



The ABM Content Challenge

How Inbound Content Strategy Can
Work with Account Based Marketing

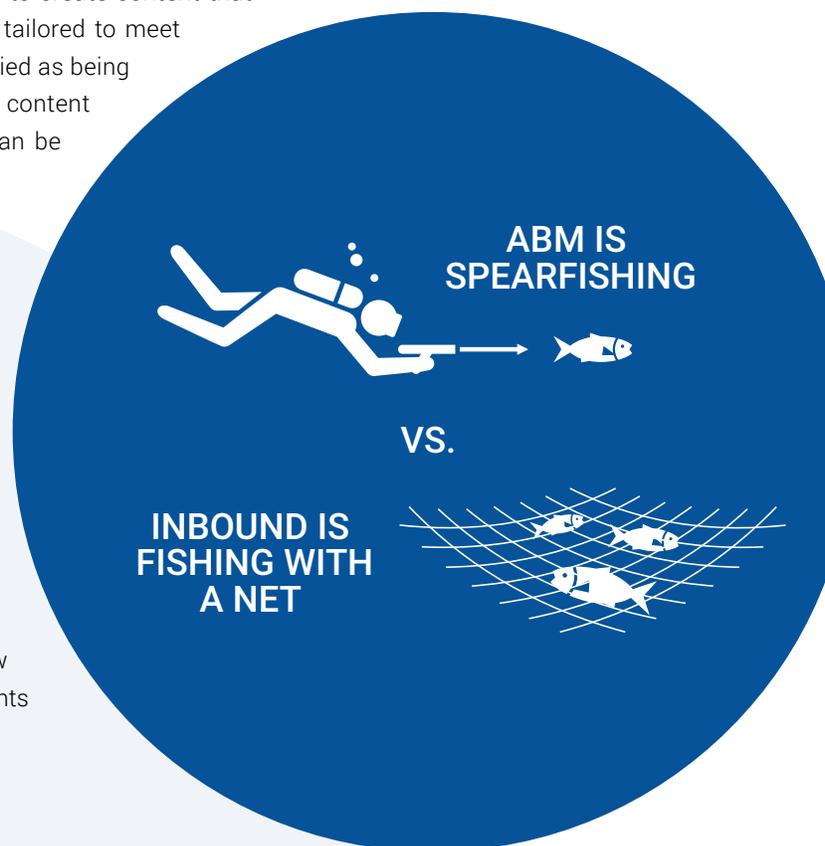


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Account Based Marketing (ABM) has been gaining increased popularity across the B2B marketing world in the past year. Companies and B2B marketers, like you, are embracing this marketing approach in growing numbers. Clearly, there are major benefits to ABM implementation; however, if you're using ABM techniques, you've probably discovered there are also clear hurdles inherent in content development and distribution.

Unlike standard content marketing—where the main goal is to create content that attracts the attention of a large audience—ABM content is tailored to meet the needs and interests of specific targeted accounts identified as being your ideal “best-fit” customers. However, such personalized content requires intense research on each targeted account and can be difficult to scale.

ABM targeting has been compared to spearfishing while traditional Inbound content marketing might be described as fishing with a net. This is probably a good analogy for us to use here when it comes to your content. Both spearfishing and net fishing have their advantages and disadvantages. When fishing with a net, you can catch a lot of fish, but you can also catch a lot of other things you might not want... just like with Inbound content marketing. And just like in spearfishing, where you may only have one chance to get your fish, the same can hold true of ABM targeted content strategies... you better get it right or you won't make a catch! So with this analogy as our background, let's discuss some new ideas and solutions to the unique challenges and requirements faced by the ABM content marketer.



Is ABM “And” or is it “Or”?

If you've adopt or are adopting ABM methodologies, one of the first things you've probably done is put together a targeted accounts list...right? You either did it manually by working with your sales team or put together a target list based on predictive account selection to come up with a “perfect” persona—or perhaps you did a bit of both. In this narrowing of focus lies your first content challenge. Jon Miller of Engagio says, “In the real world, many factors contribute to a successful sale and many of them will be invisible to you and your team.” Unless you're a company like Boeing with an extremely targeted list of customers, you are at high risk of missing companies that can be customers. They can be “invisible” to you.

“...many factors contribute to a successful sale and many of them will be invisible to you and your team”

Jon Miller | Engagio



Think of it this way, if your angle is off by just 1 degree when you start your journey across the sea, you will end up in a very different spot than you intended. Similarly, if you don't get your target accounts, personas or content right for your ABM strategy, you will miss opportunities.

This brings up the question...should you stay the course with the tried and true Inbound volume lead model or should you abandon Inbound content marketing to pursue ABM? Marketers can end up asking themselves if adding ABM to their marketing plan is an "and" or an "or" proposition?

The answer is—it's both. You don't need to exclusively pursue one model over the other. In reality, inbound lead generation, which we'll discuss in the next section, can actually be complimentary to your ABM strategy...really. Implementing ABM is an "AND" inbound not an "OR" inbound" exercise. As a B2B marketer you'll be better off employing a content marketing plan that includes both these strategies. It will allow you to scale more easily and greatly reduce the risk of missing those "invisible" customers.

Here's the good news - we think you can do inbound content marketing in a smarter way by using complementary technology to make it work together with your ABM program.

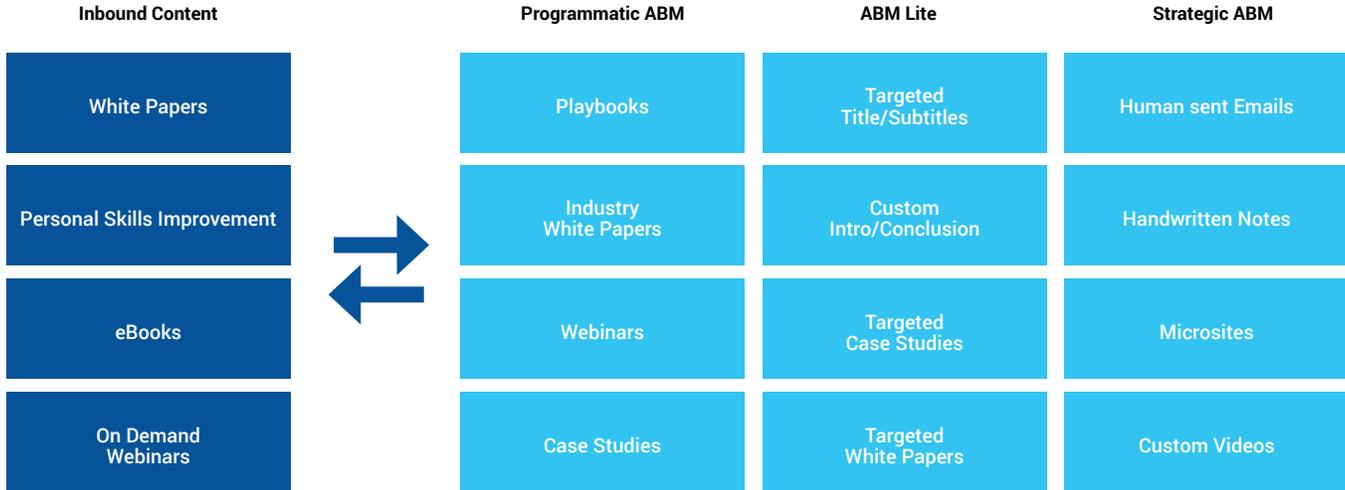
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Jon Miller | Engagio

Including Inbound Content as Part of Your ABM Program

To start, first make sure you have an ABM content targeting plan in place. This is where you have increasingly targeted and personalized content as you move through the ABM tiers from **Programmatic, Lite and finally, Strategic** style content. You can see from the chart below that Programmatic Content is where you can start to think about how your Inbound top of funnel efforts can start to play together.

ABM Content Personalization Spectrum



Thinking of inbound and ABM content marketing this way you can start to see the natural fit between the two. In Programmatic ABM you are using predictive targeting to create a persona to target a larger group of accounts...maybe 500 to 1000+. Programmatic is essentially ABM's version of Inbound marketing and as such it plays very nicely with Inbound techniques and content. For example, they both rely heavily on email. In an **ITSMA survey of 60 B2B marketers**, the most effective form of Programmatic ABM campaign tactics was email. That is also true of Inbound content—year after year, email continues to be the most effective delivery tactic. Additionally, often times you can take your Inbound content, add some simple target audience personalization like a custom intro or conclusion and now it becomes a Programmatic ABM piece. The key is how you deliver the content together.

If you deliver your content on a platform that allows you to create a “content experience” you now have many more options..

Content Experience is Key to the Integration of Inbound and Programmatic

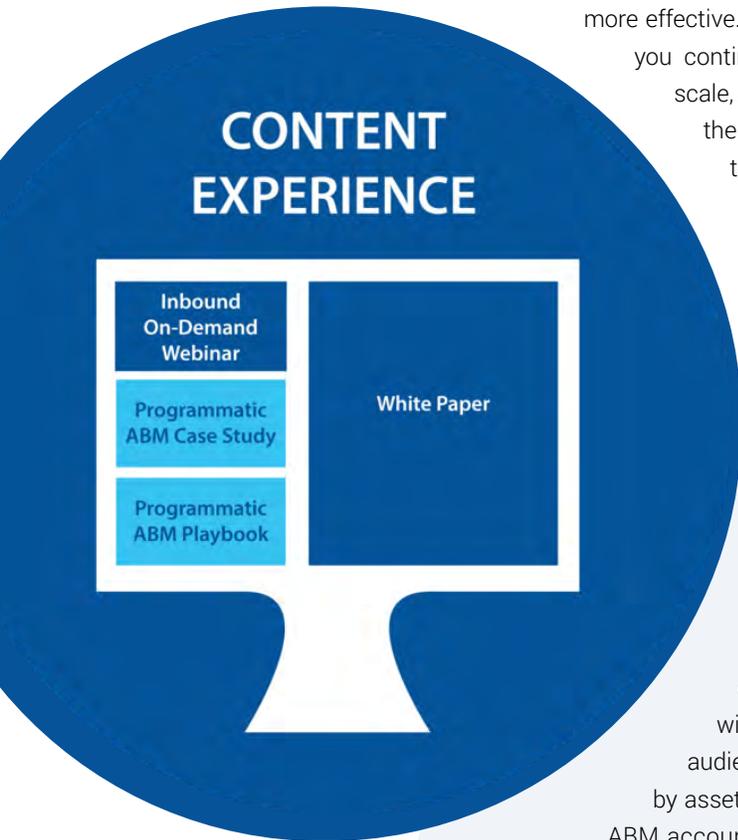
Whether they're delivering Inbound-style or ABM-targeted content, most marketers think of delivering white papers, eBooks, case studies etc. via campaigns with single information points for readers to digest. However, if you deliver your content on a platform that allows you to create a "content experience" you now have many more options.

The two types of content, delivered together, make each more effective. This method of platform delivery lets you continue to use your inbound content at scale, as a source of new customer discovery, then seamlessly move interested readers towards your Programmatic ABM content.

For example, you can create an easily scalable, top of funnel white paper campaign that leads with popular topics like "How to Present to Business People" or "From Geek to Manager: Five Tips to Help Geeks Transition into Management." However, since you're delivering a content experience rather than a single PDF, you're taking advantage of the complementary nature of Inbound's wide net and Programmatic ABM's audience targeting. If you track engagement by asset type, you can discover potential new ABM accounts by zeroing in on readers who are engaging with your Programmatic content.

Inbound casts a wide net and gets readers. Once captured in the "Inbound Net," ABM content allows you to identify possible unknown targets to add to your ABM strategy. To keep up with our analogy, you're now "spearfishing inside the net." I know that sounds unfair but it works great for getting a fish! The platform is the key to the integration of Inbound and Programmatic ABM content.

Using inbound content to complement and grow your Programmatic list will enable you to perform content marketing at scale, cast a wider net and, most importantly, make sure you're doing a better job of identifying those "invisible" accounts to add to your ABM program.





Conclusion

To sum it up, it turns out that Inbound and Programmatic ABM content are a natural fit to work together. The inbound model is proven to generate new contacts and fill pipelines with leads that teams can continue to nurture. The ABM model has proven to be successful in targeting accounts and allowing marketers to establish deeper business relationships with customers.

However, by its nature, ABM content requires hyper-personalization in order to be successful. That level of personalization is hard to do, hard to scale and can leave you, as a marketer, vulnerable to missing out on those "invisible" accounts we talked about. The ABM

world's solution to this problem has been the concept of Programmatic ABM.

Now you need to take the next step to integrate the two types of content types. The beauty is that if you use Inbound and Programmatic content together to create a content experience delivered on a platform, you can seamlessly integrate the two different styles into a single experience for the reader. This allows you to take advantage of their strengths and minimize their weaknesses to discover the potential customers you otherwise might be missing. We think this is one concept you might want to try!

ABOUT B2LEAD

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