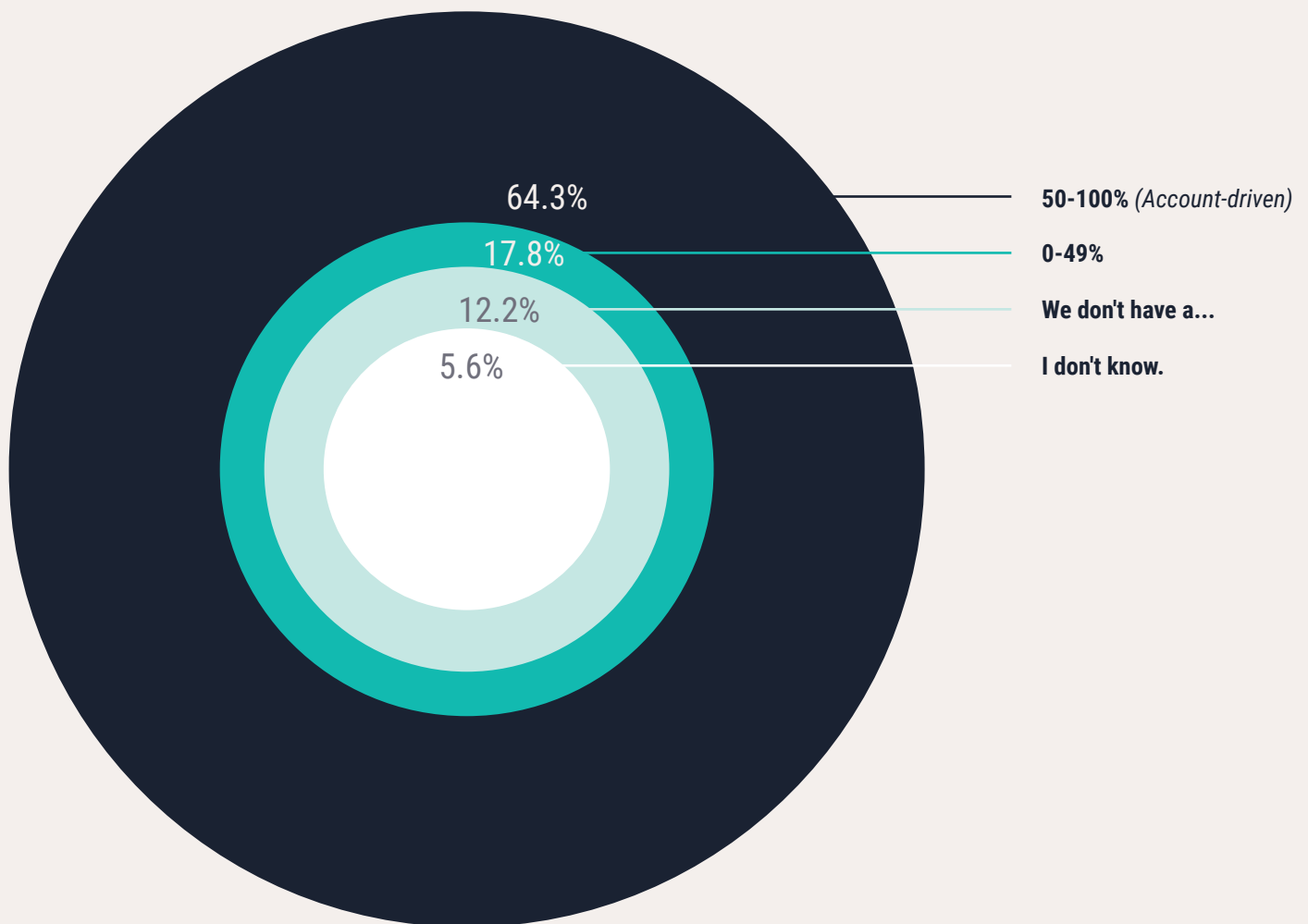
ABM adoption is substantial

Next, we looked at the level of ABM adoption amongst companies today. **64% of organizations implement ABM as at least half of their entire marketing strategy mix**, while 18% implement ABM as less than half of their marketing mix.

As we continue in this report, we will refer to organizations where ABM makes up 50% or more of their marketing mix as “account-driven.”

Percent of Marketing Mix is ABM

Q5 Approximately, what percent of your marketing mix consists of account-based marketing (ABM) programs?



But ABM does *not* guarantee success

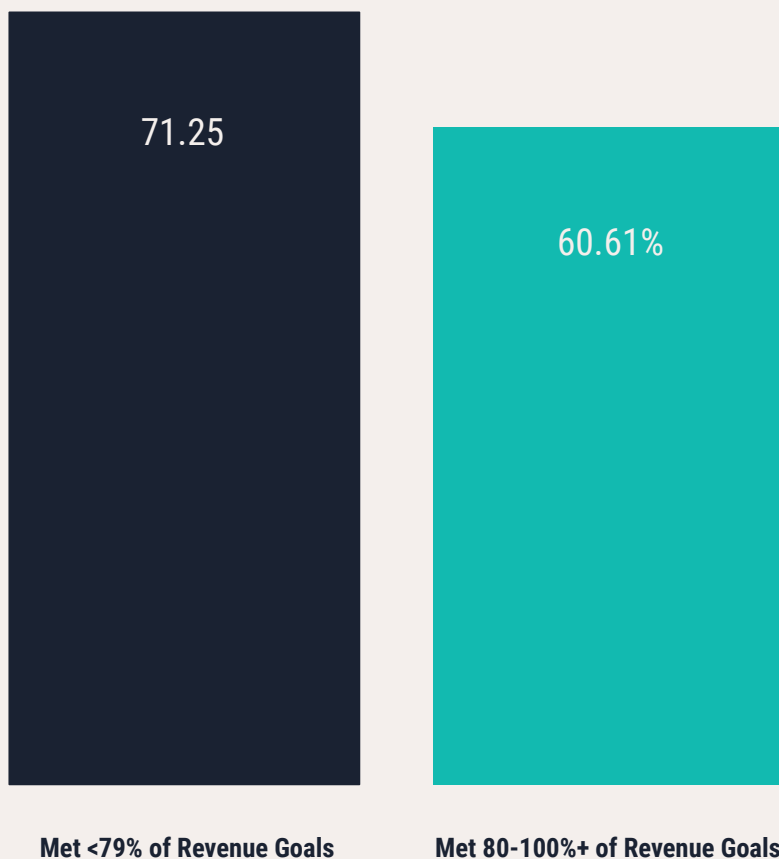
But does revenue success correlate with ABM implementation? The answer is no.

Simply *having* an ABM program does little to guarantee success. While 61% of successful companies (those who met at least 80% of their revenue goals in 2019) have implemented an account-driven approach for more than half of their marketing mix, 71% of unsuccessful companies have done the same.

The lesson: Simply having an ABM program doesn't mean it will deliver results.

Revenue Success by ABM Implementation

Q5 Approximately, what percent of your marketing mix consists of account-based marketing (ABM) programs?



ABM may not be a silver bullet, but it's an important step towards predictable revenue growth

Most companies start with lead-based marketing, generating and reacting to inbound activity, and many still embrace that strategy today. But as our data confirms, companies have increasingly recognized that they can't hit revenue targets solely by relying on inbound leads.

Account-based marketing (ABM) emerged in the last decade in response to the challenges of lead-based marketing, and many companies have established highly successful ABM programs that have placed them squarely on the road to predictable revenue growth. But unfortunately, this success appears to be limited. Without clear definitions of what ABM fully entails, the technical capabilities it requires, and how to successfully scale an ABM program, many companies will likely continue to struggle to find success.

As we'll describe in the following sections of this report, ABM success—and achieving predictable revenue growth—correlates closely with uncovering a complete picture of customer demand; providing rich account insights and meaningful metrics to sales and marketing; and having comprehensive orchestration capabilities that meaningfully engage buyers. It also requires sales and marketing to align on the full funnel rather than operating in silos.



The (Mis)alignment of Sales and Marketing

Predictable revenue growth is only possible when sales and marketing teams are aligned on goals, data, and metrics. But when sales and marketing work in silos, their strategies and tactics (no matter how sophisticated) are significantly less likely to deliver the desired revenue results.



Leads vs. Experiences: Where Do Marketing Teams Focus?

Marketing has traditionally owned the top of the funnel, including awareness, brand positioning, and lead generation. Sales of course has traditionally owned education, nurturing, and sealing the deal. But today these lines are blurred, and marketing now owns much more than they used to—especially when it comes to the buyer experience.

Lead generation is still king of the hill

While many marketing teams have added ABM to their strategy mix, lead generation is still the top priority.

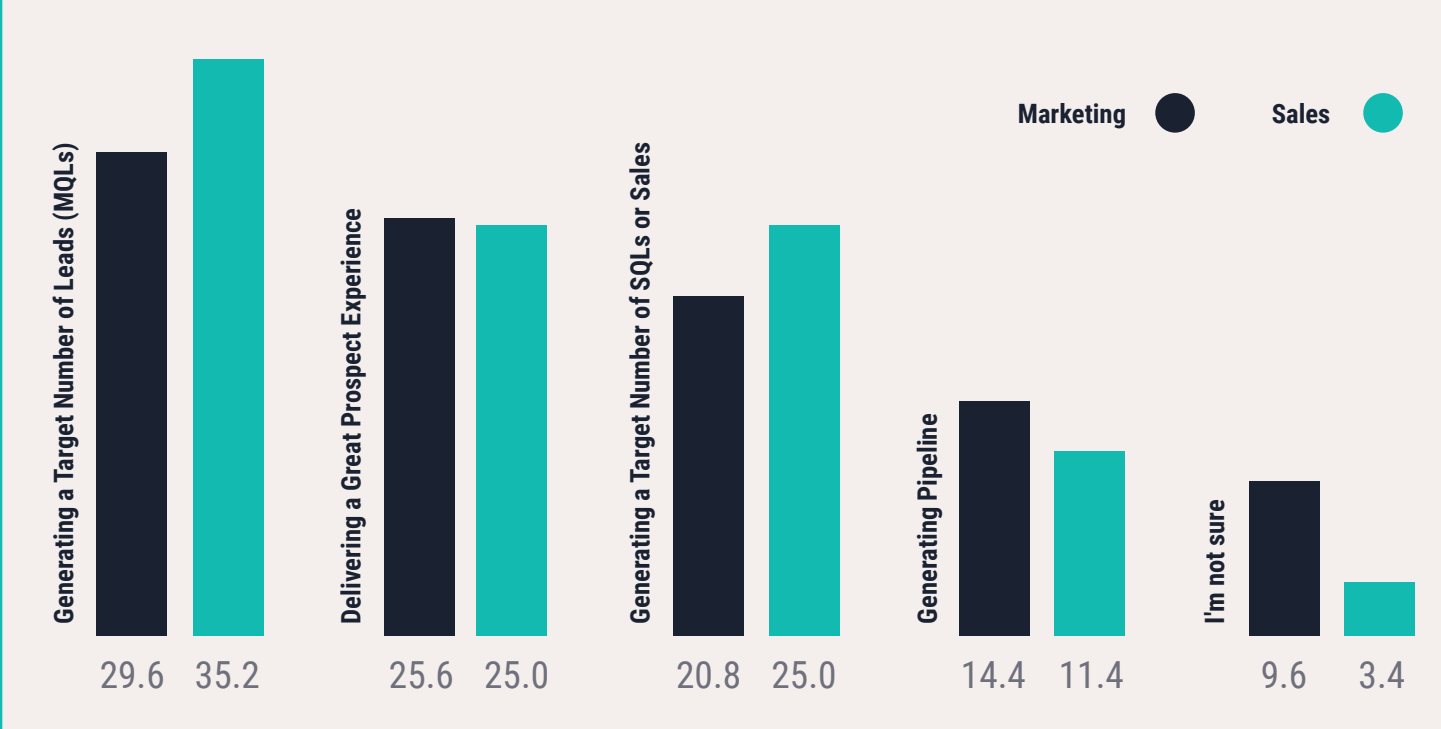
Roughly 30% of marketing leaders and 35% of sales leaders say that their marketing team is most focused on generating a target number of MQLs for the business.

21% of marketing leaders and 25% of sales leaders say that their marketing team is most focused on generating a target number of SQLs for sales.

Although about 25% of sales and marketing leaders agree that marketing is primarily focused on delivering a great prospect experience, that number is less than half of the number of responses indicating that MQLs or SQLs are the top marketing priority.

Primary Focus of Marketing: the Perspective of Sales vs. Marketing Teams

Q8 Which of the following is your marketing team most focused on?



Leads remain a priority for account-driven companies, too

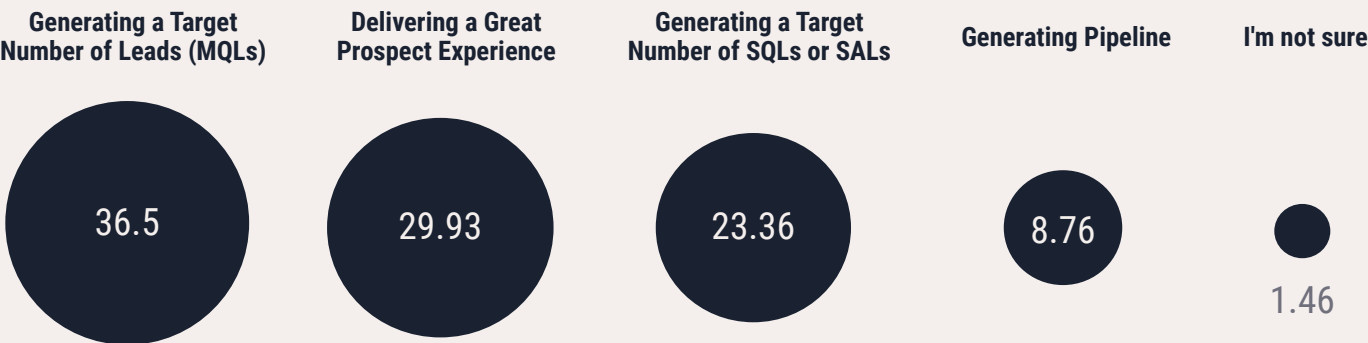
While lead-based marketing strategies continue to deliver results for some organizations, we wanted to understand how account-driven organizations view the importance of leads.

Surprisingly, marketing teams within account-driven companies are focused on leads at levels comparable to the larger research sample. Over 1 in 3 account-driven marketing teams are still most focused on generating leads (MQLs), and 23% are most focused on generating SQLs.

And despite pivoting from a lead-based to an account-based strategy, only 30% of account-driven organizations are most focused on delivering a great prospect experience. In contrast, Forrester reports that customer experience (CX) roles have grown by more than 1000% in the last five years, as both B2B and B2C companies place a greater emphasis on CX. So while the importance of CX is rising, it seems that it hasn't yet surpassed the almighty lead.

Primary Focus of Marketing for Account-Driven Companies

Q8 Which of the following is your marketing team most focused on?



Why do companies that claim to be account-based continue to focus on lead generation? While leads can deliver value, account-based organizations should be able to proactively generate meaningful engagement with target accounts that are demonstrating buying behavior. And that requires the ability to orchestrate account engagement with the right accounts at the right time.

We suspect that many organizations still lack clarity on the specific capabilities and metrics needed to achieve that level of account engagement, which makes their account-based programs harder to scale—and keeps them focused on leads.

Over 1 in 3 account-driven companies place a majority of their focus on generating MQLs despite calling themselves account-based.

Conflicting Measures of Success

Unfortunately, measuring success continues to be a headache for both sales and marketing. And when it comes to account-based reporting, many organizations that claim to have an account-driven approach aren't reporting on the right metrics.

Leads > accounts

Based on the data earlier in this report, it should come as no surprise that **both sellers and marketers measure their successes with lead-based metrics** rather than those that truly impact the business. Both sellers and marketers reported that traditional lead-based metrics like MQLs, SQLs, and SALs have a higher priority than accounts currently engaged—a key metric for any organization seeking to engage key accounts and predictably grow revenue.

Marketers' top metrics to track and report on are:

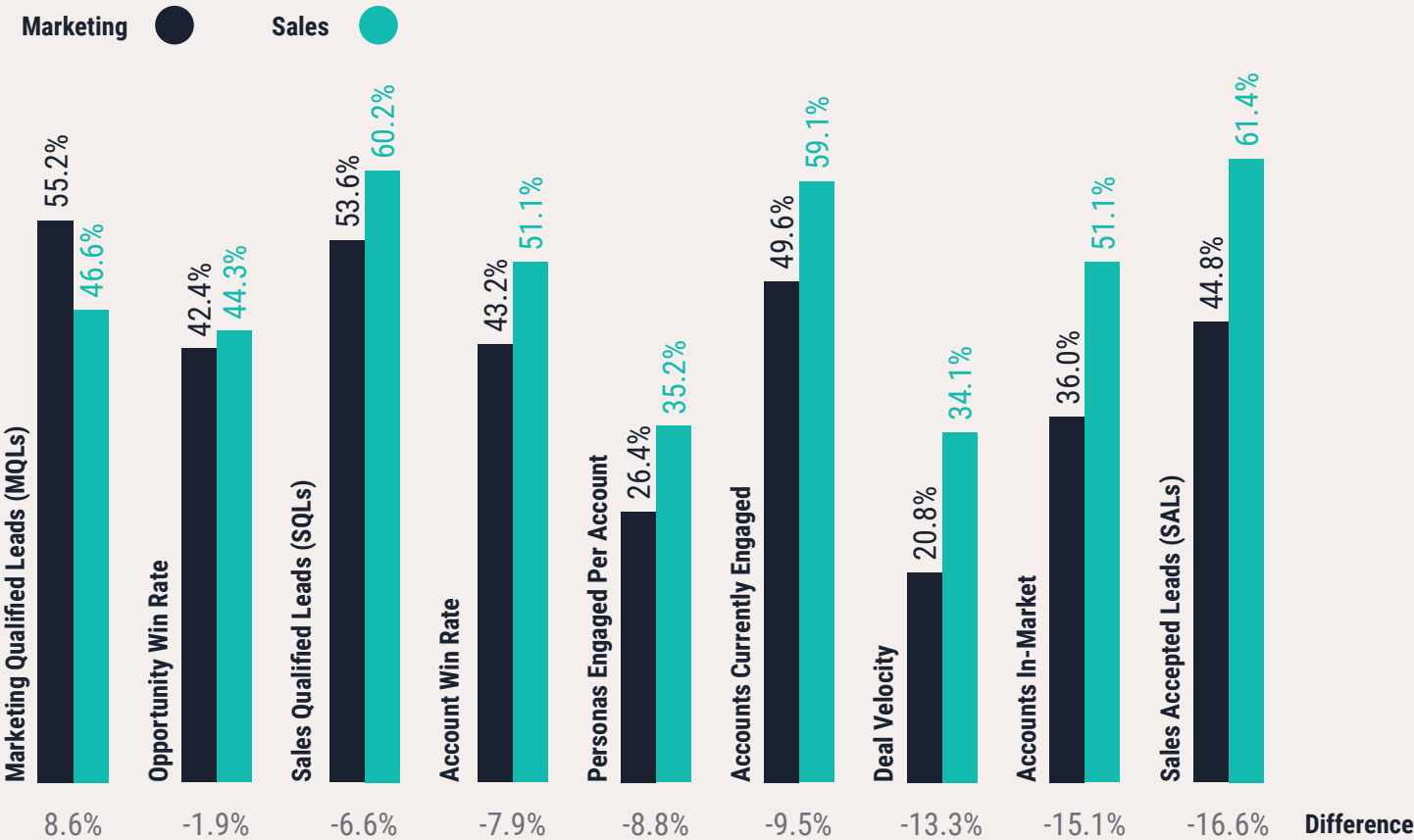
- MQLs (55%)
- SQLs (54%)
- Accounts currently engaged (50%)

Sellers' top metrics to track and report on are:

- SALs (61%)
- SQLs (60%)
- Accounts currently engaged (59%)

Key Metrics

Q6 Which of the following metrics do you currently track and report on? (select all that apply)



Revenue-Driving Metrics Matter Most to Sales

Though sales and marketing both struggle to effectively report on revenue-driving metrics, we see increasingly wider margins in what sales believes is valuable versus what marketing believes.

Sales places more value in:

- Account win rate, a difference of 8% over marketing
- Personas engaged per account, a difference of 9%
- Accounts currently engaged, a difference of 10%
- Deal velocity, a difference of 13%
- Accounts in market, a difference of 15%

But sales isn't off the hook

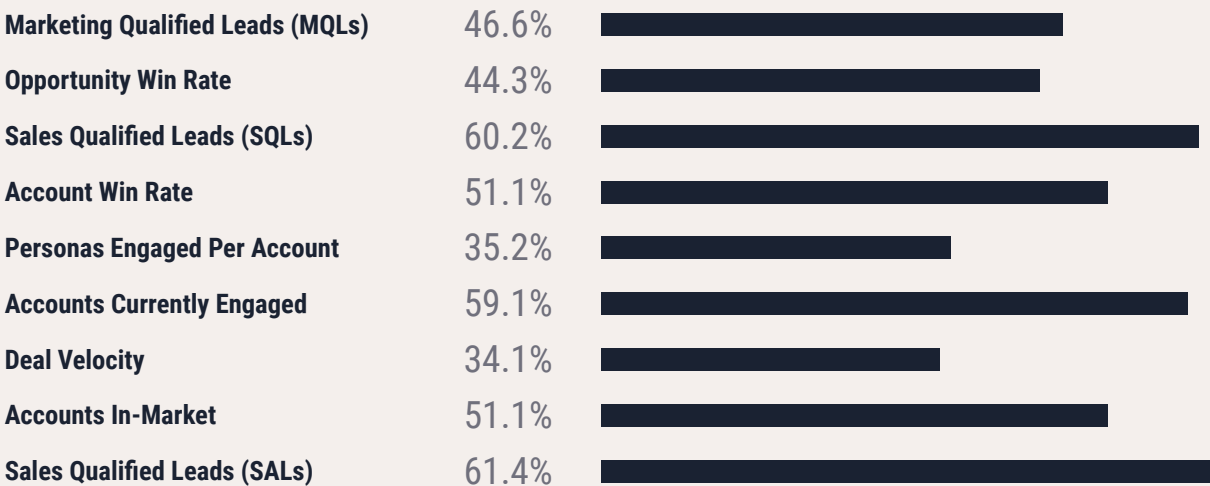
Though sellers typically care more about revenue-driving metrics than their marketing counterparts, the responses we received leave a lot to be desired. **Only 1 in 3 sales leaders reported that they care about deal velocity or the number of personas engaged within an account, and only half of all sales leaders actively track account win rates or accounts that are actually in-market.**

Sales leaders of course track metrics related to their overall quarterly and annual goals, but our data strongly suggests that these leaders are not as attuned to opportunity-specific data as they should be—and that they may be ignoring valuable account-based metrics.

Sales reps may complain about the quality of SQLs, but **60% of sales leaders currently track and report on them—more so even than opportunity win-rate.**

Key Metrics of Sales Leaders

Q6 Which of the following metrics do you currently track and report on? (select all that apply)



Account-Driven Companies Haven't Adopted Account-Based Metrics

Lastly, when it comes to account-driven companies, we see similar trends in the metrics they actively track and report on, including a surprising lack of account-based metrics.

The key metrics that account-driven organizations track are:

- SQLs (58%)
- Accounts they're currently engaged with (56%)
- MQLs and leads (55%)

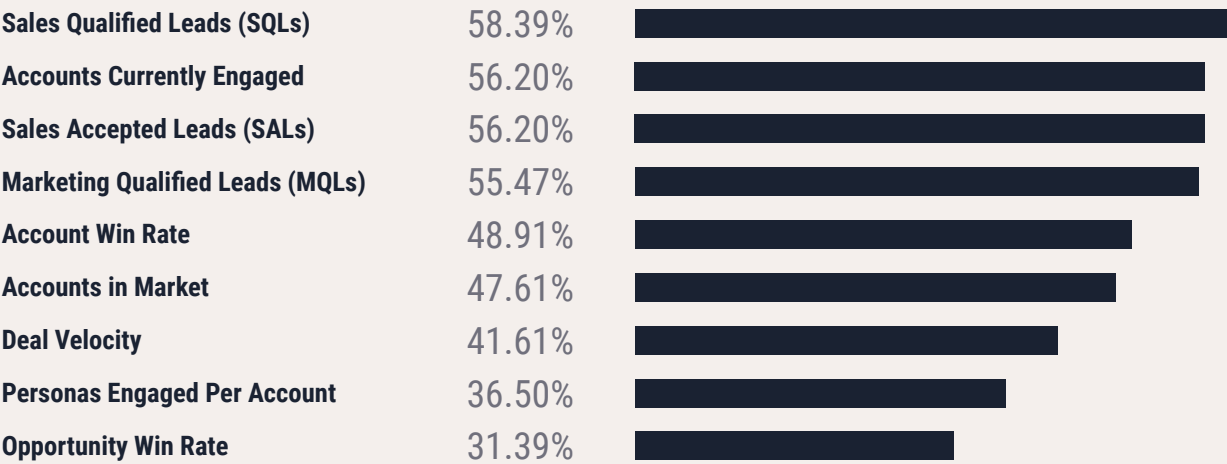
Less than 50% of account-driven organizations track meaningful account-based metrics:

- Account win rate (49%)
- Accounts in market (47%)
- Deal velocity (42%)
- Personas engaged per accounts (37%)

Nearly $\frac{2}{3}$ of account-driven organizations still focus on lead-based metrics like MQLs and SQLs rather than meaningful account-based metrics.

Key Metrics of Account-Driven Companies

Q6 Which of the following metrics do you currently track and report on? (select all that apply)



Companies that claim to be account-driven aren't setting themselves up for account-based sales and marketing success with metrics and focus areas geared towards lead generation. Account-driven organizations (and organizations in general) are better served by measuring what truly matters: driving meaningful engagement and generating revenue through the buyer's experience.

A Paradigm Shift: The Value of Delivering Consistent, Engaging Experiences At Scale

As we previously saw, only 1 in 4 marketing teams and fewer than 1 in 3 account-driven organizations are most focused on delivering a great prospect experience. In addition, less than half of all ABM-driven companies are focused on any kind of account-based measures of success.

The experience a prospect has when engaging with your company cannot be overlooked—nor its importance overstated, especially for companies that want to pursue a successful account-driven approach. In today's highly-saturated marketplace, engaging B2B buyers to drive consistent demand relies on making it easy for prospects to self-educate and progress their customer journey by delivering the right message, content, and experience across a multitude of channels.

But the unfortunate truth is that many of today's marketers lack the deep and accurate data that truly matters, leading to:

- Unrefined targeting
(and budget being spent in the wrong areas and on the wrong accounts)
- Confusing experiences for buyers
(and different channels that deliver opposing messages)
- Inconsistent success metrics
(and different measures of success from leads to accounts)

Experiences drive engagement, and engagement drives conversion and loyalty

As the expectations for marketers to deliver more value beyond the top of the funnel continue to grow, so will the importance of crafting meaningful experiences that create long-term, loyal customers for the business. And it will become even more important for sales and marketing to find alignment, coordinate initiatives, and walk in lockstep towards similar goals.

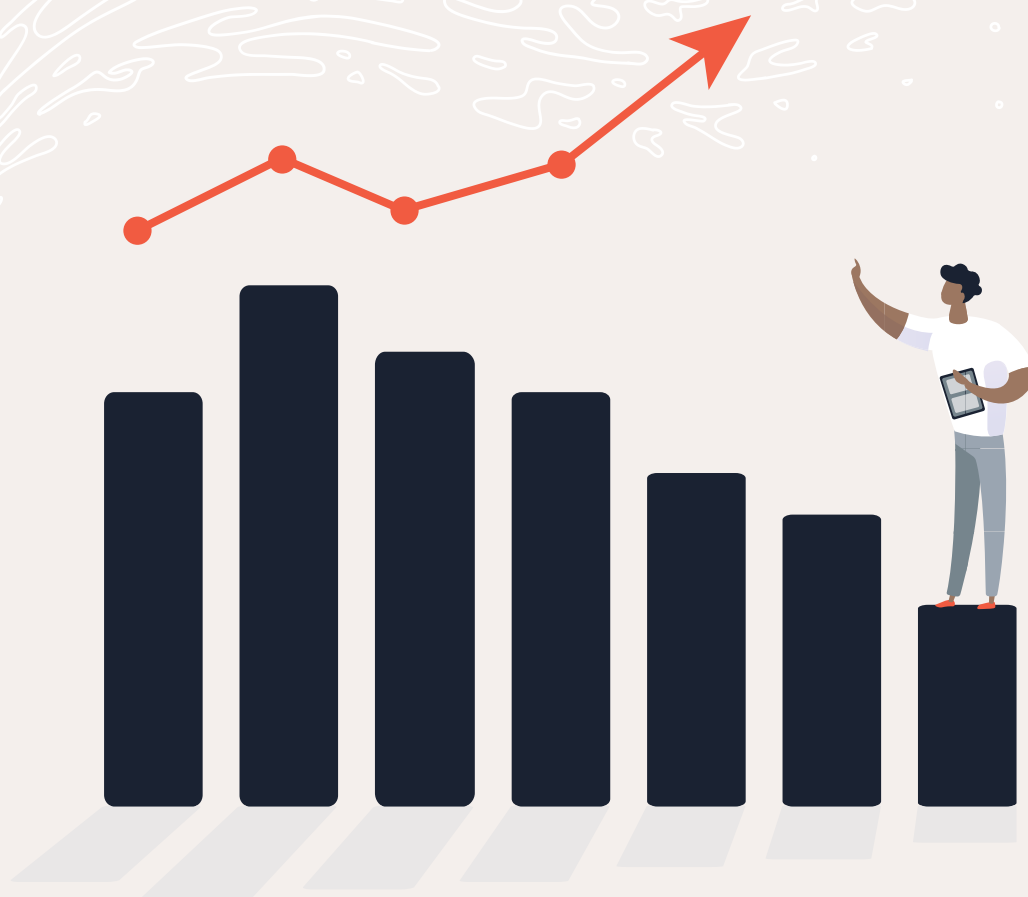


Insufficient Demand Generation

Not All Channels Are Created Equally

Buyers today are less likely than ever to complete a form or speak to a salesperson until late in the buying process. By some estimates, buyers complete 70% or more of the buying journey before raising their hand.

As new buyers become active and begin researching products and solutions, organizations need a mix of channels to garner their attention and generate engagement. Prospects must be reached in multiple places, multiple times, and with relevant, meaningful content. So where do today's organizations focus most to generate demand? How are today's most-popular channels performing, and how can organizations best utilize them to generate demand and engagement?



Social media, events, and content marketing lead the pack

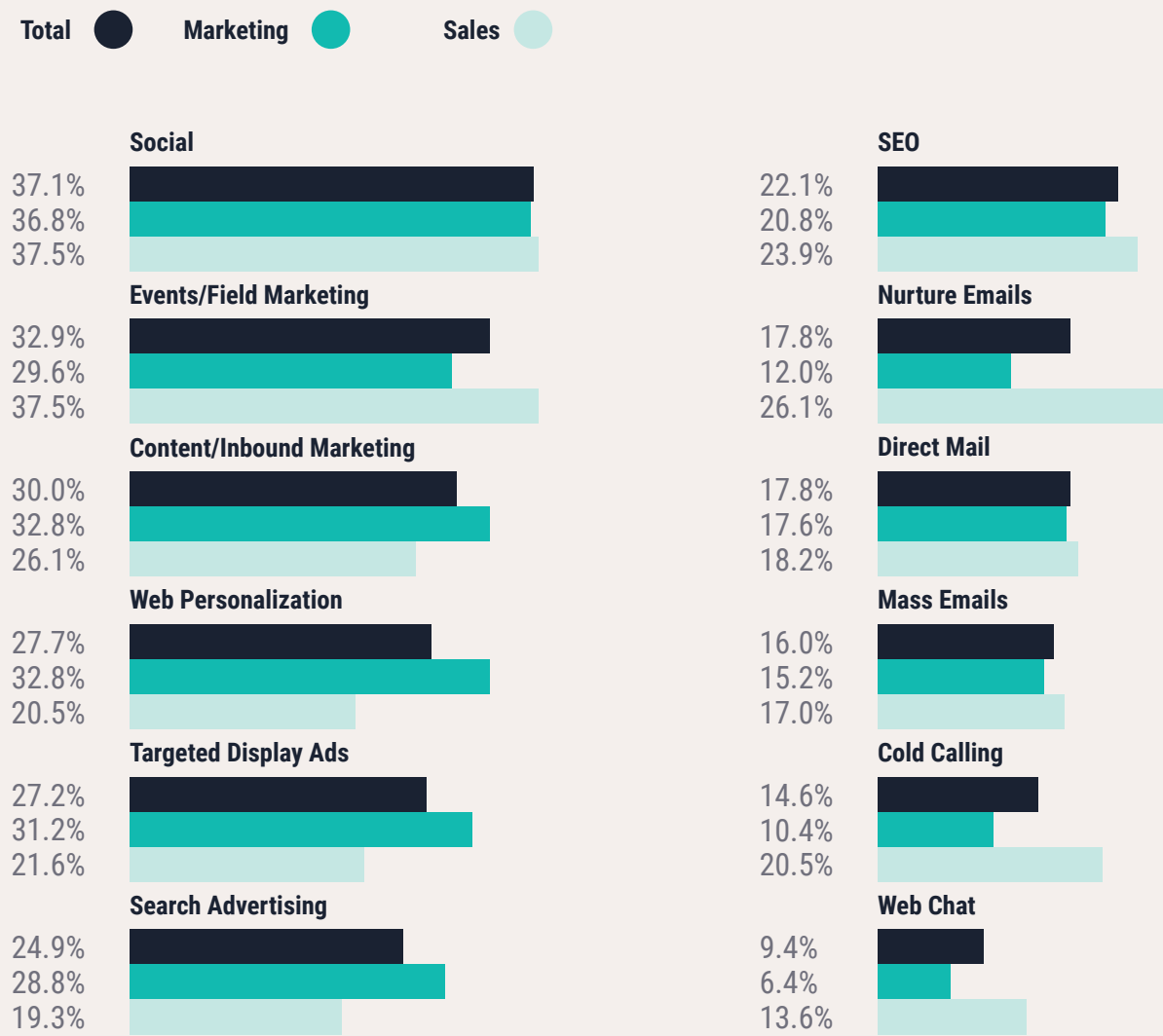
Organizations find social media, events, and content/inbound marketing as their most valuable channels to generate interest and demand. And interestingly enough, social media outranks every other channel.

Sales leaders value nurture emails 14% more than marketing leaders. Additionally, sales values web chat 7% more than marketing, and (unsurprisingly) also favors cold calling 10% more. On the other side, marketing values targeted display ads 10% more and web personalization 12% more than sales.

MAP-generated mass email is the least valuable channel to generate interest and demand amongst account-driven organizations.

Most valuable tool to generate interest and demand

Q21. What channels/tools do you find most valuable to use to generate interest and demand? (Select your top 3 choices.)

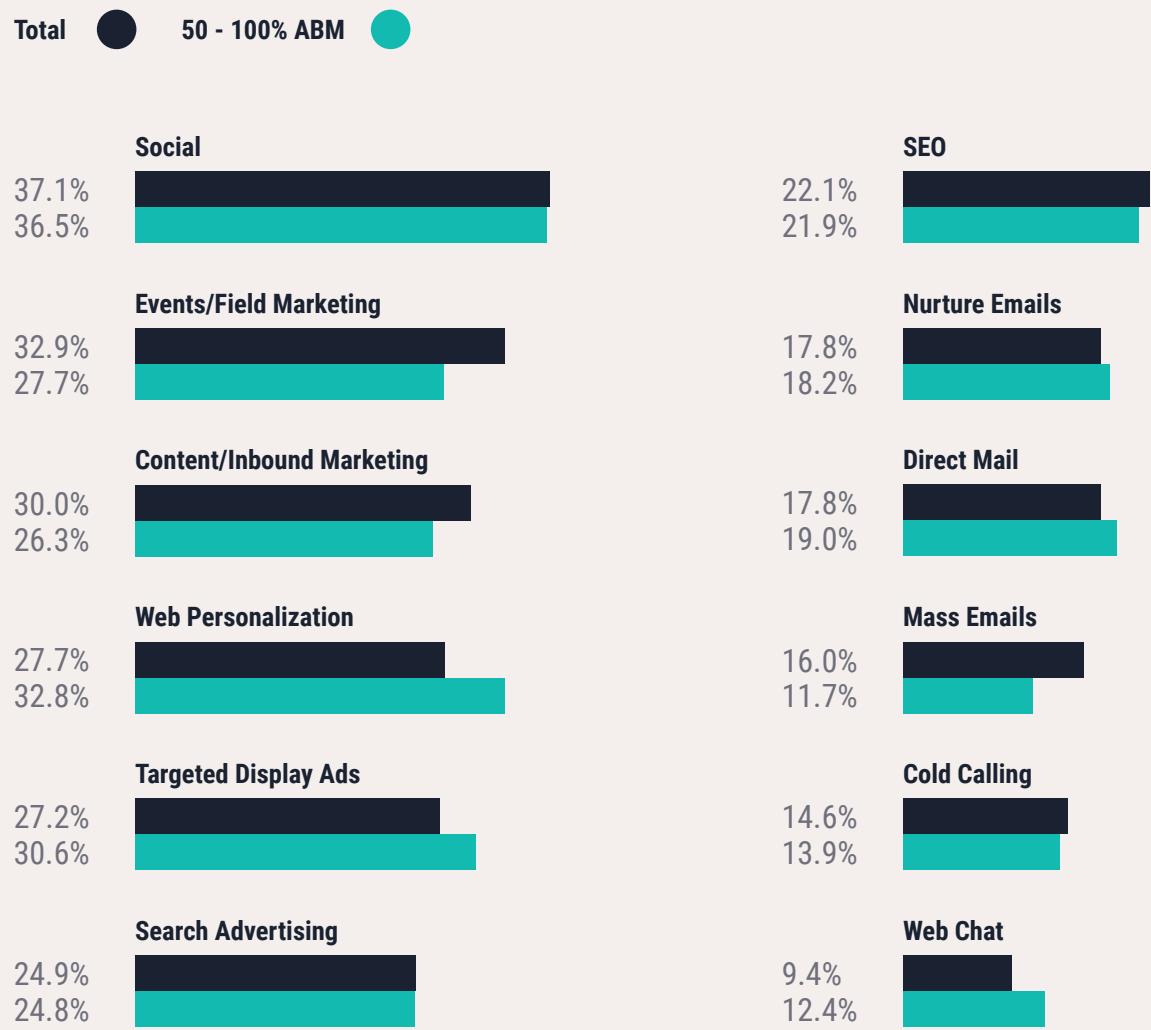


Account-driven companies prioritize a similar mix of channels

Social ranks as the top channel for account-driven companies as well. This is followed by website personalization, targeted display ads, events, and content/inbound marketing.

Most valuable tool to generate interest and demand

Q21. What channels/tools do you find most valuable to use to generate interest and demand? (Select your top 3 choices.)



Social is the most-favored channel of leadership

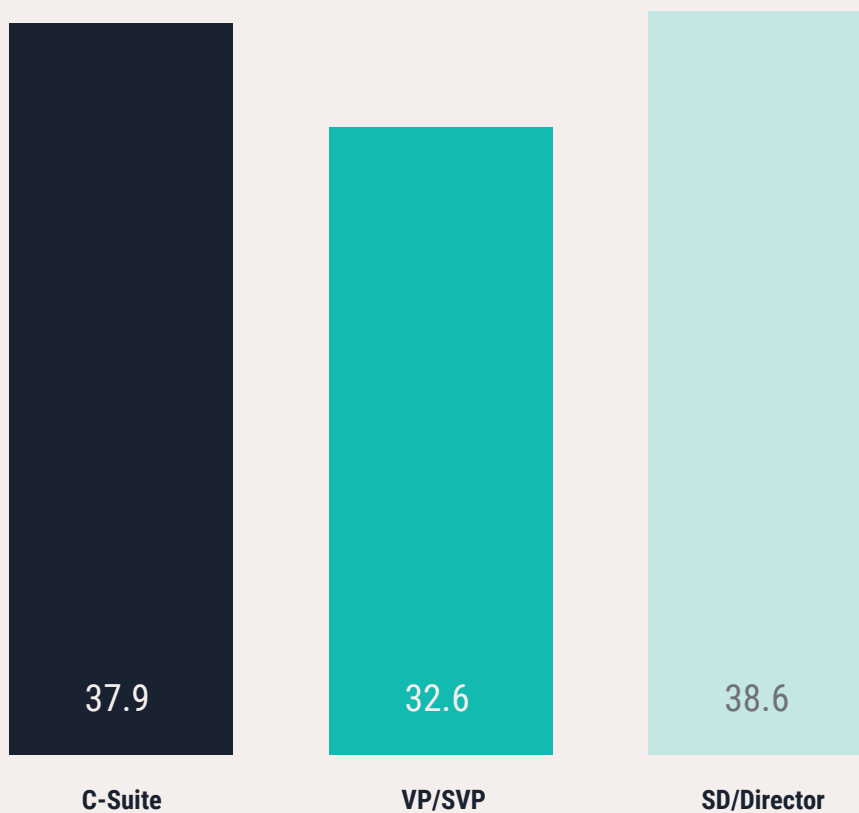
With social (especially LinkedIn), it's easy to share personal videos, stories, thought leadership, and other kinds of unique content that can have a tremendous impact on company image as well as mindshare. Social also facilitates interaction with like-minded peers in a more personal way than other channels allow.

And with sponsored ads, companies can even target audiences by region, company, job titles, functions, and roles to refine campaigns.

While social cannot solely be relied on to drive account engagement or buyer experiences, it should not be overlooked as a valuable way to engage your audience, showcase your company and values, and share personal, unique forms of content—and leaders seem to agree that it delivers the most value of any channel.

Respondents' use of Social

Q21 What channels/tools do you find most valuable to use to generate interest and demand? (Select your top 3 choices.)



Social is one of the most valuable tools to generate interest and demand.

MAP-generated mass emails and nurture emails two of the least-valuable channels

The days of email reigning supreme seem to have passed. **Only 12% of account-driven organizations and 16% of all organizations view MAP-generated mass emails as valuable in generating demand.** Similarly, MAP-automated nurture emails also deliver low value, with **only 18% of both all organizations and account-driven organizations reporting that nurture emails are valuable in generating demand.**

While email is still useful for promoting specific events, sharing your monthly newsletter with subscribers, or sending relevant content based on a buyer's interests, relying on email like we did even just two years ago is no longer viable for driving meaningful account engagement. When your audience is busier than they have ever been before, new channels are essential to reach and engage them.

Organizations may continue to fool themselves into thinking email is necessary for demand generation, but the creases start to show when mass email goes up against other more valuable channels.

No channel should be used in isolation

While all channels have value somewhere in your demand generation engine, they should not operate in silos.

Be thoughtful about your channels:

- What purpose do they serve?
- What function of the business do they support?
- What are their strengths and weaknesses?

Think about each channel in relation to your audience. Is this a channel they value? Does this channel allow them to easily engage? Or is it a channel that simply adds clutter to their already chaotic days?

Each channel is simply a part of a much larger engagement journey.



The Content Experience: Valuable But Inconsistent

Good content should seamlessly drive meaningful engagement with your buyers as they continue their decision making processes. And as today's buyers conduct their own research before engaging with sales, good content is especially important to guide them in the right direction.

Middling content experiences persist

1 in 3 companies said that content marketing is one of the most valuable ways they generate demand. But if that's so, then why is the experience so middling?

When it comes to the content experience of prospects, there's a lot that can be improved. Only 55% of

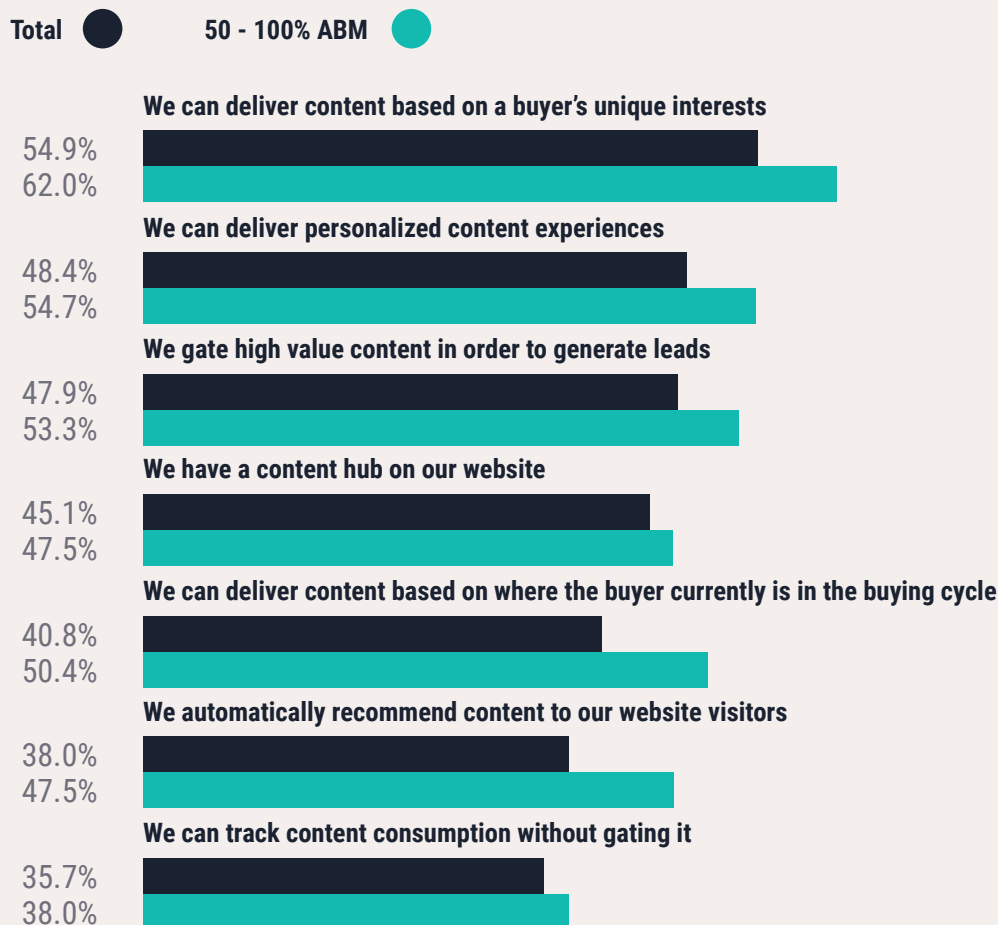
organizations and 63% of account-driven organizations can deliver content based on a buyer's unique interests.

Even fewer account-driven companies can:

- Deliver personalized content experiences (55%)
- Deliver content based on where the buyer is in the sales cycle (50%)
- Recommend content to their web visitors (47%)
- Can track content consumption without gating it (38%)
- And only 45% of all organizations and 47% of account-driven organizations even have a content hub on their website

Content delivery capabilities: Total and Account-driven companies

Q7. Which of the following statements about delivering compelling content to your buyers are true for your business? (Select all that apply.)



As we learned earlier, companies continue to be heavily focused on lead generation. From a content perspective, the problem this leads to is that MAPs (as we'll explore in later pages) do little to enable better customer journeys, so the content experience after that first piece of content is consumed often fails to drive meaningful ongoing engagement.

Account-driven companies gate their content, but why?

For organizations that are primarily focused on lead generation, gating content makes sense. But for account-driven organizations, gating content should be irrelevant because they're seeking to increase engagement with key accounts—and ideally are using account-based technology that helps them understand how and when those accounts are engaged with their brand, even anonymously.

Yet 53% of account-driven companies continue to gate their content, further emphasizing that simply “doing” account-based marketing is not the same as being truly account-driven.

For companies that are truly account-driven, generating leads shouldn't be as big of a priority as account engagement. If you know which accounts you want to go after, the goal is to generate meaningful engagement with them. But forms don't amplify engagement; they hinder it.



Generate Demand With Experiences, Not Conversions

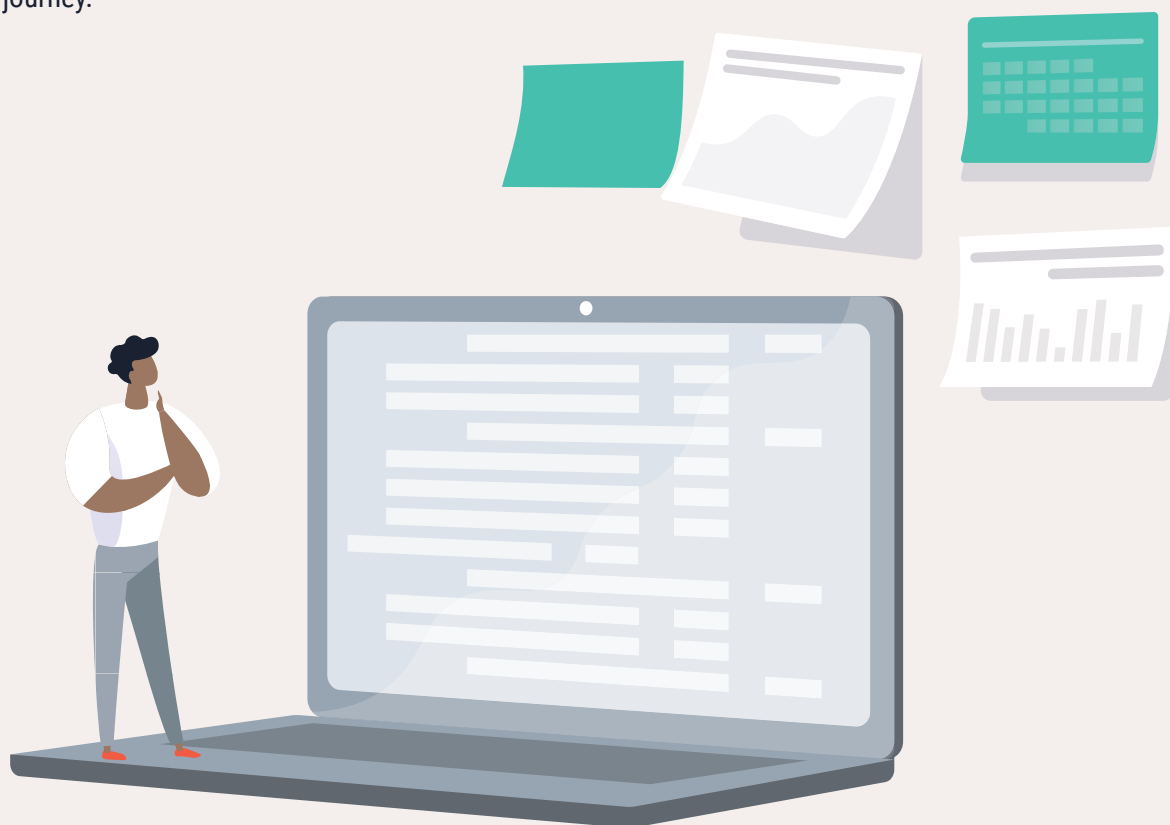
Demand generation requires thinking beyond the initial conversion of a prospect to a lead and considering the entire prospect experience. Otherwise, you're left with a number of holes in your demand generation engine.

It's not only about the channels you use or the content you offer; it's also about your message, your story, and (most importantly) your audience:

- What value do you bring your buyers?
- What goals do you enable them to achieve?
- Why should they even care about you in the first place?

To achieve predictable revenue growth, it's important to look at the way you generate demand from a holistic point of view—and to focus at the account level with the entire buying committee in mind. The first conversion action is important, but even more paramount is the entire experience from the buyer's first touchpoint all the way through to their last. The challenge is that the first touchpoint usually happens without your sales and marketing team knowing about it.

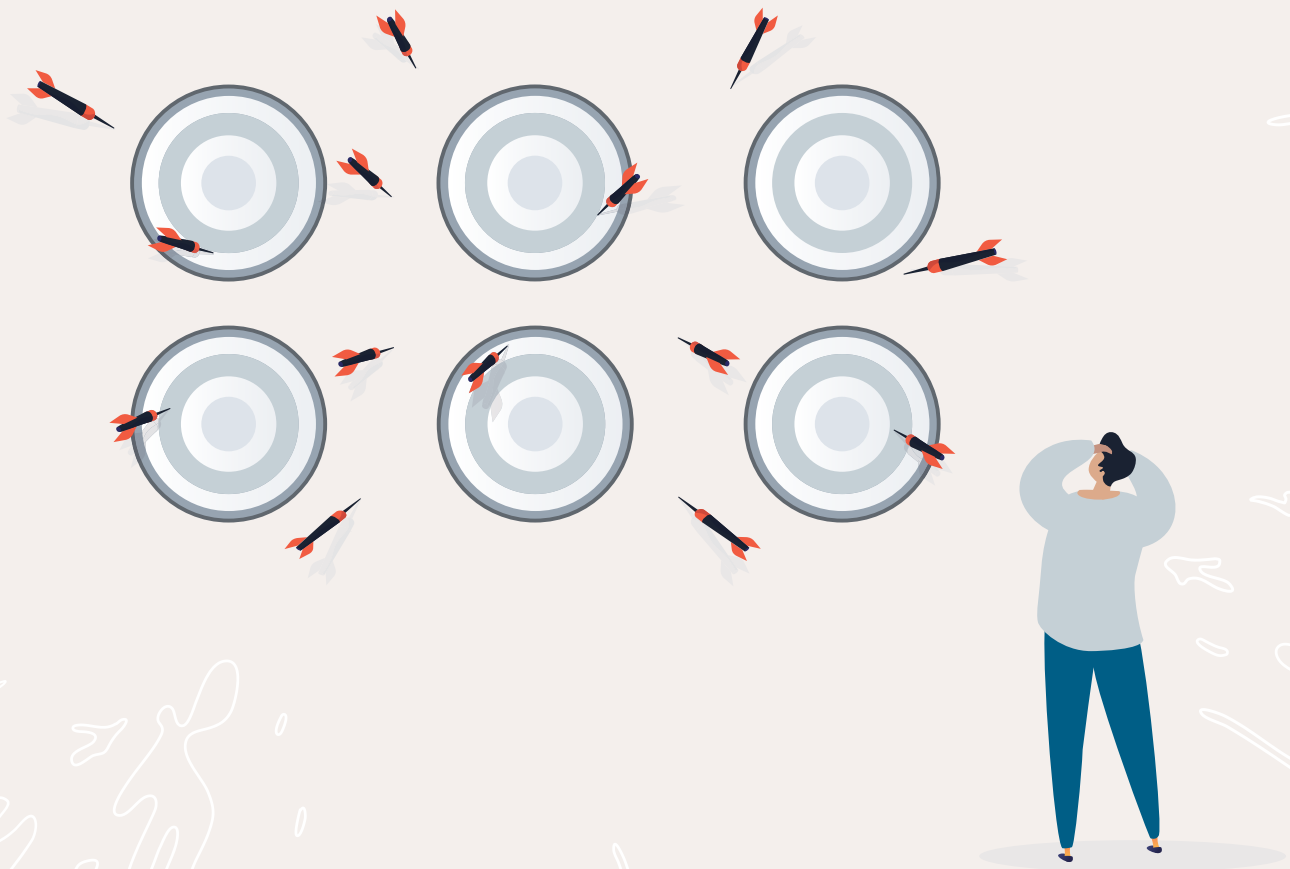
As mentioned at the beginning of this section, buyers today complete most of the buying journey without filling out forms or raising their hand to sales, so account-driven companies need to be able to understand where buyers are on their journey before the initial conversation. Sales and marketing teams that can uncover and understand anonymous buyer intent can not only proactively target the right accounts, but also craft experiences that invite deeper engagement as they continue along the buying journey.



Ineffective Prioritization of Resources

Priorities Drive Actions

Your buyer's experience is key to driving meaningful engagement and predictable revenue growth. But in order to deliver experiences that align with what your buyers need and expect, it's essential for sales and marketing to effectively prioritize their actions, time, and budgets. Otherwise, campaigns and outreach are likely to reach the wrong buyers, deliver conflicting messages, and fail to engage at the right time.



Sales and marketing disagree on target accounts

An organization’s target account list (TAL) is paramount for driving business growth. Agreement on these accounts from both sales and marketing is key to ensuring that campaigns and activities are correctly prioritized and aligned with the goals of the business.

Unfortunately, that’s typically not the case, and target account selection is another area of strain on the sales and marketing relationship.

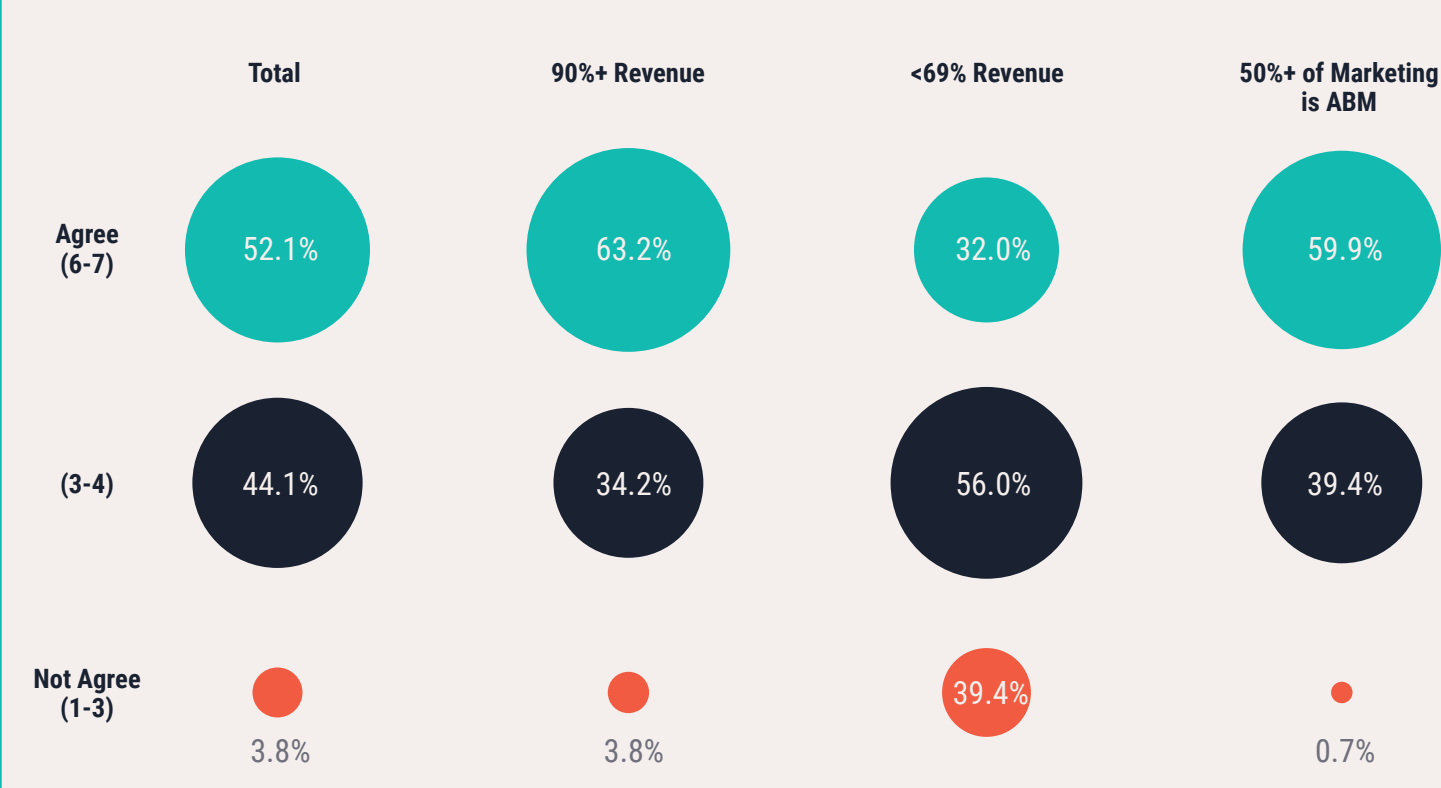
Only 52% of sales and marketing leaders agree that their target account list is accurate. And while successful organizations typically demonstrate tighter alignment on their target account list, agreements are still fairly inconsistent—and that results in a lack of accountability from either team.

Account-driven organizations aren’t much better

Similarly, we see that only 60% of account-driven organizations have agreement from sales and marketing on their target account list.

Sales and marketing agreement on TAL

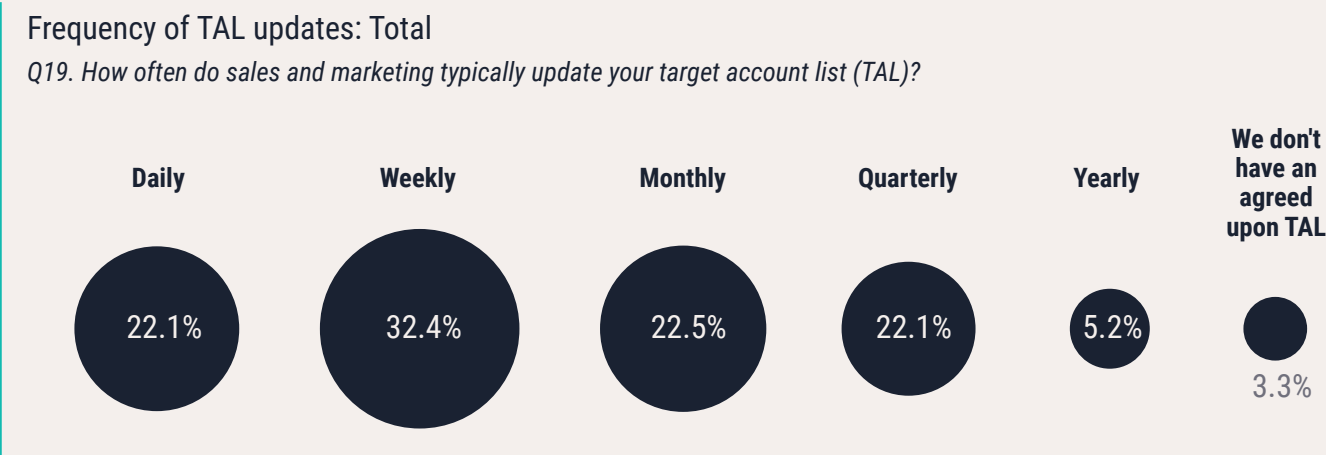
Q17. On a scale of 1-7, to what degree do sales and marketing agree on your target account list (TAL)? (Where 7 is strongly agree and 1 is not agree at all.)



Account lists are being updated, but how often—and with what data?

Things are constantly changing in the business world, so it’s important that target account lists be dynamic. However, it’s also important that updates are made regularly based on accurate, comprehensive data.

The good news is that more than half of organizations are updating their TALs on at least a weekly basis, and another 22% are updating them monthly. But unfortunately, nearly a quarter of organizations update their TALs only quarterly or yearly—or lack a TAL altogether.



As we learned earlier, most organizations lack any kind of meaningful account-level insights because they’re more focused on leads than on accounts. As we’ll cover later in this report, 2 in 5 sales leaders feel they lack the data to truly understand the level of engagement at the account level. Additionally, over 1 in 3 sales leaders are challenged by the fact that they lack a clear understanding of what to say, how to engage, and which accounts to even prioritize in the first place.

So what data and decisions are driving TAL updates within most organizations?

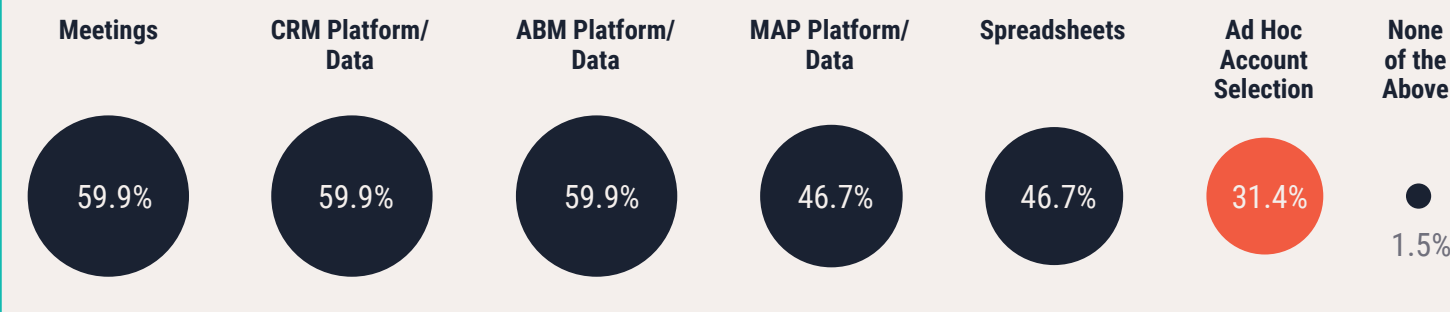
Target accounts are selected ad hoc

While half of all organizations disagree on their target account list, **1 in 3 account-driven organizations lack a defined strategy to select their target accounts altogether.**

This impacts not only sales and marketing alignment, but also ROI, productivity, overall go-to-market effectiveness, and (most importantly) revenue generation. This demonstrates a severe lack of prioritization, strategic direction, and alignment.

Methods to select TAL: Account-driven companies

Q18. What methods do sales and marketing use to select and agree upon target accounts to pursue for your ABM strategy?



If target accounts can so easily be added and removed—and sales and marketing have such wide disagreements about what accounts should be on that list in the first place—then it’s no wonder that focus areas are misaligned, data is untrustworthy, and both sellers and marketers face such fundamental challenges in which accounts are even the right ones to go after.

Tech Stacks

With all of the focus organizations have on generating leads, what happens to those leads once they've been generated? What's their journey like? What experiences do they have after they've entered the funnel?

Are organizations equipped to effectively filter leads and identify those that warrant an investment of time and resources?

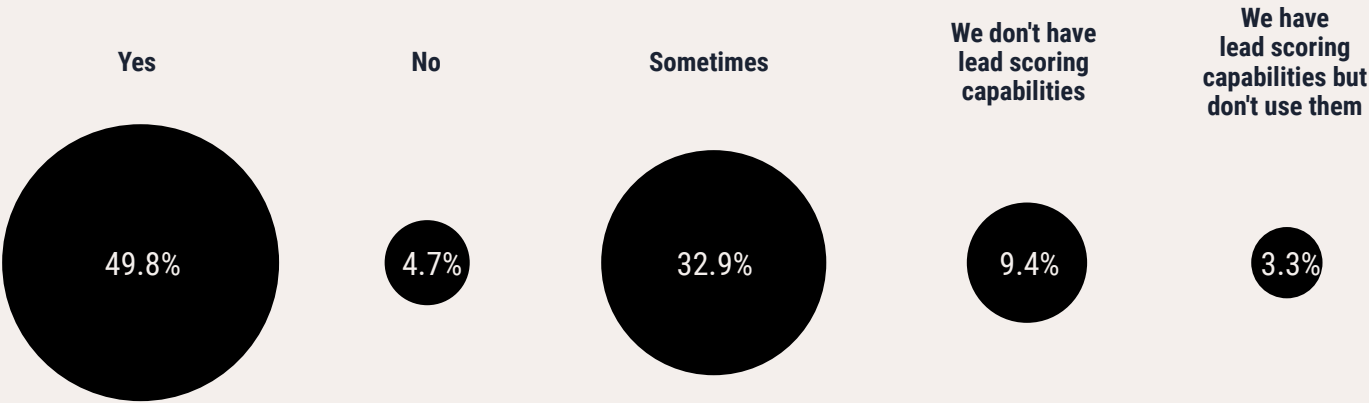
MAPs deliver little value at a high cost

For half of organizations surveyed, MAPs rarely surface the best leads on a consistent basis, or they lack or don't use lead scoring capabilities in the first place. When lead generation is the top priority amongst marketers, sellers, and account-driven companies alike, it may be that the focus is more on the act of lead generation rather than on what happens afterwards.

50% of organizations report that their lead scoring does not accurately surface the best leads or that they don't have lead scoring capabilities at all.

Lead scoring accuracy

Q9. Do your lead scoring processes/capabilities accurately surface the best leads on a consistent basis?



MAPs are insufficient at creating customer journeys

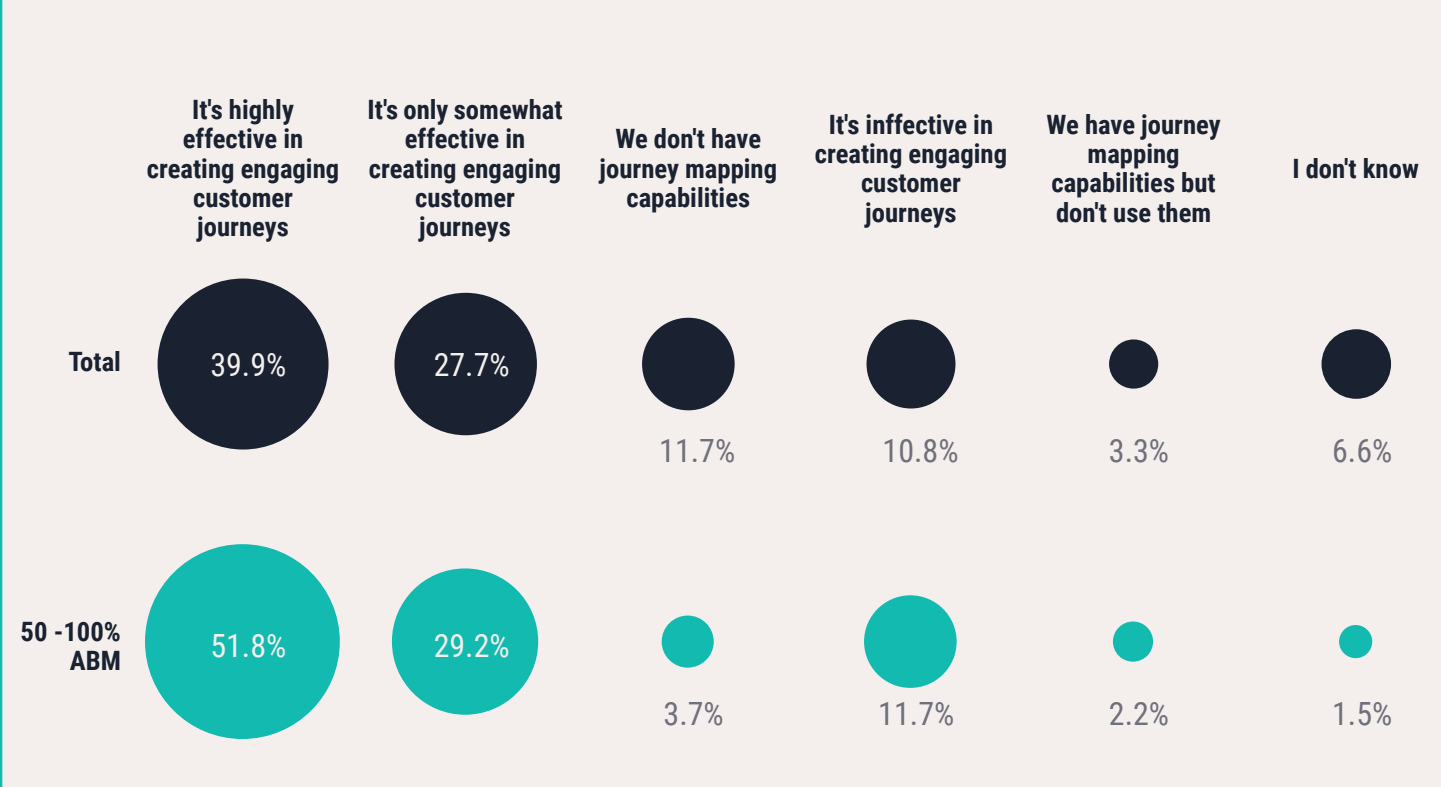
In addition to poor lead scoring and middling content experiences, journey mapping capabilities from today's MAPs are also lacking. **Only 40% of all organizations and 52% of account-driven organizations believe their MAP's** journey mapping capabilities are effective in helping them create engaging customer journeys.

Leads are coming in, but those prospects are then met with poor experiences that hinder engagement and brand perception down the road. Buyer behavior has changed, but our marketing tech hasn't kept up.

60% of sales and marketing leaders say that their marketing automation platform is insufficient at helping them create engaging customer journeys.

MAP journey mapping capabilities: Total and Account-driven companies

Q15. In thinking about your marketing automation platform (MAP), how would you describe its journey mapping capabilities?



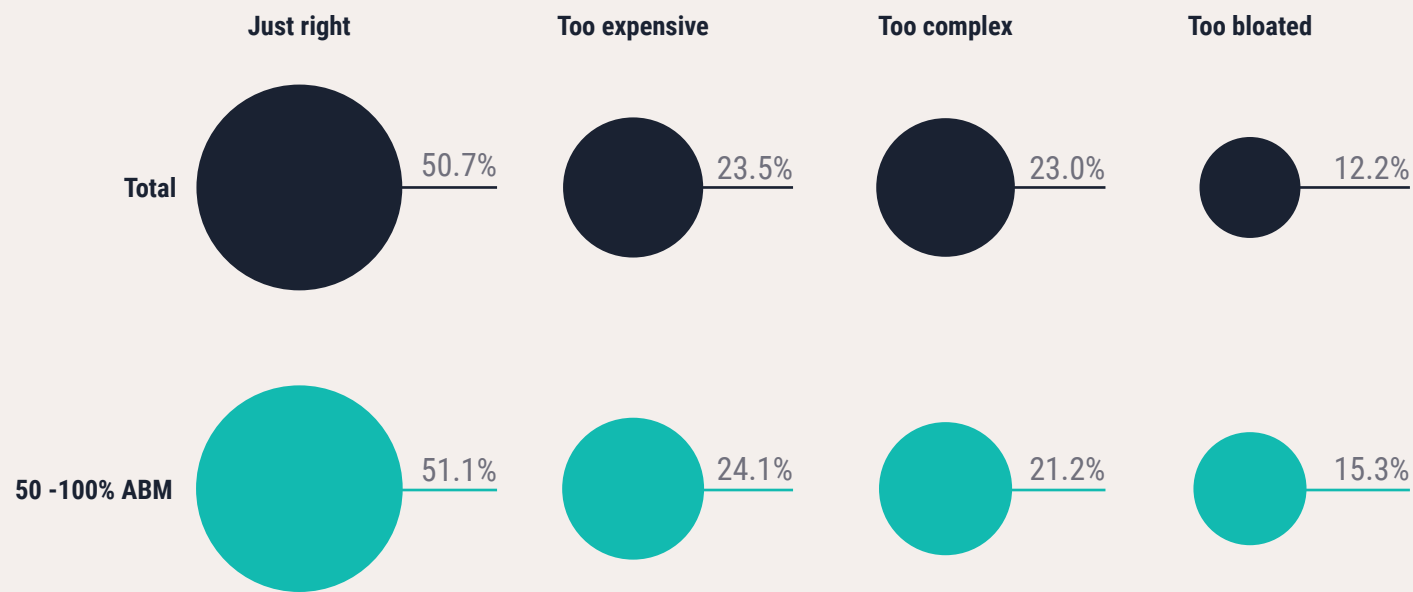
Tech stacks are too expensive, too bloated, or too complex

The challenge of orchestrating meaningful engagement with buyers isn't helped when today's tech stacks are filled with bloated, costly, and overly complex systems. And unfortunately, that's exactly the case for half of all companies as well as companies that are account-driven.

50% of companies report that their tech stacks are too expensive, bloated, or complex.

State of tech stack: Total and Account-driven companies

Q14. How would you describe the state of your sales and marketing tech stack?



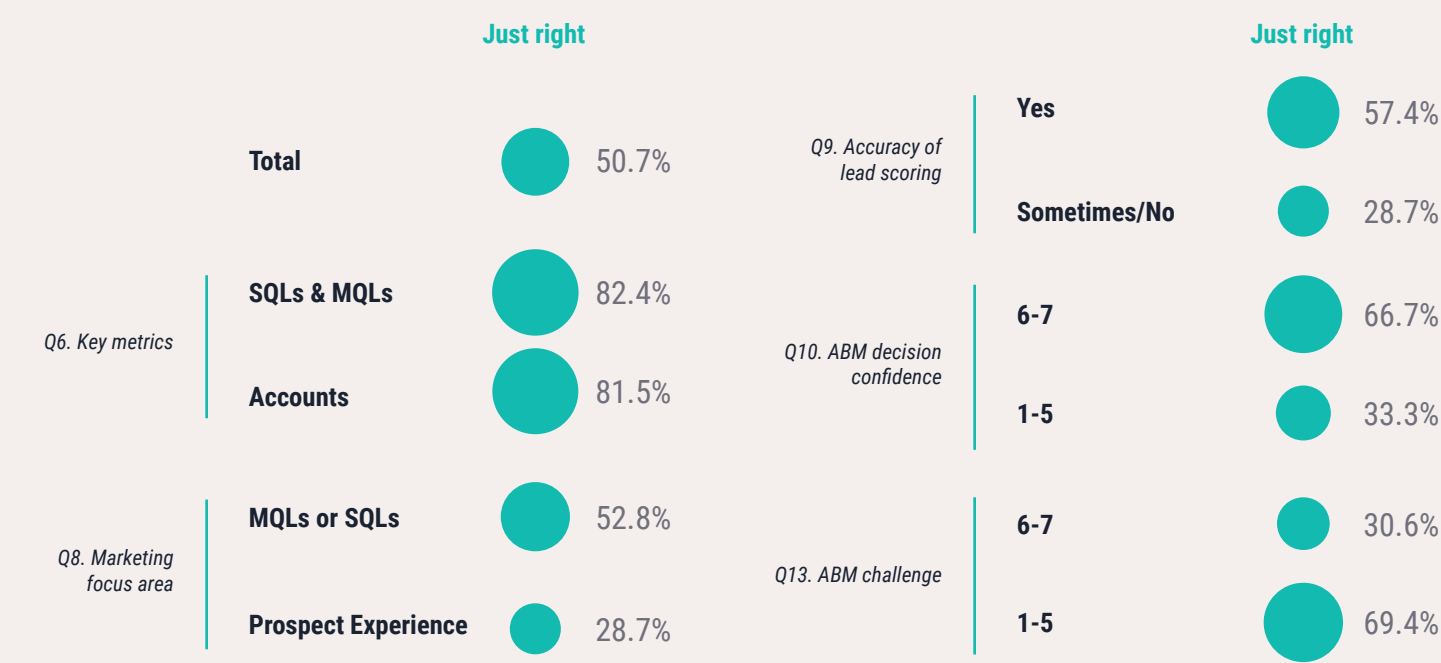
But some companies have found their sweet spot

All this isn't to say that you should completely rip and replace the entirety of your tech stack. Some organizations have found the sweet spot with their tech stack while also demonstrating valuable habits.

Of those who labeled their tech stack as "just right:"

- 82% track and report on both leads and accounts
- 57% believe their lead scoring surfaces the best leads accurately and consistently
- 67% feel their data enables confidence in making strategic account-based decisions

But while there are glimpses of better habits coming forward, there's still work to be done. Only 29% of these companies have a primary focus on the prospect experience, and 69% still have difficulty orchestrating their account-based programs. And even though these companies feel that their lead scoring models work well, splitting their focus between leads and accounts means that they aren't solely focused on engaging the best accounts to generate predictable revenue growth.



Don't aim for perfect, but rather for what's most valuable to you

With constant changes in capabilities, goals, and markets, the hunt for the perfect tech stack will continue to be elusive. There isn't a one size fits all perfect tech stack. However, there are certainly ways to make your systems more usable and valuable to your organization. Part of that is a reframing of your go-to-market approach:

- What metrics are valuable to you?
- What goals do you want to drive towards?

Your go-to-market plan should not be built off the technology you have, but rather the technology you have should work to strengthen and enhance your go-to-market plan.

As Voltaire is often quoted,
"Perfect is the enemy of good."

Lessening the experience, widening the gaps

Unfortunately, the "just rights" are but a small segment of the overall sales and marketing landscape. From ad hoc target account selection to middling marketing technologies, it's no surprise organizations distrust their data and feel challenged when it comes to engaging buyers with meaningful experiences.

It's also why they remain committed to lead generation—it's what they know and have confidence in.

However, lead generation doesn't put organizations on the path to predictable revenue growth. And when lead scoring does little to help surface the best leads to engage with, sales and marketing teams either have to determine a better way to go-to-market or waste time working leads that often aren't the right fit for their company. At the same time, leads have to go through fragmented experiences as they get passed between sales and marketing with little coordination, which can lead to poor experiences and create friction.

Either way, time, resources, and trust is lost, and the gap between sales and marketing only continues to grow as prospects slip through the cracks.



Inability to Engage the Right Buyers At Scale

Orchestrating Meaningful Experiences is Critical to Success

Whether you've embraced a lead-based strategy, an account-based strategy, or a blend of both, engaging buyers throughout their journey is crucial for success. Effectively orchestrating engaging experiences is the last piece of the predictable revenue growth puzzle because it's critical to reach the right buyers at the right time with the right message.



Account-based orchestration is a challenge for 9 in 10 organizations

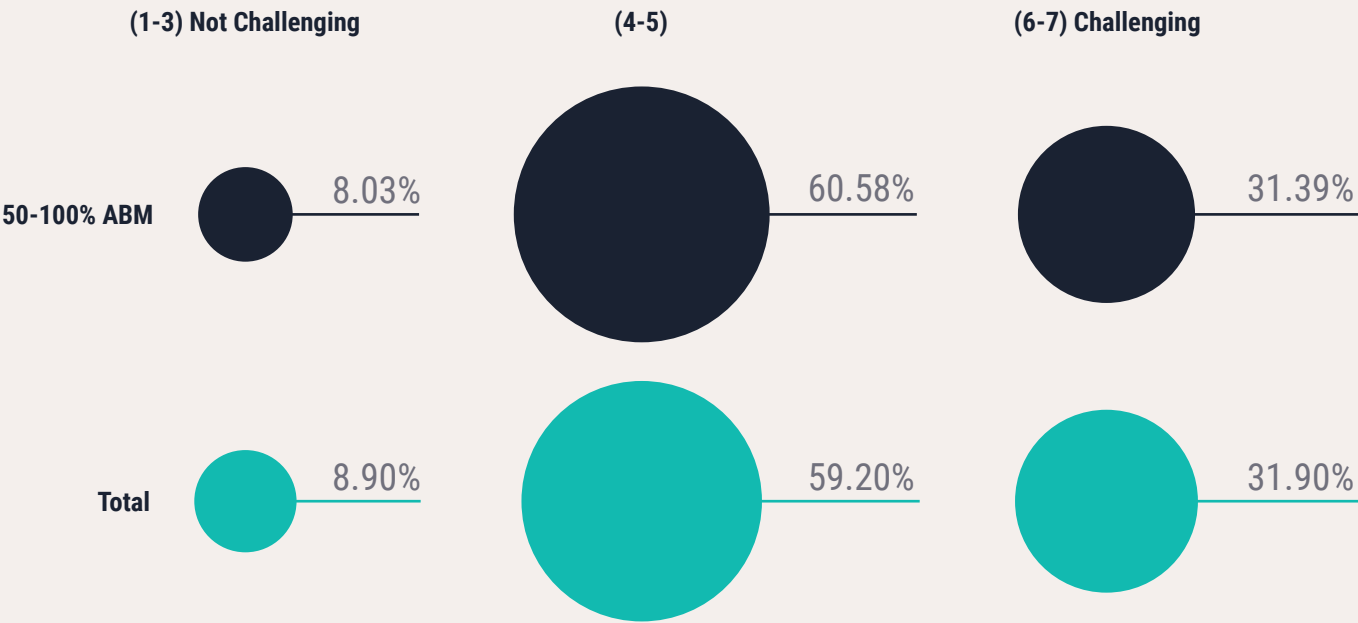
Orchestrating engagement as part of an account-driven program is critical—yet can be daunting. **Only 9% of respondents say that it’s not challenging to orchestrate their account-based strategy.** In other words, 91% of respondents report that ABM orchestration continues to be a massive hurdle yet to be overcome.

If even account-driven companies are struggling to orchestrate engagement, how are those challenges impacting their ability to engage the right buyers at scale?

ABM orchestration is a challenge for 9 in 10 account-driven companies.

Challenge of ABM Orchestration: Total and Account-Driven Companies

Q13 In thinking about your ABM strategy, on a scale of 1-7, how challenging is it to orchestrate engagement across channels using your marketing automation platform and other solutions in your tech stack? (Where 7 is very challenging and 1 is not challenging at all.)



Poor data stifles engagement

Comprehensive, accurate data is essential for sales and marketing to successfully engage with target accounts, but a lack of account-level metrics and data is stifling account-driven organizations’ ability to meaningfully engage with of accounts. In fact, **half of all sales and marketing lack confidence that their data enables them to make strategic account-driven decisions or to meaningfully engage prospects.**

Additionally, 1 in 3 account-driven companies lack confidence that they have the right data to make strategic decisions about which accounts to target and when to engage, and half of account-driven companies lack

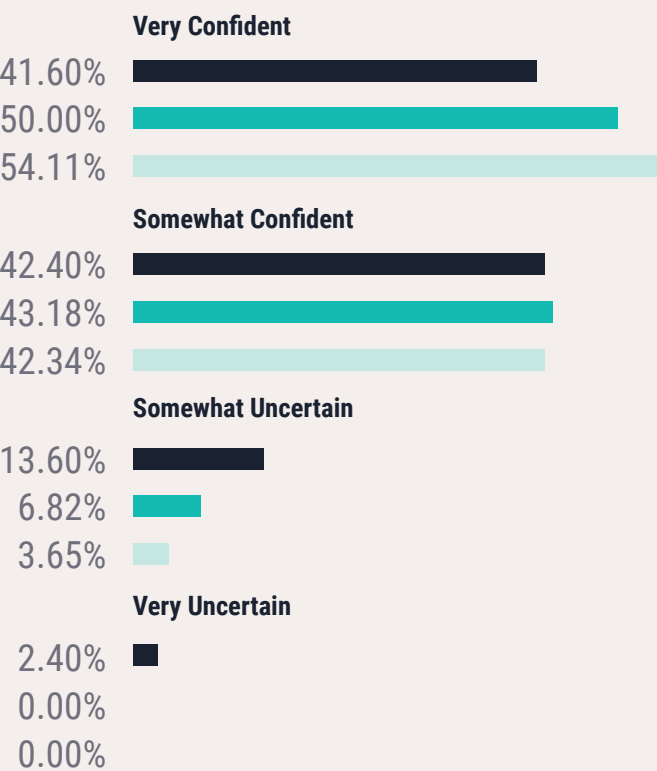
confidence that their salespeople have the insights they need to meaningfully engage customers when prospecting.

Recall that a majority of organizations prefer social media, events, and inbound marketing initiatives to generate demand. But could it also be that these are the only channels where poor data doesn’t hinder campaign performance or progress?

And while email may be thought of as a valuable tool, is it actually delivering what organizations need, or is it simply adding noise to the mix?

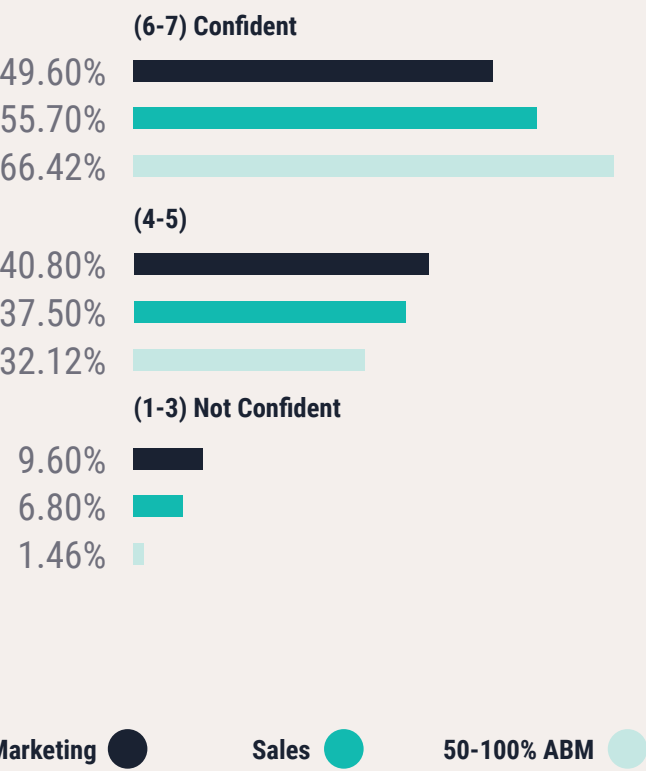
Confidence in Account and Contact-Level Insights: Marketing, Sales and Account-Driven Companies

Q22. How confident are you that SDRs/BDRs/inside salespeople have the account and contact-level insights they need to meaningfully engage customers when prospecting.



Confidence in Data to Make ABM Decisions: Marketing, Sales and Account-Driven Companies

Q10. On a scale of 1-7, how confident are you that you have the right data to make strategic ABM decisions about which accounts to target and when to engage? (Where 7 is very confident and 1 is not confident at all.)



Poor Data Impacts Sales Territory Planning

In order for sales and marketing to work together on warming and engaging key leads and prospects, everyone needs clarity on who owns which accounts—and territories need to be balanced properly based on each sales rep’s goals and capacity.

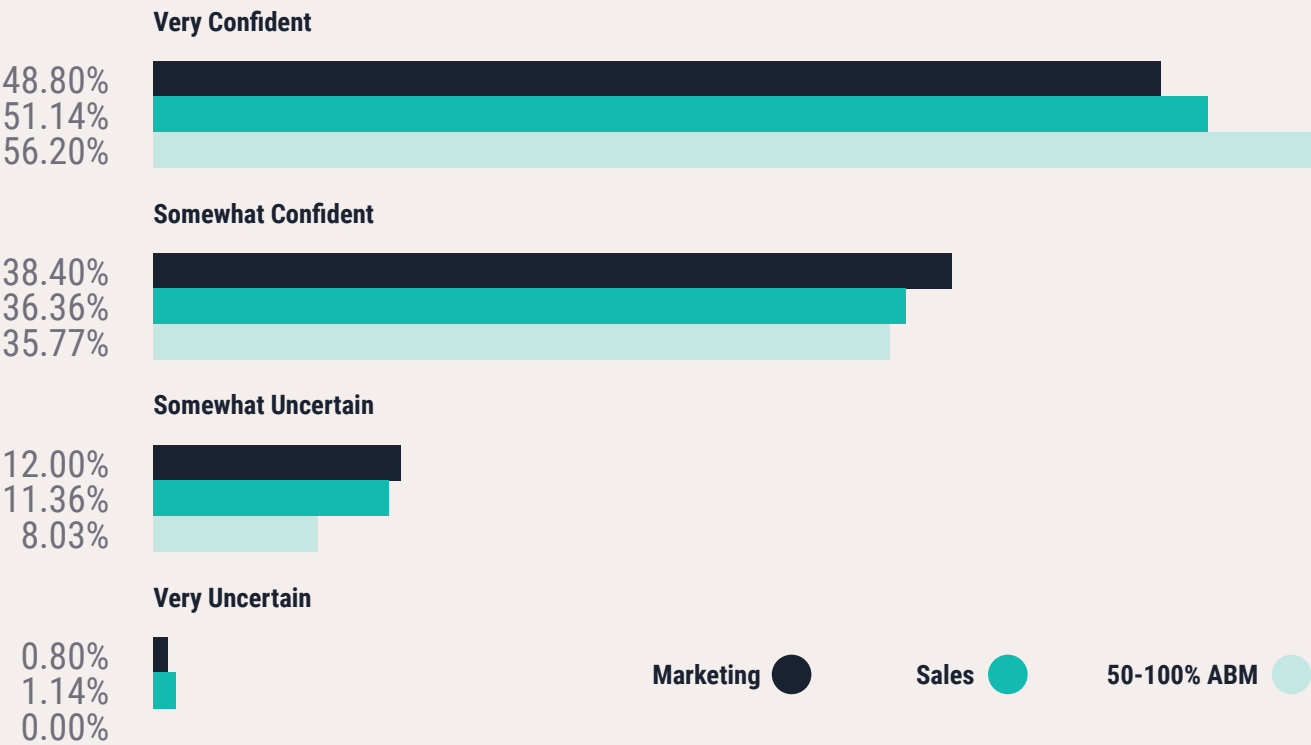
Unfortunately, **50% of sales and marketing leaders are not confident in the structure and alignment of their sales territories**, likely due to a lack of confidence in the account data available to them. In fact, more than 1 in 10 sales and marketing leaders are somewhat or very uncertain about how their territories are structured. **Only 56% of account-driven companies are very confident in the structure and alignment of their sales territories.**

Recall too that **only 52% of sales and marketing leaders agree that their target account list is accurate**, and also that **1 in 3 account-driven organizations lack a defined strategy to select their target accounts altogether**—selecting them ad hoc rather than with any kind of documented approach.

For organizations in which account-based engagement drives a majority of their go-to-market plan, a lack of confidence in sales territory planning can be a major roadblock.

50% of sales leaders lack confidence in how their sales territories are aligned and structured.

Confidence in Sales Territories: Marketing, Sales, and Account-Driven Companies
Q20. How confident are you in the structure and alignment of your sales territories?



Data quality impacts sales engagement, too

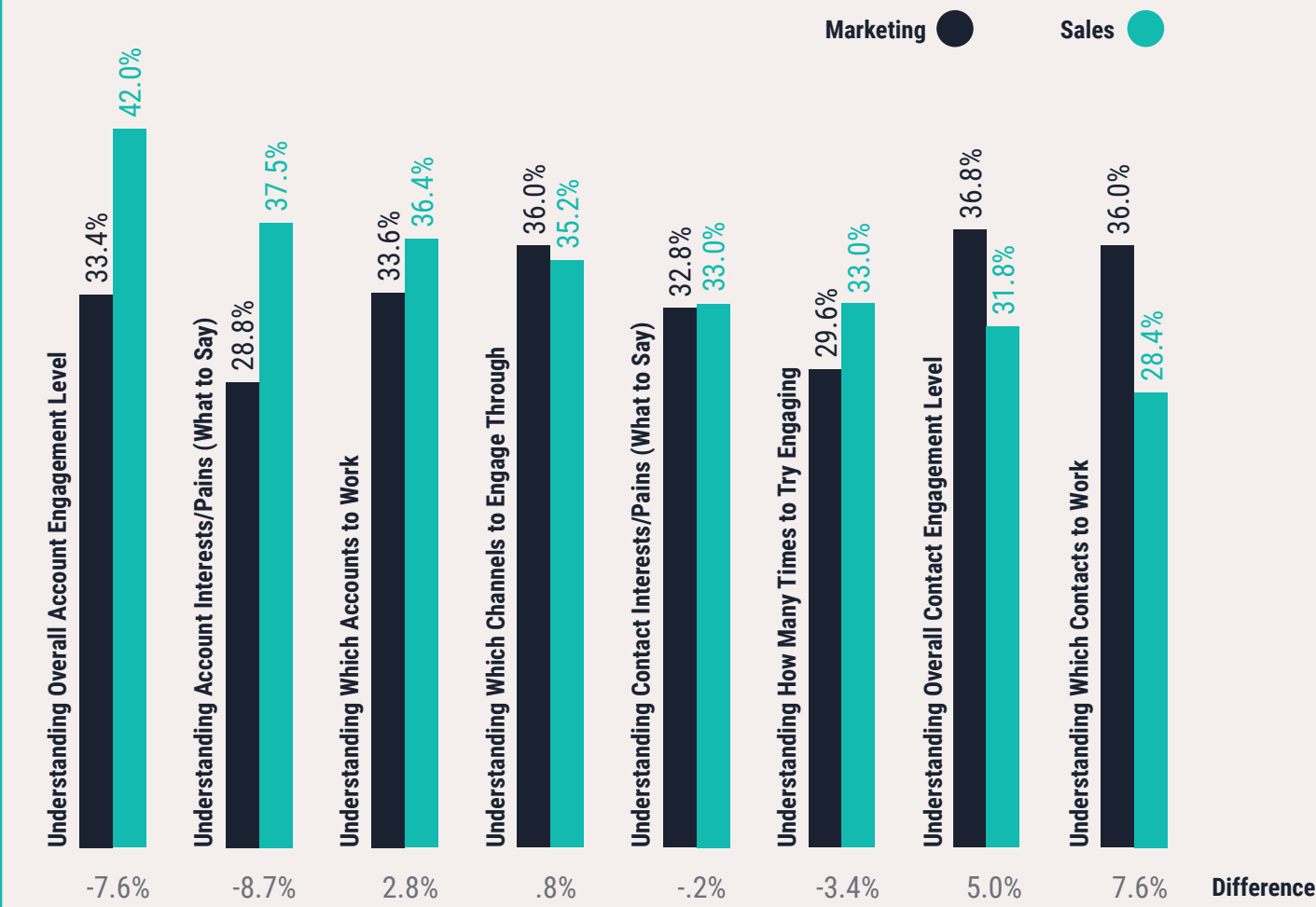
A lack of comprehensive account-level insights doesn't just impact territory planning, but also the way in which sales teams engage with key accounts:

2 in 5 sales leaders feel they lack the data to truly understand the level of engagement at the account level (echoing challenges noted earlier)

And over 1 in 3 sales leaders feel they lack a clear understanding of:

- What message to lead with at both the account and contact level (including pain points and interest areas)
- Which channels to best engage through
- How many times they should try engaging
- Which accounts to work and prioritize in the first place

Key Sales Challenges
Q23. What are the 3 biggest challenges your SDRs/BDRs/inside salespeople face? (Select your top 3 choices.)



Account-driven sales teams are at a severe disadvantage

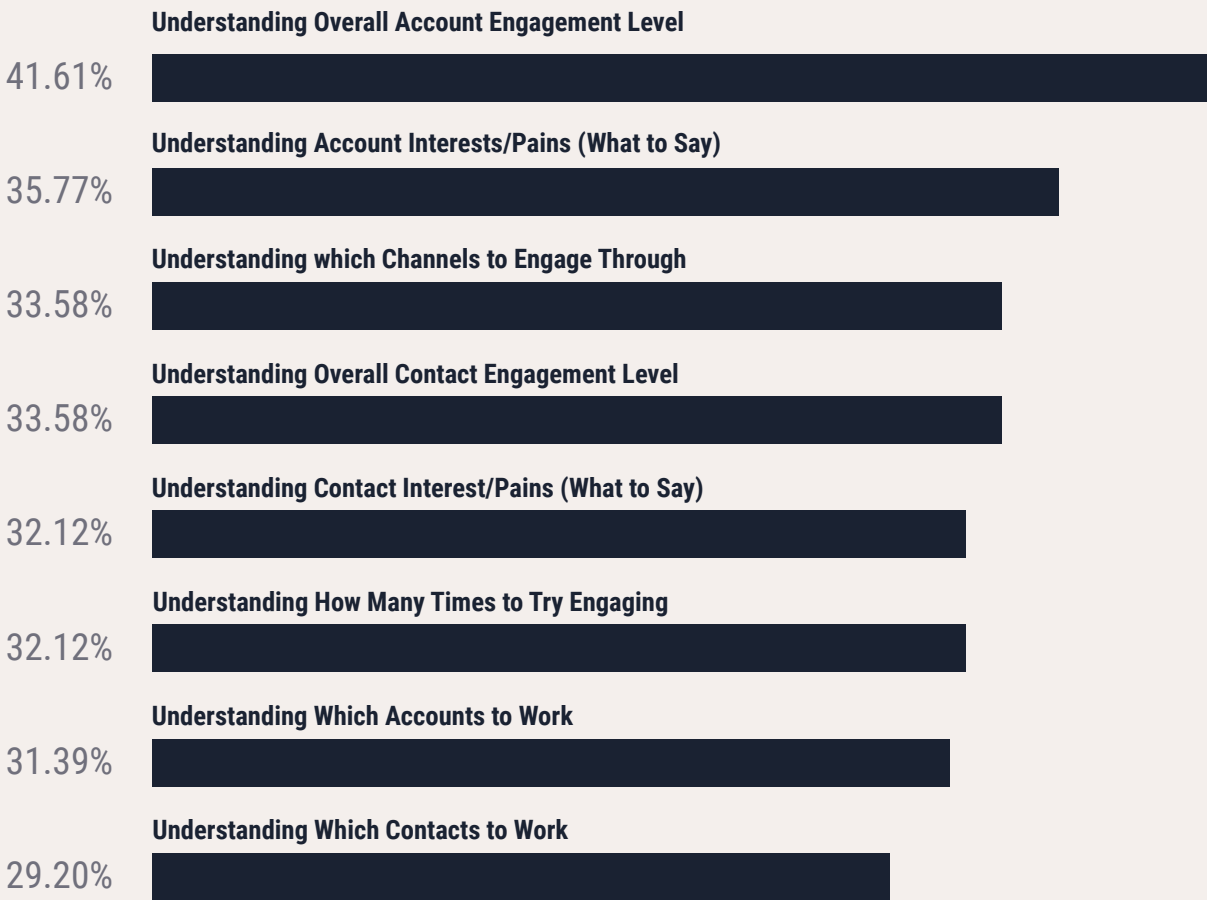
Sales teams within account-driven organizations face an uphill battle in their ability to meaningfully engage their target accounts:

- 42% of account-driven companies face the fundamental challenge of not even knowing the overall level of engagement of their target accounts
- Over 1 in 3 account-driven organizations don't know how to best message to their target accounts, what channels to reach them through, or how many times they should try engaging
- And 32% of account-driven sales teams don't even know which accounts to prioritize and engage with in the first place

Over 1 in 3 account-driven organizations don't even know how to best message to their target accounts, what channels to reach them through, or which accounts to even engage and prioritize in the first place.

Key Sales Challenges

Q23 What are the 3 biggest challenges your SDRs/BDRs/inside salespeople face? (Select your top 3 choices.)



Poor Data Results in Fragmented Experiences

The hard truth is that most sales and marketing teams lack the right data to engage the right buyers within the right accounts at scale, and that's no small challenge to overcome. On top of that, with all the challenges sales teams face due to their data (or lack thereof), the fragmented experience of their buyers is only the tip of the iceberg.

A lack of accurate, comprehensive data impacts much more than just a single team in the organization, and poor data negatively impacts the entirety of the prospect experience—from their first touchpoint all the way through to their last.

Identifying the gaps

If there's one thing both sellers and marketers can agree on it's that they need deeper buyer insights. But why? Here are three key possibilities:

Seeing the forest for the trees:

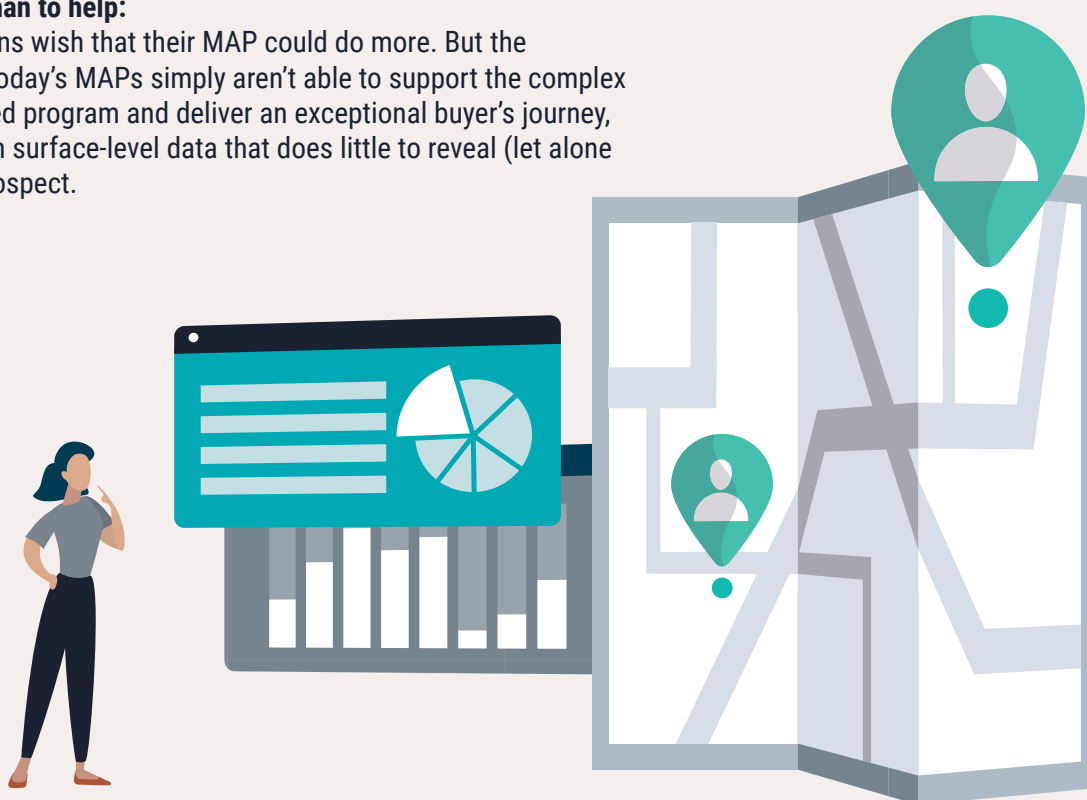
Sales and marketing teams are so focused on generating leads that it's causing them to miss out on the bigger picture. Their metrics, focus areas, and actions all support a lead generation mentality, and that's shifting priorities away from the bigger picture of the entire buyer experience.

Sales and marketing are driving towards different goals:

Because sales and marketing are focused on different things, they're driving towards different goals instead of supporting each other to achieve the same goals. If marketers continue to focus solely on lead numbers rather than lead quality—and if sales reps continue to isolate themselves and work their own account lists—it's no surprise that prospects are falling through the cracks.

MAPs do more to harm than to help:

By now, many organizations wish that their MAP could do more. But the unfortunate truth is that today's MAPs simply aren't able to support the complex needs of an account-based program and deliver an exceptional buyer's journey, leaving organizations with surface-level data that does little to reveal (let alone bolster) the intent of a prospect.



Gaps and Bridges: How to Overcome Key Inhibitors to Predictable Revenue Growth

To be account-driven is more than a directive—it's an entire mindset focused on the bigger picture of the account as well as the entire experience that account has in the buyer's journey. For organizations to truly reap the rewards of an account-driven program, more needs to be done to ensure that sales and marketing are aligned on the metrics and focus areas that are most important to drive.

Throughout this report, we've touched on a number of challenges that hinder predictable revenue growth. But while these challenges may seem insurmountable, there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

In this section we'll outline some of the considerations, strategies, and mindsets that today's sales and marketing leaders should think through to overcome the key inhibitors to predictable revenue growth and find steadier footing on the road to success.



Realign Sales and Marketing

Any business leader worth their salt knows full well the importance of aligning sales and marketing teams for the long-term, predictable growth of an organization. Understanding the importance is one thing, but achieving tight alignment is a different challenge altogether. Consider these solutions to improve alignment between sales and marketing:

Define what success looks like for marketing, sales, and the organization at large:

Determine the metrics, KPIs, and goals that sales and marketing must work towards. Then, identify who's responsible for driving what, when, and how.

Align on your ideal customer profile, target account list, and lead qualification criteria:

Drop the assumptions and open the communication between sales and marketing. With both teams giving input and collaborating, agree on who your ideal customer is, who your target accounts are, and what trigger actions and criteria qualify a lead to be handed off to sales. And the more you can leverage data and AI to drive these conversations, the more likely you are to reach consensus.

Break down the data and metrics silos within your organization:

Stop thinking of sales as one team and marketing as another. Both teams are working towards predictable revenue growth, and both want the organization to succeed. They simply need the data, tools, and metrics to get there.



Reimagine Demand Generation

Demand generation today requires more than simply getting a prospect to fill out a form and scoring the lead. Successful demand generation involves focusing on the end-to-end experience a prospect has, the content they engage with, and the journey they go on as they move through their decision making process. How can sales and marketing work together across the funnel to ensure they're not only generating demand, but generating the right demand? Here are some considerations:

Gain visibility into buyer intent in order to proactively target the right accounts:

With fewer and fewer buyers raising their hands until late in the buying process, it's critical to be able to uncover anonymous visits to your website and match them to accounts—and also pick up buyer intent signals on third party websites. Investigate buyer intent solutions and determine how to best add these capabilities to your sales and marketing tech stack.

Deliver the right content to the right buyers at the right time:

Not every piece of content is suited to every buyer. And because today's buying teams consist of multiple stakeholders, decision makers, and influencers, it's important that the content you create reflects that diversity in both form and message—and that you can orchestrate delivery of the right content based on where each person is in their journey.

Replace SPAM and cold calls with personalized, contextual outreach:

No one likes getting unsolicited emails or cold calls. No one likes getting pitched without having ever met or even conversed with you before. And in today's age of personalization, content curation, and data-driven insights, there's simply no excuse for these low-value efforts. Find more valuable means of engaging your audience early in their buying journey, and ensure that the calls and emails your team initiates are warm because they're relevant, personalized, and timed correctly.



Reset Expectations and Processes

Achieving predictable revenue growth requires efficiencies that can only come by prioritizing audiences, tools, and metrics that set your sales and marketing teams up for success. Effective prioritization enables teams to be more focused and precise in how they go to market, and also ensures that precious time and budgets go towards activities most likely to generate results. Here are some key considerations:

Provide experiences that help the right leads and accounts buy:

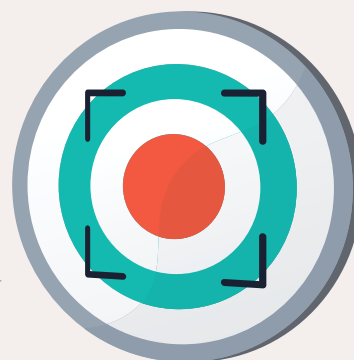
The experience a prospect has from their first touchpoint to their last is critical in accelerating and enabling the decision making process. When prospects from good-fit accounts start engaging, ensure that you can identify that engagement (even if it's anonymous) and make the most of it. Additionally, your sales and marketing teams need to know how and when to prioritize these accounts over others. Develop nurture processes designed to continue the experience and increase engagement with key accounts, and eliminate tools and processes that stifle it.

Assess the account-based sales and marketing capabilities of your tech stack:

When it comes to your tech stack, think critically about your tools and capabilities. Are components configured correctly and integrated strategically, and do they enable you to drive meaningful engagement with the leads and accounts you care most about? While every tool serves a purpose, think about whether or not your tools are serving the right purpose for your sales and marketing teams.

Arm your teams with data that eliminates guesswork:

If your sales and marketing teams lack the data they need to make strategic decisions, guesswork will inevitably trump smart prioritization. Examine the quality, comprehensiveness, and sources of data in use today, and then determine whether gaps are the result of processes, technology, or both.



Rethink Buyer Engagement

Ultimately, for an organization to reap the rewards of predictable revenue growth, they must be able to engage the right buyers—seamlessly and at scale. But from planning and orchestration to data and implementation, there are a number of challenges that must first be overcome. Here are a few solutions to get you headed in the right direction:

Consolidate, augment, and enrich your account data:

It's hard to meaningfully engage the right buyers at-scale without rich account data, so start by uncovering your data gaps and finding ways to bridge them—whether by improving the integration of systems, rethinking data capture mechanisms, or using third party data enrichment tools. Ensure that your data is available to both sales and marketing teams, and use it to plan territories and outreach strategies.

Use data to drive meaningful buyer experiences:

Meaningful experiences are what turn buyers into customers and customers into evangelists, so ensure that you're using your data to personalize, time, and contextualize experiences. Keep in mind that improving CX is a marathon, not a sprint, and even incremental improvements can make a substantial difference.

Augment automation with AI:

Buyers today are in control of the purchase journey, and the linear seller-led journeys of yesterday are no longer effective at creating engaging experiences that meet buyers where they are. As the amount and complexity of data continues to increase, look for AI-driven solutions that replace linear if/then automations with dynamic, AI-driven actions and insights.



Research Report

The State of Predictable Revenue Growth



About 6Sense

The 6sense Account Engagement Platform helps B2B organizations achieve predictable revenue growth by putting the power of AI, big data, and machine learning behind every member of the revenue team. 6sense uncovers anonymous buying behavior, prioritizes accounts for sales and marketing, and enables them to engage resistant buying teams with personalized, multi-channel, multi-touch campaigns. 6sense helps revenue teams know everything they need to know about their buyers so they can easily do anything needed to generate more opportunities, increase deal size, get into opportunities sooner, and compete and win more often.



About Heinz Marketing

Heinz Marketing is a B2B marketing and sales acceleration firm that delivers measurable revenue results. Every strategy, tactic, and action has a specific, measured purpose. Instead of focusing on the activities, we focus on the outcomes. What really matters is sales pipeline, closing business, and accelerating revenue. For more information, visit www.heinzmarketing.com.

