

ACCOUNT BASED MARKETING AND BTOB WEB VISIT IDENTIFICATION

A new growth opportunity for high tech companies

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INTRODUCTION



I consecrated 13 years of my life to building Emailvision, an international SaaS software company worth more than \$ 100 million. After all these years, I have understood the power of Account Based Marketing (or ABM). Emailvision was among the first to propose a complete software suite for email, social and analytical marketing and we were met with great success by marketers worldwide.

In the beginning, our marketing team was dedicated to generating growing numbers of leads for sales teams. The volume and cost per lead indicated satisfactory and controlled levels for many years, but quality was difficult to maintain over the long term, given our steady growth. The sales teams began to complain: marketing was not providing enough leads and increasingly the contacts were coming from companies that were poorly targeted and/or had little interest in our solutions. No one was satisfied.

When we decided to adopt Account Based Marketing (ABM), we saw rapid and significant growth on our marketing ROI. Rather than a large and indiscriminate diffusion of our marketing offers to an infinite and random universe of prospects, we began to establish, enrich, maintain and develop a close relationship with an identified list of accounts that, for each of our operating sectors, we considered to be strategic. In treating each of these strategic accounts individually, closely following their activity on our site and their reaction to our offers by email, blog or social marketing, we became more pertinent and closer to their expectations. We went beyond basic and undifferentiated direct marketing.

Used and advocated by major high tech firms like HP, Fujitsu, BT, HP and Accenture, Account Based Marketing (ABM) has recently become an accessible trend for BtoB firms of all sizes. In fact, Emailvision was nothing more than a small software publisher when we first decided to adopt the ABM approach. It was thanks to this strategy that we were able to rapidly play in the big leagues: Our salespeople had advance knowledge on which products or features interested their key accounts the most; they were able to follow up with decision makers if an account showed an unusual level of commitment on our website.

Contrary to what one might think, Account Based Marketing does not entail an exorbitant budget. It can actually prove to be very economical because it concentrates the marketing budget solely on the priority accounts who are the most likely to buy your products. More than just a strategy, the ABM approach is a philosophy. I would advise you to start with a low investment and a lot of common sense. Below is a brief 10-step guide to assist you in setting up Account Based Marketing within your firm:

SUMMARY

1. Review your key existing clients with your salespeople in order to map the profile and criteria of a future ideal client: the strategic account
2. Build your strategic client list (Named Accounts) using professional social networks to identify the key influencers and buyers of your products
3. Integrate the qualified list of strategic accounts into your CRM, even if they are not yet in contact with your organization
4. Freshen up the presentation of the product offers on your website.
5. Align your digital content with the expectations of your strategic accounts (thematic newsletter, white books, webinar subjects, form titles...)
6. Install a tracking system on your website (for strategic accounts that don't complete the web forms)
7. Invest in a retargeting advertising program (Google Retargeting for example) in order to increase your visibility and accelerate the buying process of your core target
8. Create personalized cycles of pertinent and tailored emails within the strategic accounts
9. Measure the results of campaigns in order to develop what works and abandon what doesn't
10. Periodically refine your targets and your strategic accounts list by involving the marketing and sales teams

1. Review your key existing clients with your salespeople in order to map the profile and criteria of a future ideal client: the strategic account

In the real world, you choose your friends with care and it would never occur to you to waste your time with people who do not share your values. Why wouldn't you do the same with your clients?

If you don't profile the clients with whom you want to expand your business, you risk exhausting your sales resources trying to win over companies that have little interest in your solutions, ending up with clients who are unsuitable for your organization (unprofitable, short lived, time consuming...).

Once you have determined which companies you'd like to work with, you will automatically reduce the cost of acquiring a client because you concentrate marketing investments and you reduce your sales cycle. You close better deals and you keep your clients longer.

To implement an Account Based Marketing strategy, ask yourself the right questions in order to identify your best existing clients; who are your most profitable clients? Are they faithful? Were they easy to convince?

In other words, start by identifying 20% of the clients who allowed you to generate 80% of your net margin over the last three fiscal years. Be even more selective: choose only clients who are active to date, or even growing clients.

From this list of your best contributors, continue the investigation with your marketing department and the relevant salespeople in order to find the points in common between these "Class A" clients: do they belong to the same business sector? Are they concentrated in a particular geographic region? Do they have an itinerant sales team? Do they have a network of retail points? Were they already equipped with tools (CRM, ERP) or specific software when they signed? Do they participate in more than X number of trade shows per year? Etc.

Thanks to your sales team, you will now be able to rank the criteria selection, which will help you to search for clones of your best clients and to build your strategic account list.

2. Build your strategic client list (Named Accounts) using professional social networks to identify the influencers and buyers of your products

You will then source the clones of your best contributors with your marketing team in order to have an exhaustive list of the “Named Accounts” on which to focus your expansion strategy.

It is easy to obtain a first draft of the list using typical firmographic data resources (geography, sector, size, financial health, growth...)

Other key criteria that are not available in the BtoB market lists should be carefully researched.

Here are three examples of tools that you can use to characterize your premium sector if you are in the business of marketing software:

FILTER CRITERION	WHY?	EVALUATION TOOL
Internet traffic on the website	High traffic is a sign of substantial investments in the digital area	www.alexacom.com : website rankings worldwide and by region. Ranking indicator
Number of salespeople	Sales staff are usually correlated to the marketing budget	LinkedIn, Viadeo: indication of the number of employees, listed by category and country. Simple indications that should be grossed up (not all sales people sign up on social networks)
Market technology maturity	Marketing software and connector equipment reflects the existing equipment in each targeted company	www.builtwith.com : tools found on the website; lets you know the analytical tools, automation and CRM

Sometimes there are no tools in existence and you must go through a qualification phase via telephone/internet in order to construct your list.

Once your Account Based Marketing list has been qualified, you must identify the group of contacts within the account most likely to take part in purchase decisions for your product.

Buying committees in BtoB are growing: they involve the buyers, the decision makers, the influencers and of course the users. The more you engage the contacts in the marketing programs of your strategic accounts, the more you create a favorable environment for your sales people.

The first step is signing up for a BtoB data service in order to assure you are injecting regular key function updates into your strategic accounts list. In the United States, Data.com proposes this type of service in an integrated manner with the CRM Salesforce; in France, service providers like Altares (Dun&Bradstreet), Bureau Van Dyjk, Zebaz and many others can propose made-to-order service.

Whether your list is made up of several hundred or several thousand companies, gather the data yourself, even if it means outsourcing one or two update phases per year.

Here is how to proceed:

- A.** Determine the key functions that are required imperatively
- B.** Recuperate the contact identity information of your strategic accounts available within your CRM
- C.** Use the Premium versions of LinkedIn and Viadeo to rank decision makers, influencers and your solution users
- D.** Learn about/update all contact details; physical and email address, telephone and websites.

Count on LinkedIn as much as possible (Viadeo is also very representative of France): information is auto-administrated by the interested parties and therefore always up to date.

3. Integrate the qualified list of strategic accounts into your CRM, even if they are not yet in contact with your organization

Whoever your clients may be, whether they are already in touch with the sales team or are yet to be contacted, every one of your strategic accounts will now receive your full attention.

Your strategic list is the cornerstone of your marketing plan. You will now concentrate all of your campaigns on this base. For this reason, it is essential that all of the organizations on the list, both clients and prospective clients, are integrated into your CRM.

A strategic prospect should not be considered a juxtaposition of leads to be “taken on” individually, but as a unique account. You should:

- integrate the account and the contacts in your CRM (taking care to eliminate any duplications)
- assign the account to your best salespeople
- take the time to characterize the account in the CRM and to update all the contact information
- plan the campaigns so that they strengthen the link with the different contacts within the organization (White Book proposition, invitations to webinars, live demos, etc).

It is therefore essential that you set up indicators in your CRM (and your automated marketing tool, if you are equipped with one) to constantly measure the evolution of the engagement level of these strategic accounts and the progression of each contact within the accounts.

These scores will be valuable indicators for the sales team. It will also enable marketing to trigger automated lead nurturing tasks for each action (or reaction) made by the contact.

4. [Freshen up the presentation of your product offers on your website.](#)

You have now redefined the features of your core target and can concentrate exclusively on the accounts that require your solution and that will bring the best results for your sales team.

Now you must adapt the presentation of your product solutions and services to the needs of your strategic accounts. Review your existing mix:

NAME: Do your solutions have a name that is meaningful and adapted to your core target? Should you personalize each form with a suffix (-pharma, -HR, -SMB...)? Should you provide variations for each profession/function? (-marketing, -HR, -Sales...)

FORMS: Is the layout of your forms coherent as they relate to your (new) direct competitors? Can your clients/prospects immediately visualize your advantages or your unique positioning? Can they easily compare your functionalities versus those mostly widely used on the market?

PRICING: Do you prefer to post your prices, or leave it up to your sales people? What do your principal direct competitors do? Put yourself in the buyer's shoes and decide what the best strategy would be. If you're tackling the midmarket and your standard solution does not exceed a few cents per month, post your prices. If on the contrary your approach requires an analysis of needs, the intervention of a sales person and results in a personalized offer that costs several thousands of euros per month, present your methodology, insist on the personalized relationship and simply give a few examples.

5. [Align your digital content with the expectations of your strategic accounts \(thematic newsletter, white books, webinar subjects, form titles...\)](#)

Let's imagine that you have decided to exclusively target the medical field and that your strategic list is made up of pharmaceutical laboratories and biotech companies. It is important that your website mentions this industry.

ADAPT YOUR WEBSITE

First, you must choose significant visuals (a team of doctors, nursing staff, etc.) so that visitors feel at home. You should think of your target when you formulate your arguments: What are their needs, their expectations, their challenges? You must also speak their language (in the pharmaceutical world we don't speak of clients but of patients, the doctors or the hospitals are at the heart of the relationship). This work on substance and form is essential if you want your new and established clients to see your expertise and consider you as a member of their ecosystem.

UPDATE YOU CONTENT

In order to engage first rate visitors on you website and to incite your strategic account contacts to seek out more detailed information about your solutions, update your digital content.

Ask yourself the right questions so that your internet site, a genuine hub for your digital marketing, reflects the new branding position that you have chosen and the proposed offers are more pertinent and incisive.

Do you already propose a White Book on your internet site? If so, is it adapted to your new core target? If not, which theme should be chosen? What is the new subject that interests your prospects? Start by constructing a practical White Book of about 20 pages. Choose an attractive title (for example, "How to build an efficient call for tenders?" or "10 check points before choosing a new operating theater"...). Plan the launch of a new White Book each trimester if your internal resources can absorb this cost. The more content you have, the richer your marketing campaigns will be and the more you will draw in your target.

Beyond your library of White Books, propose meeting your strategic accounts during webinars and thematic breakfasts. Here again choose a current topic and systematically invite one or two clients to these events who will share their experience and give credibility to the approach.

BOOST INTERACTION WITH YOUR TARGET

Each offer that is presented on the website must be standardized in the form of a landing page.

Update all forms:

- **shorten them:** you will greatly improve the conversion rate. You already have information on each of the key contacts in the strategic accounts within your CRM, so there's no need to ask for their function or the number of employees, for example. On the contrary, show your contacts that you already know who they are.
- **record the events** within your CRM in order to trigger the appropriate marketing and sales commitment actions (via the CRM or automated marketing).

6. Install a tracking system on your website (for strategic accounts that don't complete the web forms)

You have decided to "surround" your strategic accounts in order to commit the decision makers at the heart of these organizations and maximize the opportunities for your sales force. Within the

framework of your new marketing plan, you have assigned the essential (even 100%) of your budget to highly targeted actions.

These dedicated campaigns, concentrated on your strategic list, will generate very qualified traffic on these landing pages that are specific to your internet site (White Book downloads, webinar enrollment, participation requests for thematic business breakfasts, live demo requests, etc.)

But not all VIP visitors will complete the process. No matter how attractive your offer, they are going to hesitate to interact with you.

In fact, it is estimated that only 2 to 5% of BtoB visitors spontaneously leave their contact information on a website.

BtoB buyers have changed. Increasingly, they operate autonomously to identify their short list of potential partners, let their project mature and compare solutions, coming into contact with the companies later and later.

THE BtoB BUYER 2.0: THE INTERNET SITE AT THE HEART OF THE BUYING PROCESS

OLD TIME BUYER		NEW BUYER 2.0
Trade show, commercial directory, interview with sales people	Initiation of the purchase process	Pre-selection of partners off a short list from Google
Small team made up of 2-3 decision makers	Purchasing committee	Expanded committee that now integrates the purchasing department, one or several users, influencers, IT, etc.
Commercial, fliers	Preferred source of information	Self service: company internet site, videos, testimonials, user forums
Sales strategy	Decisive criteria	Capacity to speak the same language, personalized service

Within the framework of your target strategy it is crucial to act on the 95% unknown visitors because among them are prospects/clients of high added value from your traffic creation campaigns.

The setup of an intelligent IP identification tool will allow you to:

- reveal the companies present on your site in real time,
- filter out only the professional visitors that interest you (and eliminate the “noise”: interns, private individuals, off target...),
- immediately alert the relevant salespeople when one of their strategic accounts browses a “hot page” on the website (prices, live demo, upcoming event...),
- automatically feed the CRM with new leads for the salespeople,
- trigger automated lead nurturing actions and retargeting.

7. [Invest in a retargeting advertising program \(Google Retargeting for example\) in order to increase your visibility and accelerate the buying process of your core target](#)

The marketing activities for your core targets are going to generate quality traffic from strategic prospects on your website and, as we saw above, only a minority of these contacts will identify themselves through your forms.

To increase this rate and give you a second chance, you can act on the 95% unknown visitors after they have left your website. To achieve this, you can use retargeting advertising through Google’s remarketing service and Display network.

How does it work?

When the prospect browses your site, Google names a cookie to identify your account on their computer. This tag allows your publicity banners to be displayed when they visit other sites of the Google Display network.

How to use it?

You can then define how many days your prospect will be exposed to your advertisement and how frequently. You can also define what type of banner will be displayed for a certain type of visitor.

This way, for example, you will be able to advertise a specific offer for first time visitors. You will also have the opportunity to change the advertisement and propose a more attractive offer (webinar or live demo) as soon as the prospect clicks on the first advertisement.

With Google retargeting you are allowed multiple combinations to prolong the impact of the visits, remind prospects who you are and increase the conversion rate on your site. It's an efficient method of providing more qualified leads for your sales people that requires low investment in advertising.

You have an extra target channel to surround your priority prospects while they are web browsing.

If this is your first time retargeting, we would advise you to keep it simple. Retarget all your visitors with the same strategy: for example, run one advertisement for 3 days, with a maximum of 10 exposures.

After one month, measure the results of this campaign on the exposed audience before proceeding.

8. [Create personalized cycles of pertinent and tailored emails within the strategic accounts](#)

You have now identified the most interesting contacts within your strategic client (and prospect) list. Whether they are decision makers, influencers, users or prescribers, these contacts are likely to participate in the decision-making process which can lead (or not) to adopting your solution.

You have collected and updated all the points of contact...particularly the email addresses. You can now keep them regularly informed of any news and interact with them.

Email is a powerful and efficient marketing tool. It remains the most important BtoB channel of communication with your clients and prospects. Know how to use it wisely.

Choose the right pace

Don't waste your contacts' time or abuse their trust, or you might be blocked access to their mailbox.

Imagine a one-year activation program, with an email campaign every 6 weeks (maximum one per month):

- define the editorial program for one year for the next 12 messages
- always create 4 messages in advance so you won't be caught short
- allow some flexibility in your program so you can add the latest news
- systematically plan interaction (a call to action) in order to involve your prospects and provide new opportunities for your salespeople

For example: In January, propose your new White Book; in February, invite your prospects to participate in a webinar; in March, propose a free trial of your solution; in April, send out an invitation to a thematic breakfast; in May, organize a survey with prizes to be won, etc.

Design tailor made communication cycles

Go beyond mass push campaigns, setting up automatic cycles targeted according to the actions of your clients.

A few suggestions:

- client satisfaction emails following registration for a webinar
- video mail testimonials following a live demo
- cycle of 3 best practices emails to welcome a strategic prospect when they register
- etc.

Create exclusive content:

In order to gain your target's interest you can't simply present your solution, no matter how interesting your service or product may be.

Put yourself in the contact's shoes:

Read what they read; visit the trade shows they visit; participate in the conferences they're invited to; know their current questions, the hot topics that preoccupy them, the issues they are facing.

Once you have listed the top 3 themes that affect their sector/their profession/their technology/their type of company, you single out only one, you choose a line of attack and you position yourself as an expert in this subject and develop your content around this subject (White Book, video interview, experts, webinar format, breakfast format, press release...)

Interact as much as possible to become part of their community

As mentioned above, each email campaign should be organized around a call to action. It's the minimum, but it's not enough.

In every email or on your website invite your strategic prospects and clients to connect with you via LinkedIn, Viadeo or Twitter.

Create a Group linked to your topic on three of these social networks and invite your targets to follow, react and interact with you. Animate these groups by planning at least two posts/questions per week to generate reactions.

9. Measure the results of the campaigns in order to develop what works and abandon what doesn't

First, ask yourself what metrics you wish to follow to permanently improve your performance.

Here are some ideas which may help you build your marketing dashboard:

INTERNET SITE

- traffic: number of unique visitors, % of identified visitors/total visitors
- engagement: length of visit, number of pages viewed
- conversion rate: number of completed forms/number of unique visitors

EMAIL CAMPAIGNS

- open rate
- response rate
- number of leads per month

ACTIVATE SOCIAL NETWORKS

- number of followers
- number of likes/comments
- number of forwards/retweets/etc.

THE ROI ON YOUR CAMPAIGNS

Define all of your budget lines by detailing them as much as possible. If needed, make a summary table and detail each line on a specific spreadsheet (trade show-exhibitions, email campaigns, AdWord campaigns, etc.)

Campaign	Budget excl. tax	# leads	cost/lead	% conversion	cost/client
Trade shows					
Breakfasts					
Emailing					
Retargeting					
Breakfasts					
Google AdWord					

For each line, identify the number of generated leads in order to calculate the cost per lead; follow the associated sales opportunities and generated business manually or with your CRM in order to calculate the ROI of each marketing channel.

It could be that certain actions bring strong leads at a low cost, but they contribute little in terms of business, or the opposite. It is therefore essential to measure the efficiency at both levels.

At the end of the period you can then: 1) allocate more budget to the actions/campaigns that work 2) give up those that are less profitable 3) earmark a budget for R&D to test new ideas/channels.

Know that everything can be tested: the solutions of CMS SaaS, email marketing and Display now allow you to organize A/B, A/B/C/D tests that compare several variables simultaneously. Take advantage of this power to rapidly improve the ROI on your marketing budget.

10. Periodically refine your targeting and strategic accounts list by involving the marketing and sales teams

More than just a method, the ABM approach is a philosophy which consists of selecting your future clients based on your best existing clients and concentrating your marketing and sales efforts on this privileged hunting ground.

The biggest risk with this approach is to think that once the list is compiled, the job is done and everyone can go back to their regular job.

On the contrary, compiling this strategic list is the beginning of a collaborative process that must continue to evolve. That doesn't mean changing the sweet spot every month or suddenly deciding that the core target you identified in January must be obtained by March. This would have a disastrous effect on the sales team, who wouldn't know where to start prospecting or where their priorities lie.

It would be just as damaging to write your strategic list in stone, sticking to it no matter the feedback from the field or suggestions from marketing.

What we consider to be a balanced approach:

- You have put together a marketing/sales committee to create the initial list; meet with this committee two to three times per year in order to evaluate the efficiency of your strategy.
- During each meeting, review the criteria that led to your selection of strategic accounts and reconsider each one based on sales conversions/participant input/recently signed clients.
- Is the existing list feeding the sales people sufficient new leads for the coming period? Should new accounts be integrated into the list? What is the coherence as it relates to positioning? to the salespeople's pitch? to the existing marketing/sales tools?
- If the approach is commercially positive and the results are tangible, can a second sweet spot be created (for example, vertical trade, a new market...) and recruit a specific sales force to exploit it?

To sum it up, listen to the salespeople. Stay on course and don't change the list every other day, but don't be too dogmatic either.

CONCLUSION

Regarding AZALEAD SOFTWARE: Co-founded by Nick Heys and Hervé Paolini in September 2013, AZALEAD helps small and mid-sized high tech companies take full advantage of Account Based Marketing, thanks to website visitor identification technology. AZALEAD offers a BtoB mobile app that alerts the sales and marketing teams whenever a strategic account, client or prospect visits the internet site. The app measures and notes the visitor's level of engagement in order to help the sales team in their selective approach. The AZALEAD identification technology functions without cookies or PPI.

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