

Moving to ABM Maturity: 2019 ABM Benchmark Study

A hand is shown in the lower-left quadrant, pointing towards a network diagram on the right. The network diagram consists of a series of interconnected nodes and lines, with some nodes glowing. The background is a dark orange gradient with a subtle grid pattern.

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Introduction

Account-Based Marketing (ABM) continues to dominate the B2B marketing discussion, with new programs launching on a seemingly daily basis.

Moving to ABM Maturity, the third annual ABM benchmark study from ITSMA and the ABM Leadership Alliance, demonstrates clearly that the primacy of ABM is for good reason: It works!

Companies continue to achieve great results in driving business success with ABM. And amid its rapid growth, ABM has matured substantially in recent years with the most experienced programs achieving even more substantial results as they continue to learn.

This report, based on both survey data and qualitative interviews with ABM leaders, describes the current state of ABM as well as insight and lessons learned from the most effective and the most experienced ABM programs.

The report provides essential data and guidance on ABM program objectives, spending, tools, tactics, challenges, metrics, and business results.

The report also notes the differences across the three distinct types of ABM that have emerged in recent years: One-to-One ABM, One-to-Few ABM, and One-to-Many ABM.

Among other highlights, the report documents that companies practicing ABM are now dedicating 29% of their total marketing budgets to these programs and generating positive results across a wide range of business metrics.

The report also showcases the more substantial business results of the most

experienced ABM programs, and the best practices of the most effective programs.

Looking toward 2020, the report identifies five strategic guidelines for ABM-ers to accelerate success next year and beyond:

- Practice patience
- Strengthen sales alignment
- Invest in insight
- Master multichannel
- Build a blended strategy

Please join the conversation by adding your questions, comments, and experiences to the mix. We look forward to talking soon!

- Rob Leavitt, SVP, Consulting, ITSMA
- Julie Schwartz, SVP, Research and Thought Leadership, ITSMA
- Donna Thach, Manager, Research, Data, and Analytics, ITSMA



@ITSMA_B2B @ABMLA1 #ABMmaturity

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About the research

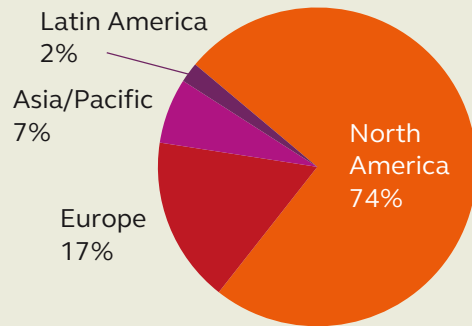
Moving to ABM Maturity, the third annual benchmark study from ITSMA and the ABM Leadership Alliance, explores the current state and best practices in Account-Based Marketing based on a quantitative and qualitative review with ABM leaders and practitioners worldwide. To support a deeper review, the report includes analysis based on two sets of cross-tab survey data: The most experienced programs vs. all others, and the most effective programs vs. all others.

Web-based survey

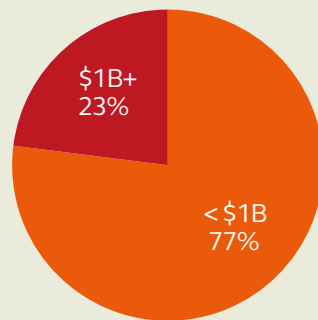
 Web-based survey in September–October 2019 with ITSMA member companies and ABM Leadership Alliance contacts

 196 Marketers at B2B technology and business services companies


Location



Revenue



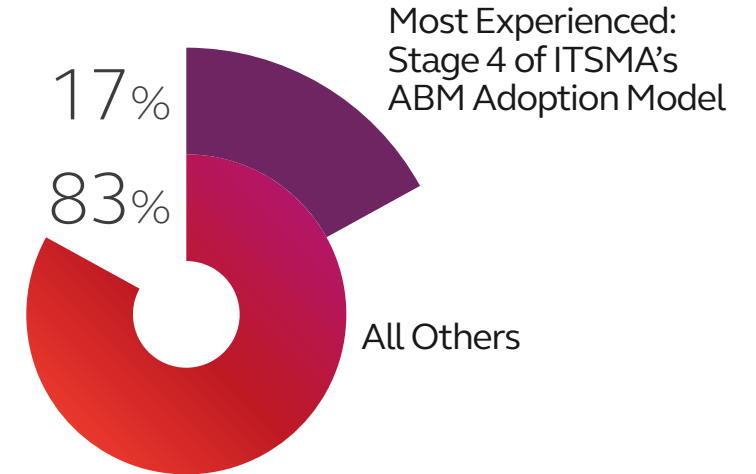
Qualitative interviews

 21 In-depth interviews with leading ABM practitioners

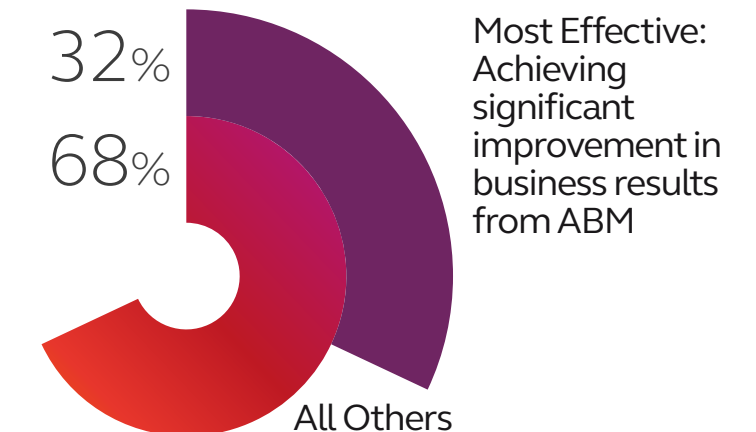
Analysis by

ABM Experience*

*See page 8 for the ITSMA ABM Adoption Model



ABM Effectiveness



Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019

ABM: A Maturing Discipline

A hand is shown reaching out from the left side of the frame towards a digital network structure on the right. The network is composed of numerous small nodes connected by thin lines, with some nodes glowing. The background is dark with a subtle grid pattern.

ABM Definition

Treating individual accounts as markets in their own right



As ABM has taken off in recent years, so too have the number of definitions. Even the sponsors of this research have used different definitions in the past.

For the purpose of this report, and with the hope of helping marketers rally around a common definition, we agree on the following:

Account-Based Marketing (ABM) is a strategic approach to designing and executing highly-targeted, personalized marketing programs and initiatives to drive business growth and impact with specific, named accounts.

Core principles for ABM include:

- Strategic focus on improving business reputation, relationships, and revenue
(if it's just about lead gen, it's not ABM!)
- Tight partnership and integration with sales
(if there isn't active, ongoing collaboration throughout the lifecycle, it isn't ABM!)
- Tailored and personalized programs and campaigns based on deep customer insight
(if customers get the same experience and inside-out messaging, it's not ABM!)



“

“We’ve seen an incredible rise in interest in ABM since 2013, and I don’t see any signs of that abating.

For those already doing ABM, I see it becoming embedded into their marketing strategies with more dedicated resources allocated to it, both in terms of people and budgets.

ABM will continue to influence the way we do our broader marketing too, such as One-to-Few ABM principles shaping vertical marketing and One-to-Many ABM shaping ‘always on’ offering campaigns.”

”

Bev Burgess

Senior Vice President
and ABM Practice Lead
ITSMA

Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018

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Moving to Maturity: ITSMA's ABM Adoption Model

ITSMA's ABM Adoption Model highlights four stages of development across seven dimensions. As companies develop their programs, they typically move from Exploring and Experimenting, often with one type of ABM, into a broader and more strategic program as they learn, improve, and refine their initiatives. Achieving a fully Embedded program as a core component of the firm's growth strategy often requires three or more years of increasingly sophisticated development.

ITSMA's ABM Adoption Model



Source: ITSMA © 2019 ITSMA. All rights reserved.

ABM evolution: The rise of three distinct types

Launched in the early 2000s with a primary focus on One-to-One marketing for existing key accounts, ABM has evolved in recent years to provide breadth and depth of coverage across both new and existing accounts with three distinct approaches: One-to-One, One-to-Few, and One-to-Many ABM. Far beyond the very large tech and professional services firms that pioneered ABM a decade and more ago, B2B firms of all shapes and sizes now employ ABM to drive strategic growth.

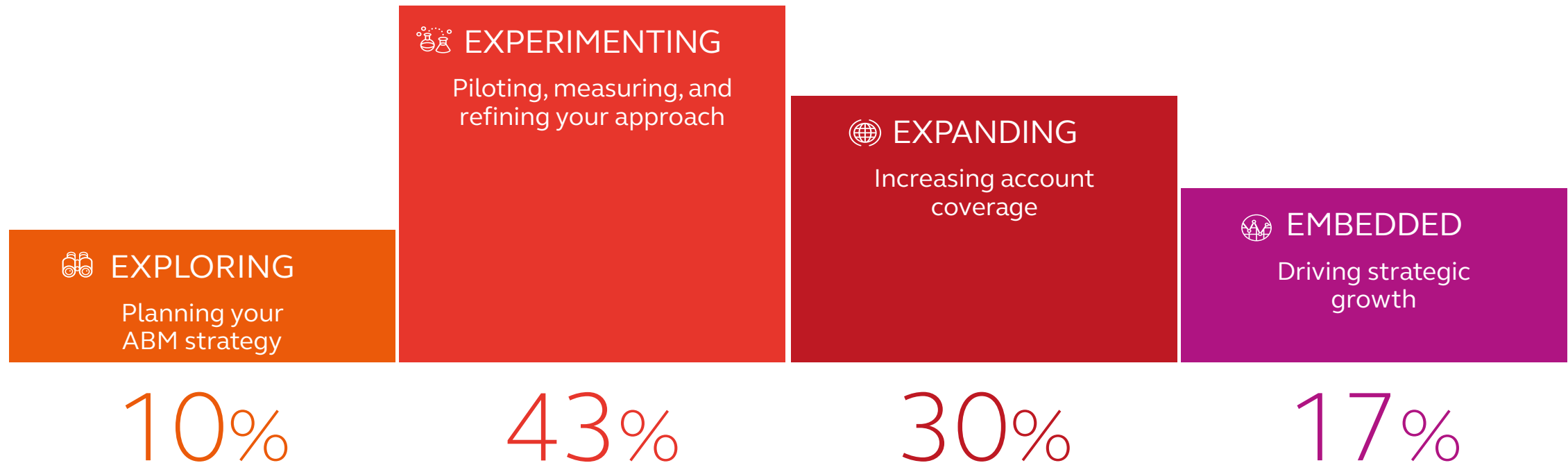


Sources: ITSMA, 2019; ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019

Numerous ABM programs have moved well beyond initial experimentation

The rapid growth of ABM means that companies are constantly launching new programs. By 2019, though, a great many firms have had years of ABM experience and moved far beyond the early stages of development. Today, almost half of all ABM programs are in the Expanding and Embedded stages, with 17% representing a “most experienced” cohort.

ITSMA's ABM Adoption Model: Four Stages of Adoption



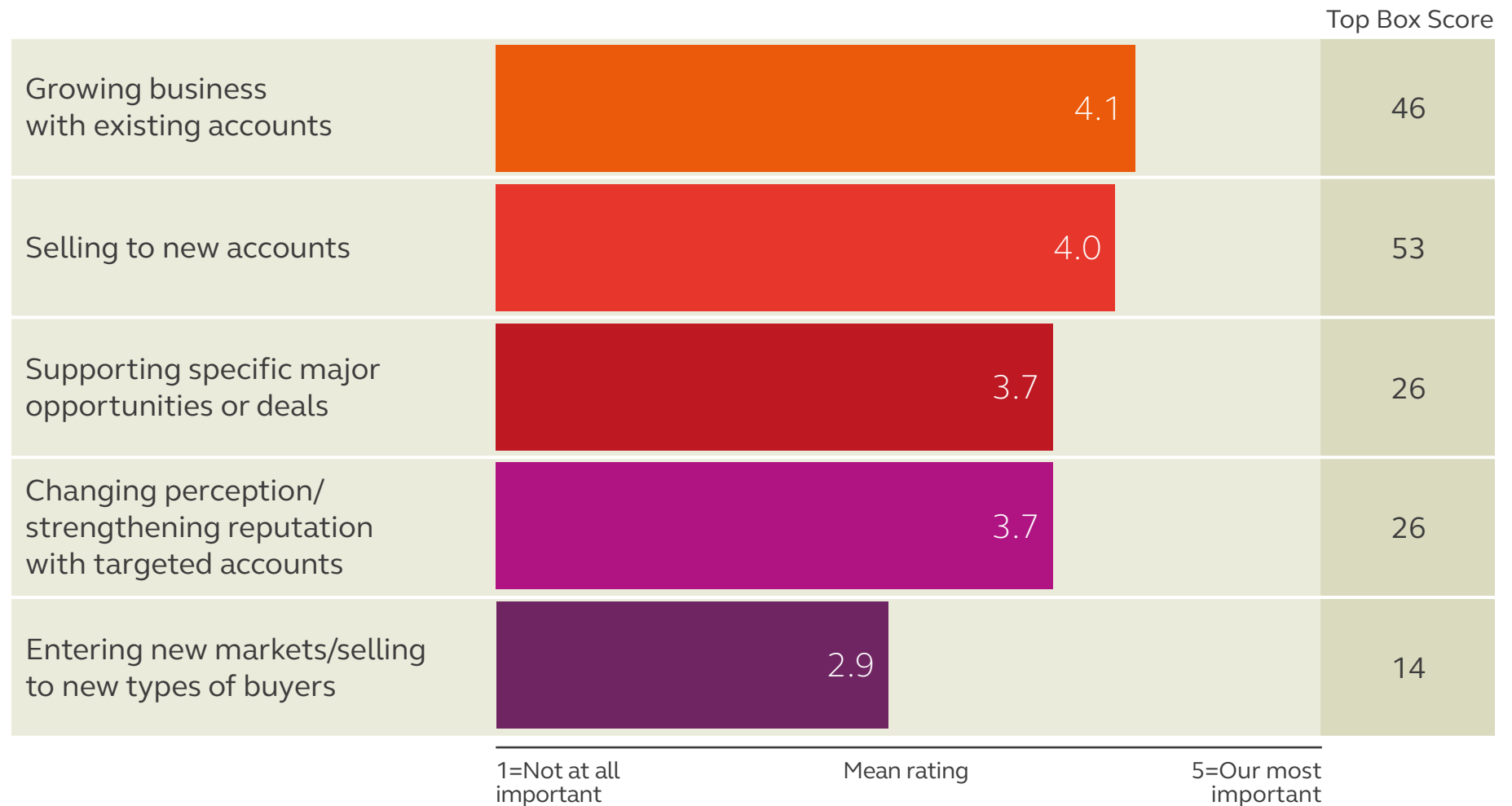
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019 | % of Respondents (N=141)

ABM programs are supporting a broad range of strategic business objectives

Many ABM programs begin with a dedicated focus either on growing business with existing accounts or selling to new accounts. Today we see a growing number of programs applying ABM to both of these objectives, along with several other strategic concerns. Deal-based ABM has grown substantially in recent years, and using ABM specifically to address brand and reputation issues with your most important accounts has become another important focus area.

What are your business objectives for ABM? Please rate the importance of each of the following potential objectives.
Mean rating (N~140)

“It depends a lot on the size of your company and where you are. If you're a mature business, you're going to drive most of your business from existing customers. If you're early stage, growing fast, and don't have a big installed base, it's all about grabbing new logos.”



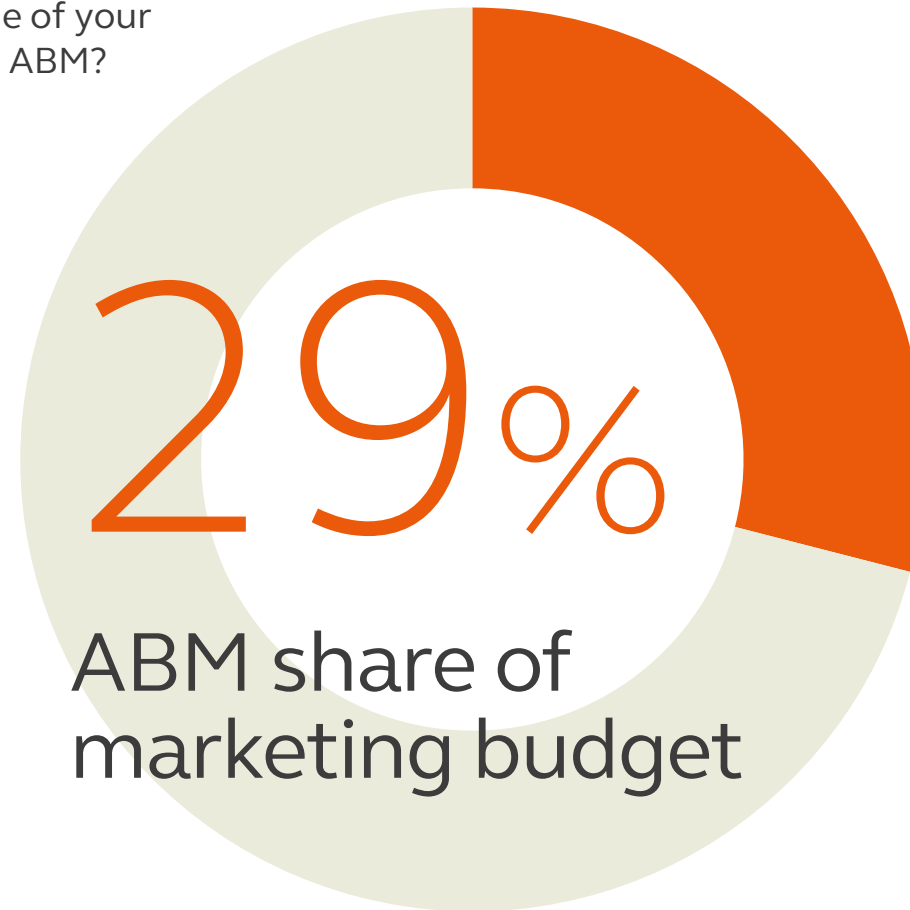
Note: Mean rating based on a 5-point scale where 1=Not at all important and 5=Our most important, primary objective.
Top box score is the percentage of respondents that rated the objective a 5 in importance.
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019

Companies are dedicating significant shares of their marketing budgets to ABM

An important indicator of the maturity of ABM is the increasingly large share of total marketing spending that programs are now consuming. Even as many companies are just getting started with small pilot projects, average spending on ABM is now approaching one third of the total marketing budget.

In FY2019, approximately what percentage of your total marketing budget is/will be spent on ABM?

Mean %
(N=104)

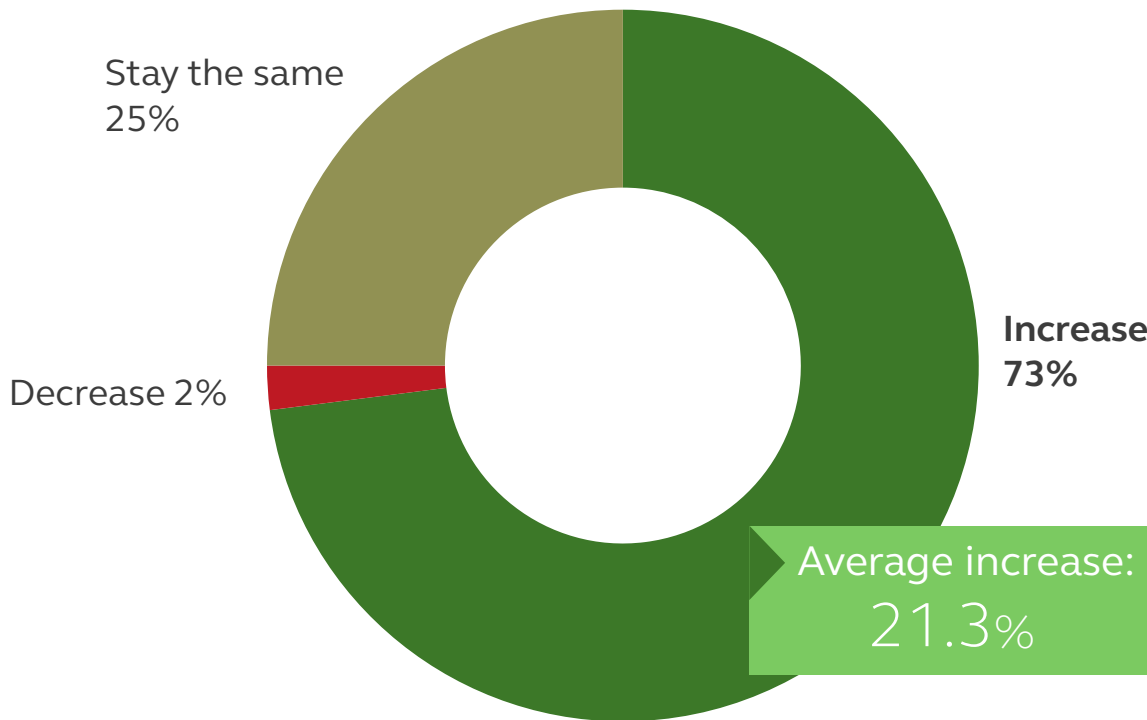


Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019

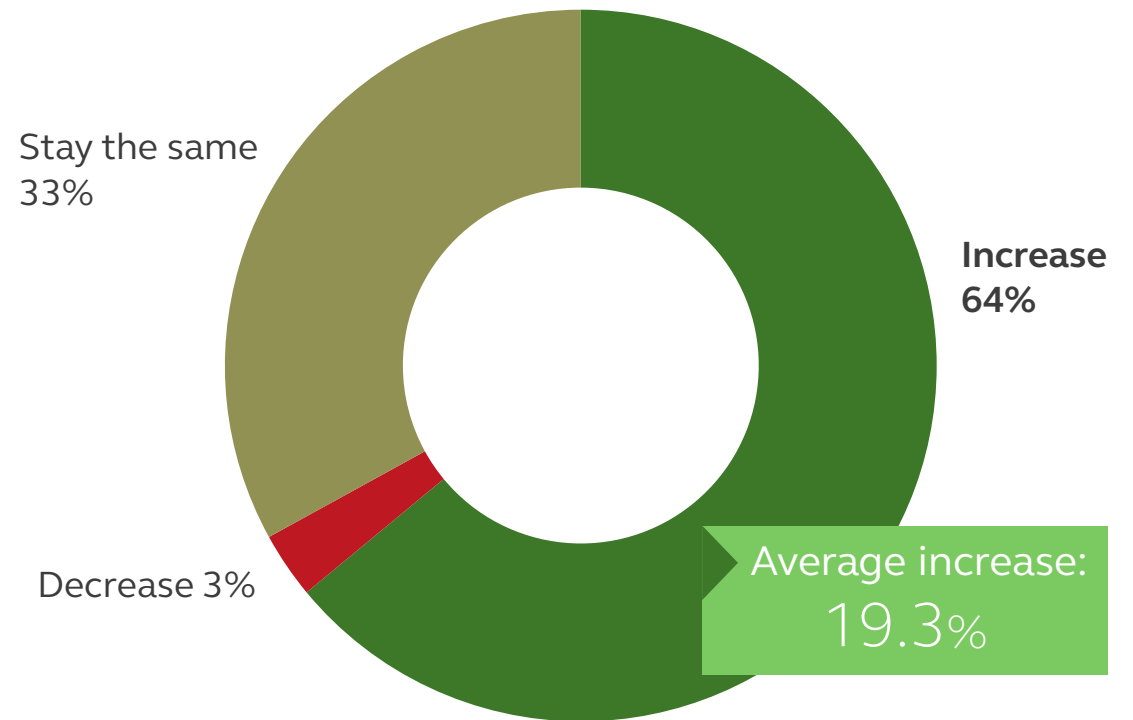
Most ABM programs are adding significant budget and staff in FY20

Most ABM programs are committed to increased investment in FY20, with almost three quarters of programs adding budget and almost two thirds adding staff. The increases are quite sizable, too, roughly 20% for both budget and staff for those committed to expansion. In most cases, this represents growth well beyond the overall increases in marketing spend and staff, thus suggesting that ABM will take an even larger share of the marketing function in FY20 than in FY19.

Changes in **ABM Budgets** for FY20



Changes in **ABM Staff** for FY20



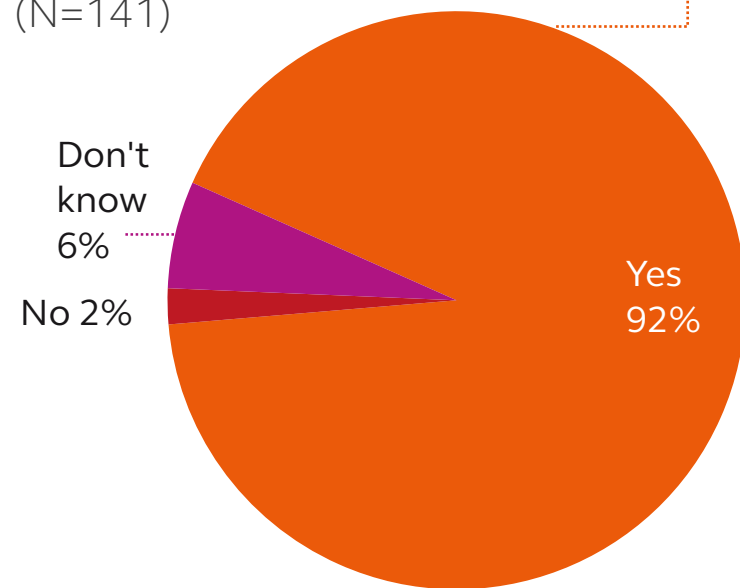
% of Respondents (N=131) | Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019

Companies are expanding and strengthening their ABM programs in a variety of ways

The vast majority of companies doing ABM are planning on expanding their programs next year, with more than two thirds of programs looking both to do more for accounts already covered in the program and also to cover more accounts. A majority of programs are also focusing on improved use of technology and creating greater efficiencies through new tools and templates to facilitate reuse and best practice sharing.

In the next 12 months, are you planning on scaling your ABM programs to cover more accounts or expand what you do for current accounts?

% of respondents (N=141)



What approach are you taking to scale your ABM programs? % of respondents (N=130)

Expanding what we do for accounts currently in our ABM programs	69
Covering more accounts	68
Adding technology to automate and create more leverage for existing programs	58
Developing new tools and templates to facilitate reuse and best practice sharing	53
Applying ABM to major opportunities or deal pursuits	52
Adopting a blended approach using more than one type of ABM to cover more accounts/clusters/segments	51
Adding more marketing resources to cover more accounts/clusters/segments	45
Having existing marketers cover more accounts/clusters/segments	40
Implementing additional ABM programs in new geographies/business units/divisions	38
Adding education and training to increase ABM skills among existing marketers	38
Other	3

Note: Multiple responses allowed.

Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019

The toughest ABM challenges today include personalization, metrics, budget, and content.

Other significant challenges include educating sales, hiring the right staff, standardizing ABM processes, and agreeing on account selection.

What are the top challenges your organization faces in your ABM program(s)?

% of respondents (N=135)

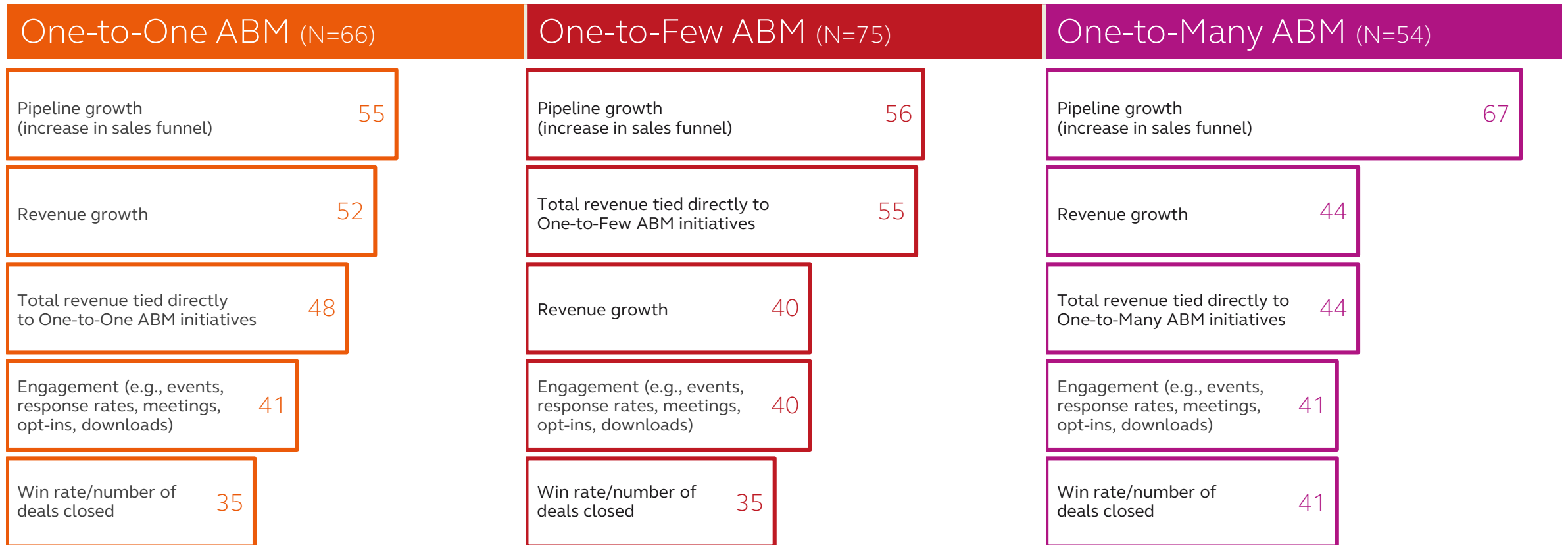


Note: Up to three responses allowed.
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019

Top metrics across all types of ABM are focused on pipeline, revenue, and engagement

Companies are focusing primarily on revenue-related metrics for ABM, regardless of the type of ABM they have implemented. Pipeline growth is the top metric for all three types, and revenue growth and total revenue round out the top three. Practitioners of all three types are also prioritizing engagement metrics as essential precursors to revenue and looking at win rates and deal closure as additional indicators of marketing impact.

Which five metrics are most important to measure the success of your ABM initiative? % of respondents

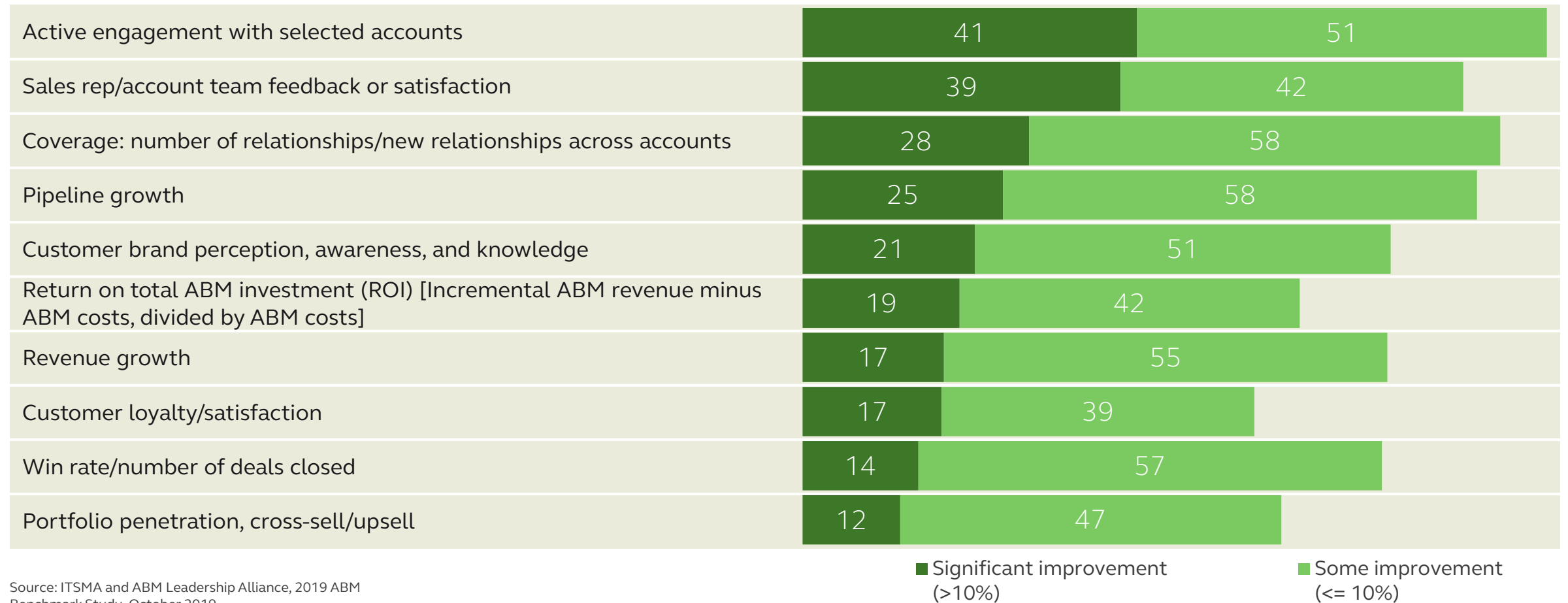


Note: Up to five responses allowed. Other response choices included: Sales rep feedback, customer brand perception, return on ABM investment, average deal size, length of sales cycle, cross sell/upsell, relationship coverage, relationship strength, customer loyalty/satisfaction, and others
 Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019

ABM programs are driving business impact across a wide range of metrics

The growth of ABM reflects, most of all, the impact that programs can have in accelerating revenue. Importantly, though, programs are generating success across a wide range of business-critical measures, including account engagement, sales satisfaction, relationship development, and customer loyalty and satisfaction, along with more directly revenue-related measures.

What changes have you seen in these metrics that can be attributed to ABM? % of respondents (N~83)



Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019

Get the metrics right: Measure what matters most

The rise of ABM has inspired an important shift for marketers from focusing mostly on top-of-the-funnel metrics, such as awareness and leads, to a more revenue-centric approach. Most recently, we have also seen a convergence of focus on engagement metrics as a key indicator of relationship development and longer-term opportunities.

“Obviously, the business is measured on the ability to generate pipeline and bookings. But to help inform our marketing tactics, we can't operate on a timeline that long. We look at the return on engagement and cost per minute of the engagement, or how efficient we are at getting engagement.”

“We tie the ABM program goals to the business goals. If we understand how the board are measuring its success, we can make sure that we can report our KPIs in a way that resonates at that level. That secures our funding, resources, and strategy. It also helps us articulate the value further down to orchestrate to the various teams.”

“In terms of value, it's account by account. So for each account plan, we'll have a report card for the three R's: reputation, relationships, and revenue. I'm trying not to aggregate results at a program level, but to keep the focus on individual accounts. We need to drive that customer obsession.”

“We'll measure pipeline to start. Closed business is obviously the goal. But right now, pipeline is going to be a good indicator of how successful ABM is.”

“We follow the ITSMA Three R's framework: What is the quality of ABM revenue compared to traditional marketing? Which buying centers are we in? We measure both depth and breadth of relationships across the account. From a reputation standpoint, what's our brand score, perception, and advocacy in the account?”

“Essentially what we've done is set up tagging for all our ABM accounts within Salesforce. We're tracking engagement activity across both frontline, outbound sales efforts and marketing touches. We calculate a cumulative account engagement score. And then we're looking at new meetings set and the progression through the sales funnel.”

“We're moving to a model where we're going to start measuring ourselves on pure attribution of engagement vs. whether somebody's filled out a form in the last 180 days. Where have we touched them and where have they engaged with us? We will give different types of touches different weights, and then be able to say, once it hits a certain threshold, ‘That account was attributed or contributed by ABM.’”

Moving to Maturity in 2020 and Beyond: Five Keys to Success

- Practice Patience
- Strengthen Sales Alignment
- Invest in Insight
- Master Multichannel
- Build a Blended Strategy

Moving to Maturity in 2020 and Beyond: Five Keys to Success

As B2B firms continue to expand investments in ABM, and ABM continues to mature as a discipline, analysis of the most effective programs point to five keys to near- and longer-term success: Practicing patience (effective ABM takes time!), strengthening sales alignment, investing in insight, mastering multichannel approaches, and building a blended strategy.



Practice patience

- Companies investing in ABM see substantial business results, with 71% reporting greater ROI than other marketing initiatives
- As programs mature, benefits continue to accrue beyond early successes; 92% of mature programs report higher ROI than other types of marketing
- Top business benefits include improvements in:
 - Account engagement
 - Brand perception
 - Pipeline and revenue growth
 - Customer satisfaction

Strengthen sales alignment

- Despite great strides in building sales alignment, few ABM-ers are completely satisfied with marketing and sales collaboration
- Sales alignment is a hallmark of the most effective ABM programs. Areas of successful collaboration include:
 - Determining plays
 - Executing campaigns
 - Working with inside sales (BDRs, SDRs)
 - Measuring success
- One-to-One ABM programs are most aligned with sales; One-to-Few, and One-to-Many ABM programs less so

Invest in insight

- Investment in technology for insight remains in early development
- Companies with the most effective ABM programs invest more substantially in tools for:
 - Account insight and engagement
 - Analytics
 - Business intelligence
- Insight-related tools dominate the list for planned technology investments for 2020; predictive and ABM platform are the top two planned investment types

Master multichannel

- Top ABM tactics cut across a wide range of channels; the most effective programs have mastered multichannel approaches
- Many ABM tactics today are digital, especially for One-to-Many ABM, but offline activities remain essential for all three types of ABM
- Along with digital, ABM programs lean heavily on in-person and executive-level events and relationship programs

Build a blended strategy

- The three approaches to ABM—One-to-One, One-to-Few, and One-to-Many—address a broad range of business and marketing objectives
- While most companies currently have just one type of ABM, half are looking to adopt a blended approach to cover additional accounts, clusters, and segments
- Both the most effective and the most mature programs are more likely to have a blended strategy incorporating two or all three types of ABM

Moving to Maturity in 2020 and Beyond: Five Keys to Success

- **Practice Patience**
- Strengthen Sales Alignment
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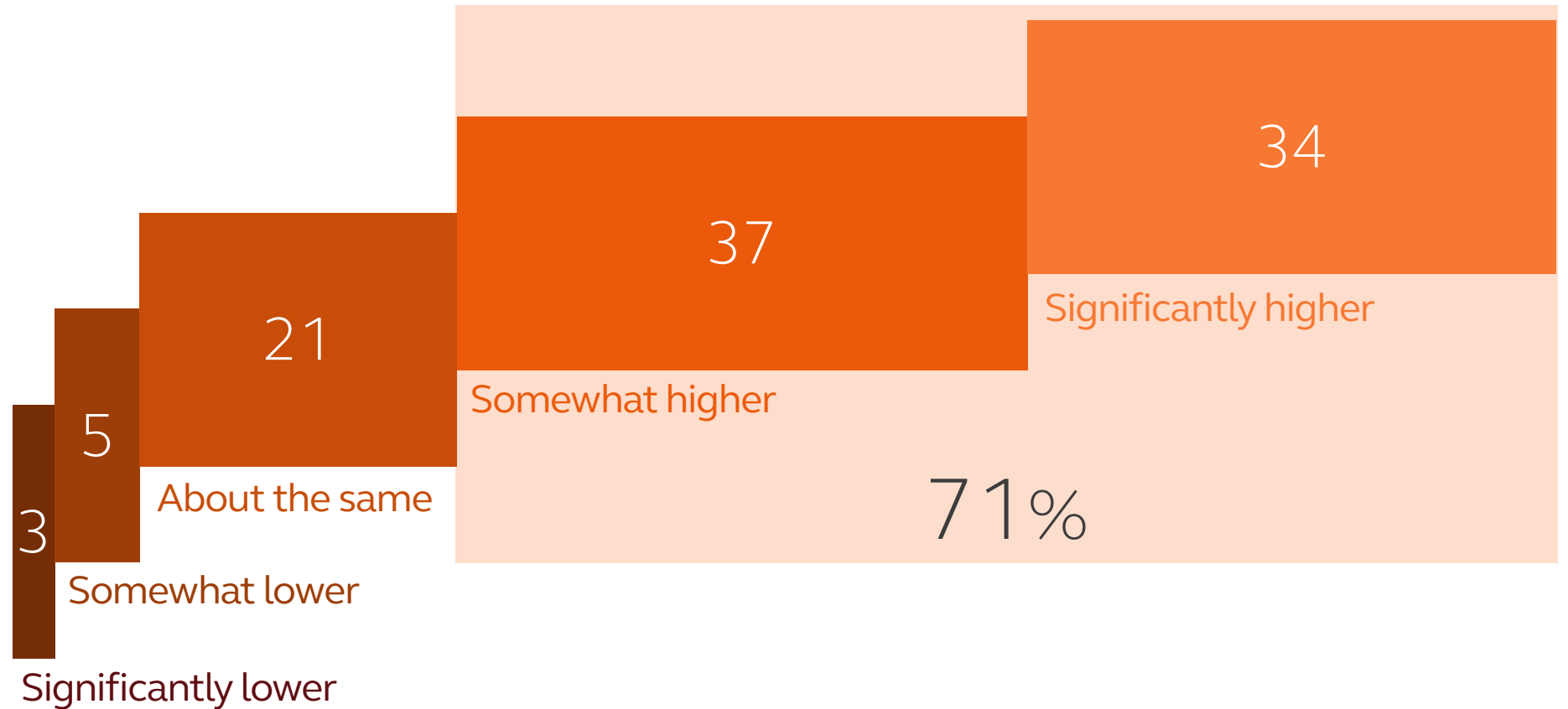
Most companies see higher ROI with ABM than with other types of marketing

ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance have consistently shown that most ABM programs generate greater return on investment than other types of marketing. In 2019, almost three quarters of programs cite higher ROI, with about one third citing significantly higher return. Importantly, this includes companies just starting out with their ABM programs as well as those with more experience.

How does ABM return on investment (ROI) compare to traditional marketing initiatives?

% of respondents (N=73)

“In our mid-market and named account business, we had a 40% growth year over year after we implemented ABM.”



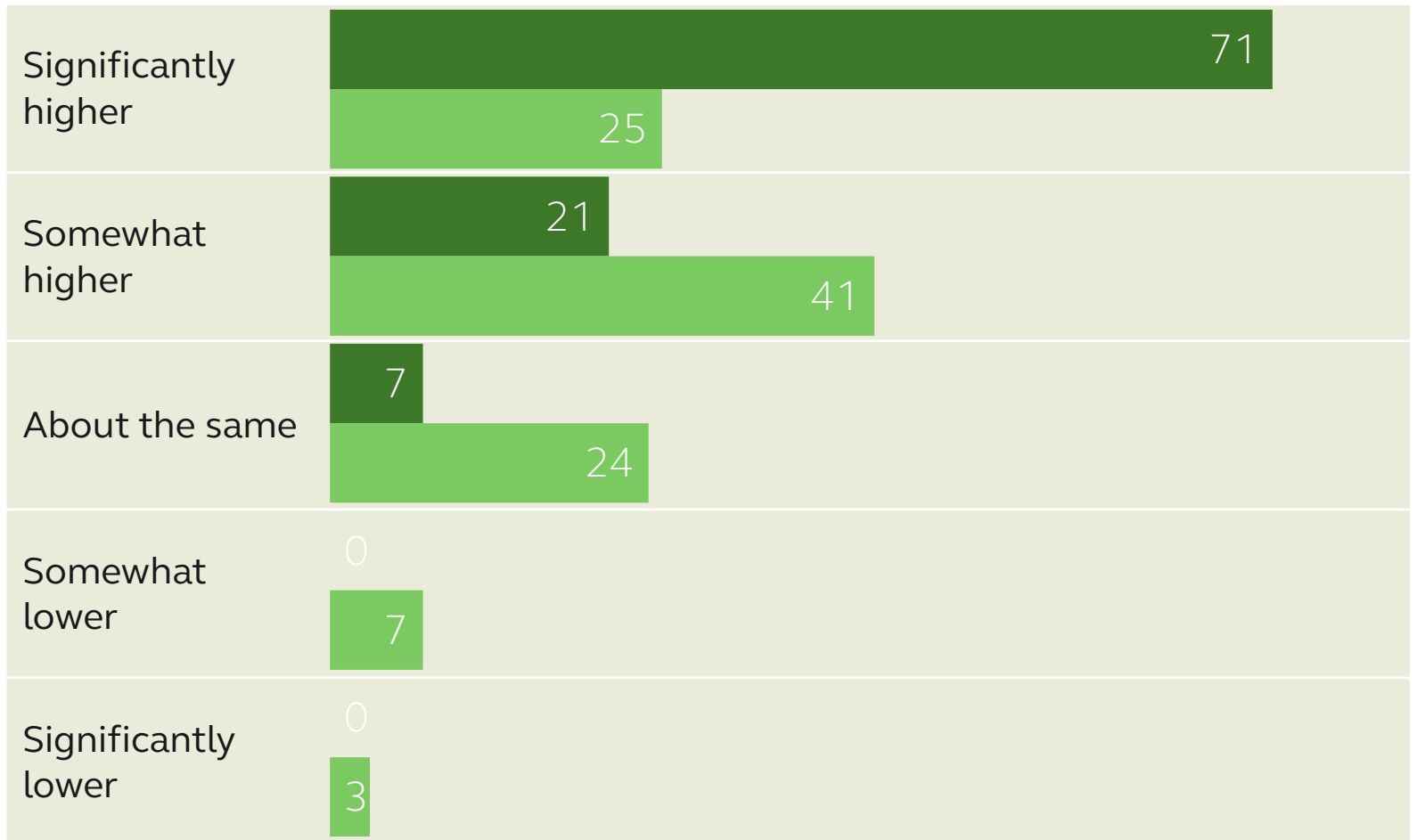
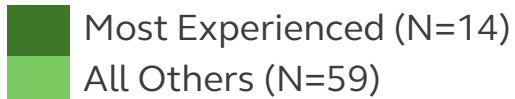
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019

As programs mature, business benefits accrue beyond early success

Although many companies generate quick results with their ABM investments, the benefits of program maturity are strikingly clear. Almost three quarters of the most mature programs see significantly higher ROI compared with their other marketing initiatives versus only one quarter of newer and less mature programs. ABM is a different approach than traditional B2B marketing; working through all the organizational, process, and technology issues takes time!

How does ABM return on investment (ROI) compare to traditional marketing initiatives?

% of respondents



“We have completely optimized and embedded a One-to-One ABM approach where we are truly treating accounts as markets of one. We are showing some of the best ROI results I've seen in the industry.”

Note: Differences are statistically significant.
 Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019

Practice patience: Maturity takes time!

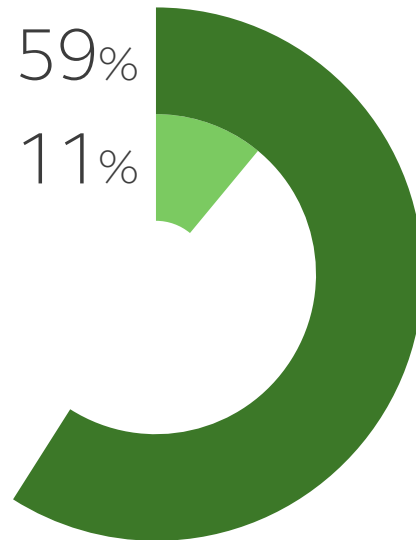
Most marketers appreciate that long-term growth relies on constant improvement in the “three R’s” of marketing: Reputation, Relationships, and Revenue. Indeed, focusing on the three R’s is a core principle of ABM; it’s not just about near-term revenue. Understanding how best to move the needle with your most important accounts, however, takes time to develop. The most experienced programs demonstrate much more significant impact across all three.

Significant improvements with ABM (>10%)

■ Most Experienced (N~19)
■ All Others (N~65)

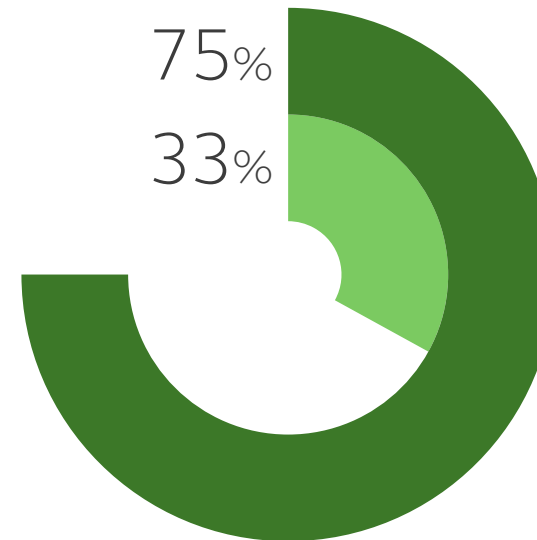
Reputation

Customer brand perception, awareness, and knowledge*



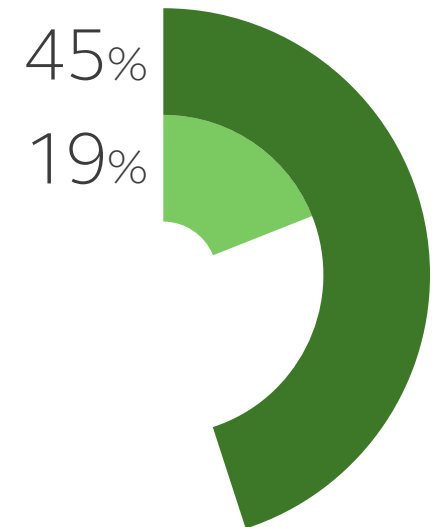
Relationships

Active engagement with selected accounts*



Revenue

Pipeline growth*



% of respondents (N=83)

*Indicates a statistically significant difference.

Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019

ABM continues to evolve and deliver business impact

“We are in our infancy rolling out an ABM strategy. I'd say for the past year and a half we've been executing ABM tactics, but those have been more at the campaign level and not as an organizational strategy. We are currently in the process of introducing a broader account-based strategy across the organization. I'll be leading that initiative from within marketing, but we're working closely with sales and our business management team.”

“You've got to be a real champion for ABM. You've got to grab onto the successes and the relationships generated and get those people to shout as loud as you can about how important this program is. And you have to do things in incremental steps. Measure everything and show cause and effect. Show sales how ABM is going to make them rich.”

“Up to this point, we've focused ABM on new logo acquisition, given that we have a 'land and expand' sales model. We haven't yet extended our ABM into lifecycle and customer marketing. That's going to be a focus area for us this quarter. How do we build expansion business with our current clients?”

“It hasn't been a linear process for us; ABM has evolved over time without a planned roadmap. There's been multiple iterations of scaling and bringing it back. We constantly assess if what we are doing is providing the right value to the business. Do we have the right resources—people and budget? And do we have the right tools in place?”

“I'm working on an initiative to do One-to-Few ABM by business need rather than industry. Industry content is our first go-to, but with ABM we're starting to uncover more and more about our accounts. We're learning that there's so many industry-agnostic business challenges that we could go to market with and we're trying to drive our content creation teams to start thinking in that way.”

“I believe ABM has to be constantly revisited; partly because of changing legal frameworks, think of GDPR last year, but also because the technology that enables ABM is evolving so fast. ABM technology is a hugely fragmented market and it's an art and a science to keep an eye on what is evolving and how you can best adapt that to your needs and your objectives.”

“When I joined the company, ABM was used to break into new logo accounts. Now, we're running ABM for our customers to help them drive adoption and advocacy internally in their businesses. We know that if we can get them to drive more consumption and adoption, they're going to then purchase more.”

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Collaboration with sales is one of the core ABM principles

“A lot of companies struggle with having a good relationship between marketing and sales. ABM puts that relationship in different light because it is so collaborative. Both functions are held accountable. The data and insights that we're giving sales is invaluable. We're giving them conversation-ready leads; not just leads to help our numbers. Everybody's in it together.”

“I think it's challenging within any corporation to align marketing and sales. As we record more success with ABM that relationship is getting stronger and stronger.”

“Our ABM Head started at the top with sales and regional marketing leadership to secure buy-in early in the pilot phase. She set clear expectations that ABM is a privilege and a collaboration between the sales team and the marketer. As a result, we have a strong partnership with sales. Sales sees the value of ABM.”

“Salespeople tend to be protective of their accounts. That's the biggest concern when you present an ABM concept to sales. Marketers must earn their trust. You must make sure that sales sees how you can build a relationship with the customer and deliver the same message they would deliver. I always tell salespeople that I'm here to help them get the opportunity and close the deal. The most successful salespeople are the ones who see the value of the ABM relationship and take advantage of it.”

“My goal is to ensure that sales isn't just on board, but that they're advocates of the program and feel accountable for it. Our sales leader talks about how the salespeople should feel honored to be at a point in their career where they're only working on a very small number of big, global accounts and they have access to resources like ABM.”

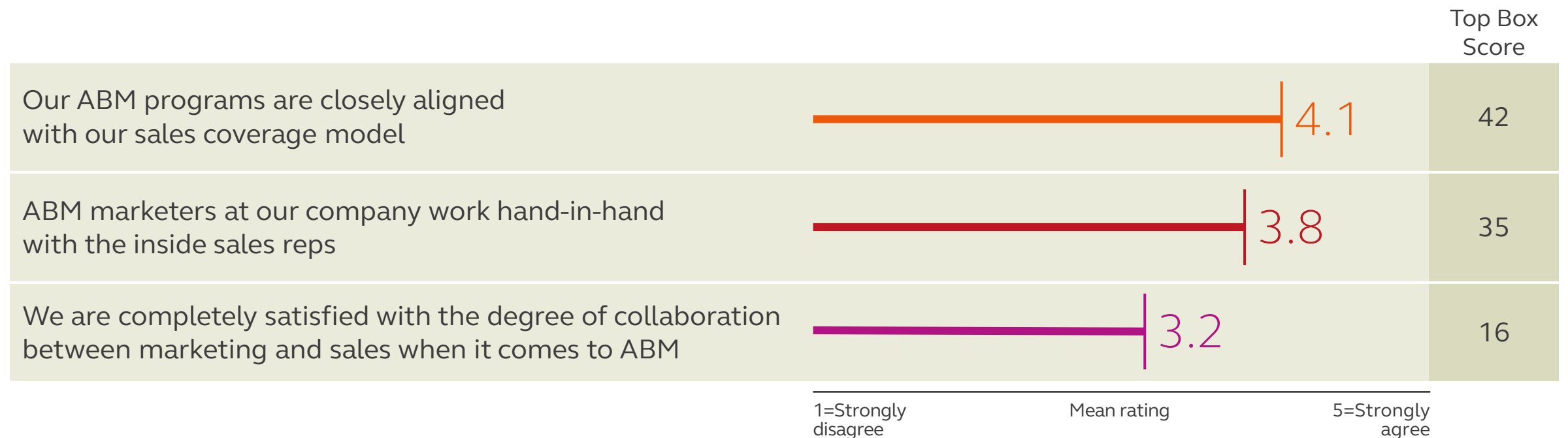
“In addition to shared pipeline KPIs, we have aligned marketing and sales processes. ABM-ers complete the training with the sales community, hand in hand, so that we use exactly the same methodology.”

Despite great strides in aligning with sales, few ABM-ers are completely satisfied

Sales alignment is another core principle of ABM. Most ABM-ers invest a great deal of time in educating, gaining buy-in, and working with sales. At a high level, many programs have aligned well with sales coverage models. Many have also made great progress in working closely with their inside sales organizations. Yet few are completely satisfied (only 16%) with the degree of ongoing collaboration between marketing and sales for ABM.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Mean rating (N~130)



Note: Mean rating based on a 5-point scale where 1=Strongly disagree and 5=Strongly agree.
 Top box score is the percentage of respondents that strongly agree.
 Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019

Sales alignment is a hallmark of the most effective ABM programs

The most effective ABM programs have made much greater strides in sales alignment and collaboration than all others. They have moved beyond basic alignment with coverage models into the entire, end-to-end process of integrated ABM programs, from account selection and insight at the beginning, through play and value proposition development, to campaign planning, execution, and measurement.

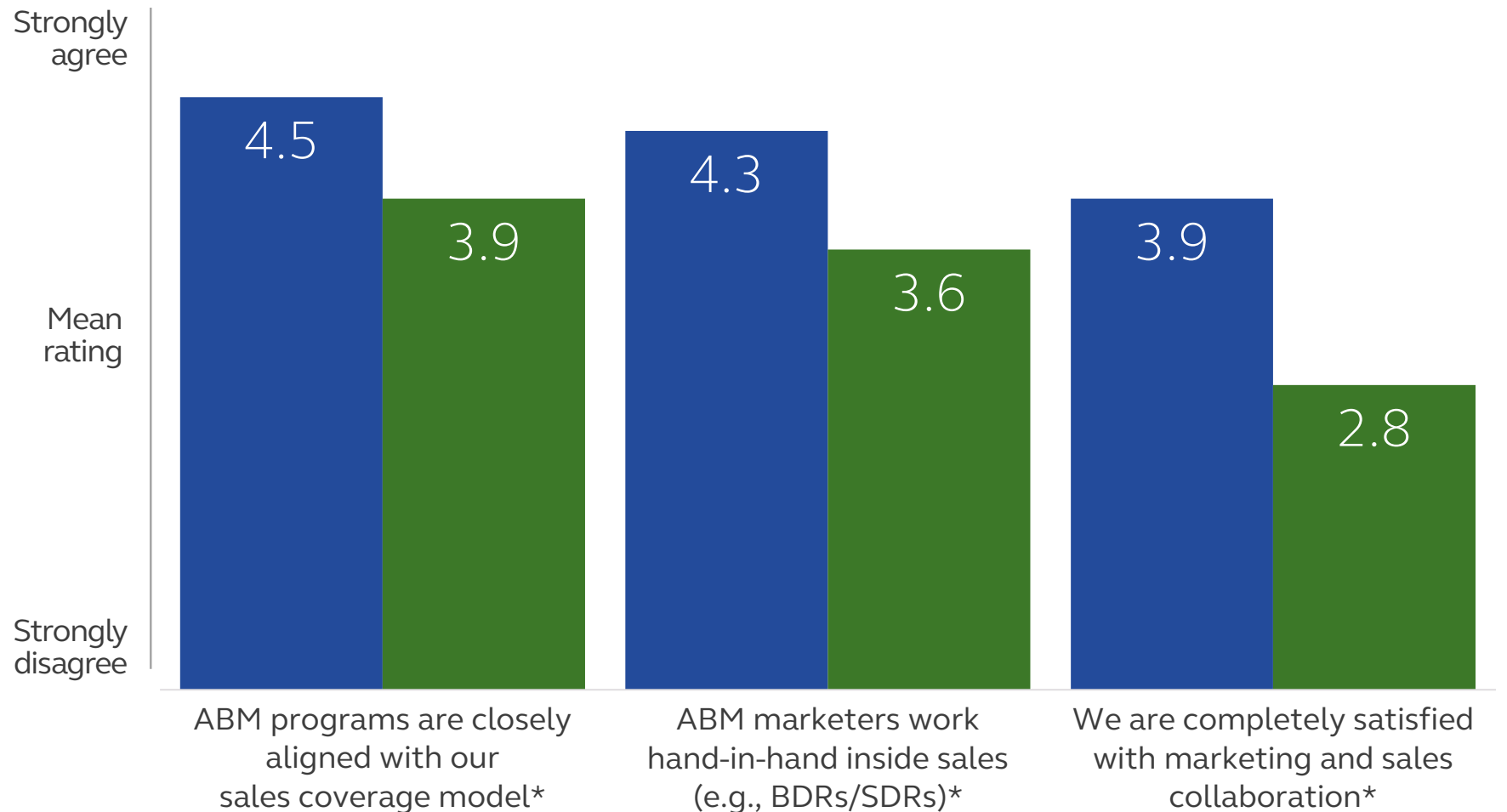
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Mean rating (N~130)

■ Most Effective
■ All Others

“When we look at One-to-One ABM it's not just alignment or partnership; we're actually embedded as part of the account team and participating in everything.”

Note: Mean rating based on a 5-point scale where 1=Strongly disagree and 5=Strongly agree.
 *Indicates a statistically significant difference.
 Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019



One-to-One ABM programs are most aligned with sales;
 One-to-Many ABM programs are far less aligned

Companies practicing different types of ABM demonstrate different levels of sales alignment. Those practicing One-to-One ABM are most closely aligned; ABM-ers often embed in account teams and work as full partners throughout the process. One-to-Few ABM programs are typically not as closely aligned; marketers check in regularly but with less ongoing, hands-on collaboration. One-to-Many ABM programs are least well aligned, relying mostly on initial agreement and periodic reviews.

ITSMA ABM Sales Collaboration Index		
One-to-One ABM	One-to-Few ABM	One-to-Many ABM
4.1	3.7	3.0



Note: The ITSMA ABM Sales Collaboration Index is a composite index that averages collaboration ratings for account selection and the seven-step ITSMA ABM Methodology. Mean rating based on a 5-point scale where 1=No collaboration with sales and 5=A great deal of collaboration with sales.

Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019

Moving to Maturity in 2020 and Beyond: Five Keys to Success

- Practice Patience
- Strengthen Sales Alignment
- **Invest in Insight**
- Master Multichannel
- Build a Blended Strategy

ABM-ers execute tailored and personalized programs and campaigns based on deep customer insight

“I don't think a piece of content creates an opportunity, but a piece of content about the problem that they're facing shows that you understand what they're going through and creates a sense of trust, which leads to them being interested in talking to you.”

“The data and level of sophistication on insights has grown dramatically in the last couple of years. You can identify companies in a buying process or sales cycle. These insights based on intent have changed the game for B2B and especially ABM marketers.”

“We use a data visualization tool called ReKener. The tool tracks engagement on HubSpot and our online channels—people interacting with our ads, white papers, and other content. It provides a holistic view, so we have a greater understanding of what our ABM accounts are engaging with. We use the insights from the data to send them the correct messaging and prioritize the demand.”

“Ours is an industry-based program. We typically cover five or six industries with five or six accounts within each industry. Within each industry, we look across the companies for the synergies and we do extensive external and internal research to gather insights. We combine the external and internal insights with discussions with the sellers and their account plans, and from that we develop the One-to-Few ABM strategy.”

“Here's an example of how we use account insight: On an earnings call, the new CEO spoke about their supply chain failings and need to be more focused on continuous improvement rather than cost cutting. I took the CEO's language and tailored our value prop. That resulted in us securing a meeting with one of their supply chain executives. This subsequently turned into a pretty cool opportunity for us!”

“One of the challenges is collecting insights from sales. We are using a new tool to collect data from sales. It's going to help the ABM-ers understand the buying groups within the accounts and who the people are.”

Few companies are leveraging the full potential of ABM-related tools

Amid the tremendous growth in ABM, we're still early in leveraging the full potential of ABM-related tools and technology. Many companies are relying on core marketing tools and systems including email, web, CRM, and social media... and achieving great results. Technology is absolutely not a pre-requisite for ABM. The most effective programs take a gradual and deliberate approach to testing and integrating new tools over a multi-year time frame.

Which types of technologies do you currently use to support your ABM programs?

% of respondents
(N=136)

"It is critical to bring insights to life through automation. Then you can trigger specific actions like advertising or website personalization or some type of sales activity. That's what makes the insights truly meaningful to sales and marketing."



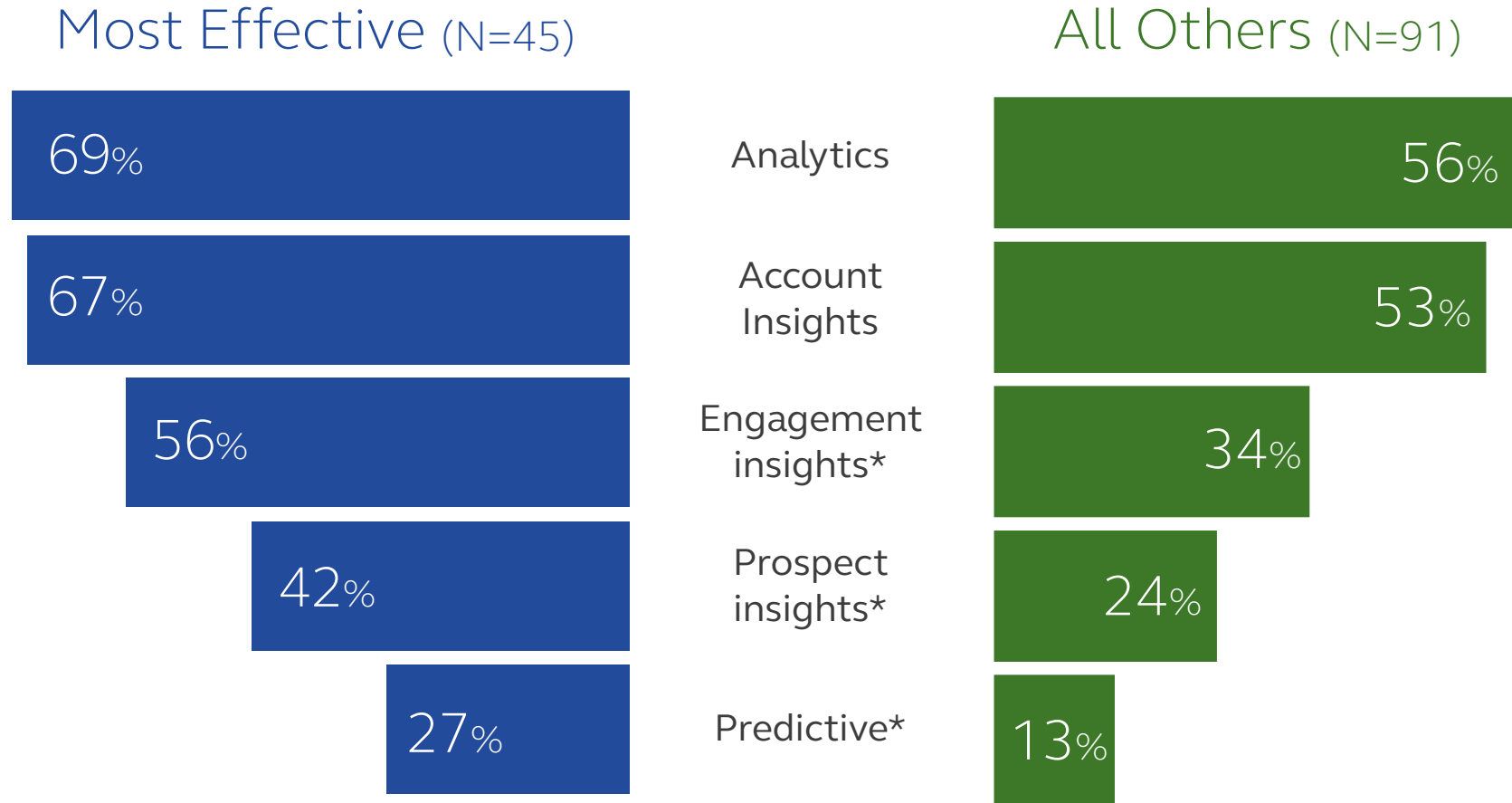
Note: Multiple responses allowed.
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019

The most effective ABM programs invest more in data and analytics

Investing in insight is a core principle of ABM. One of the great shifts from traditional B2B marketing to ABM is from an inside-out to an outside-in approach focused on what customers and prospects prioritize and how they operate. The most effective ABM programs invest more than others in insight of all types, including understanding customers and prospects, tracking engagement, strengthening analytics, and looking toward predictive.

Technologies in use

% of respondents



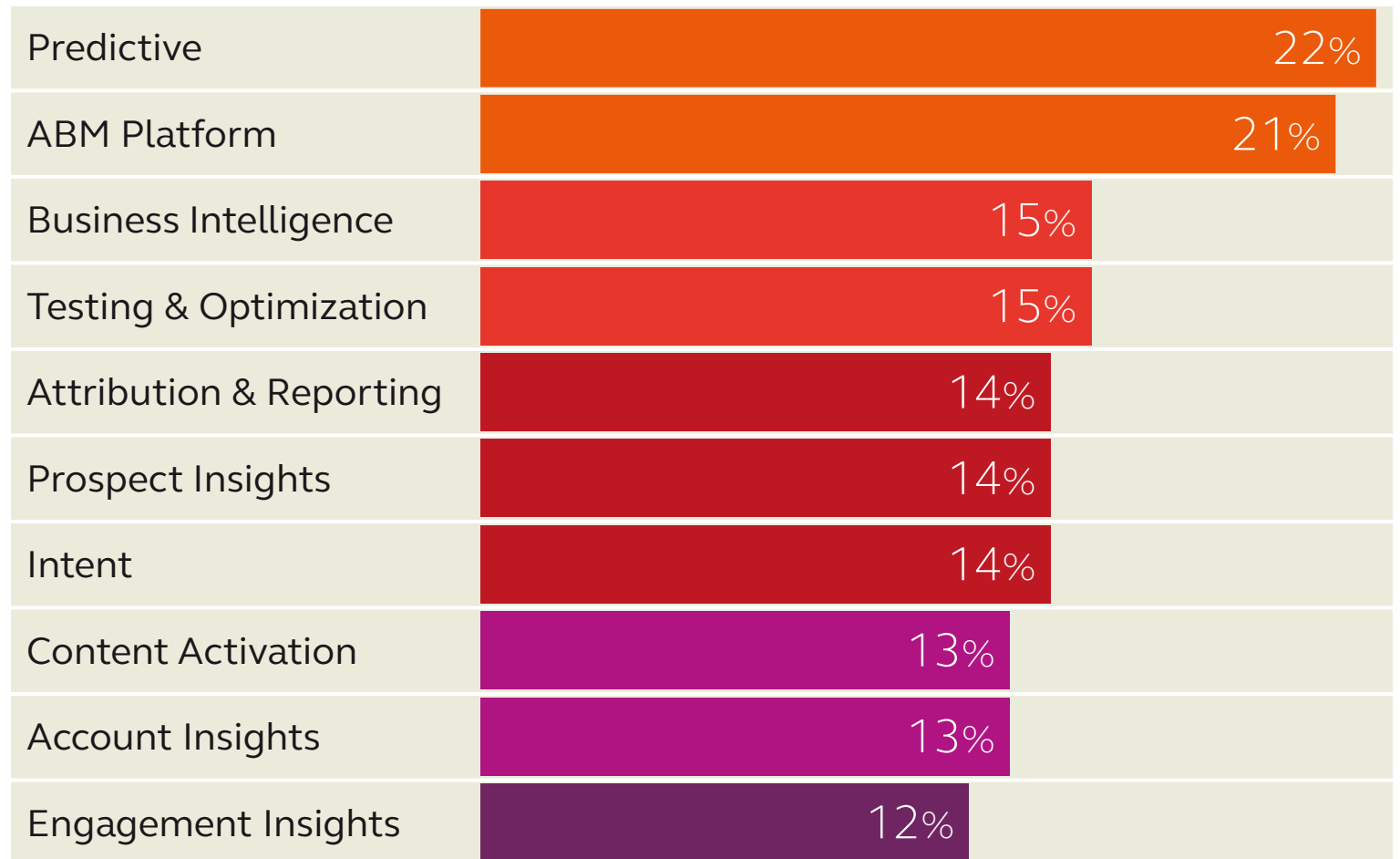
*Indicates a statistically significant difference.
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019

Insight-related tools dominate the list for planned investment in tech for ABM

Looking ahead, companies are interested in a wide range of new tools and technologies to strengthen their ABM programs, with predictive and ABM platforms topping the list. As the level of sophistication in account-level insight continues to grow, including with AI and machine learning, marketers need to balance their investments in new tools with an equivalent effort in improving team skills to leverage insight and shortening the time from insight to action.

Which types of technologies are you planning to add to your ABM technology stack in the next 12 to 18 months?

% of respondents
(N=132)



Note: Multiple responses allowed.
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019

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Top ABM tactics cut across a wide range of online and offline channels

The most effective tactics for ABM vary across the three types of ABM, but in all cases reflect a multichannel, online and offline, highly personalized approach. One-to-One ABM relies the most on offline, face-to-face activities, but even One-to-Many ABM programs look to in-person events as a key component of multichannel programs. Especially with high-value solutions and executive-level buying, ABM programs work best with a truly integrated and multichannel approach.

Top tactics for the three types of ABM

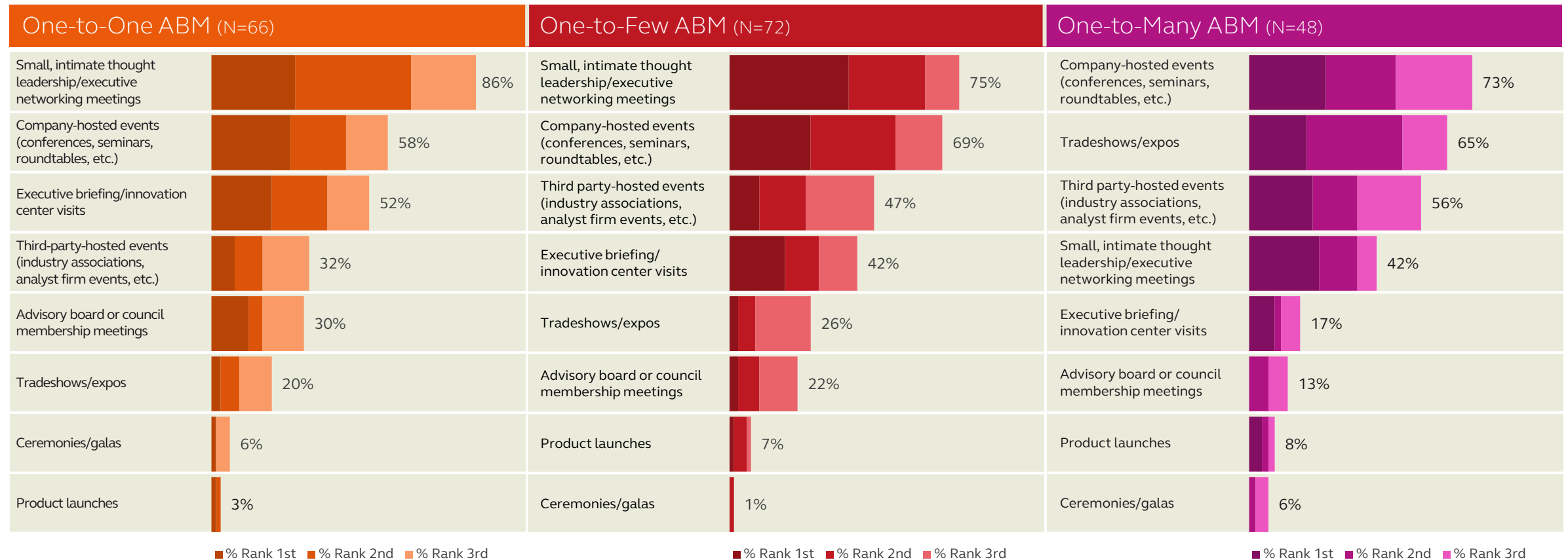
One-to-One ABM Tactics: 57% online, 43% offline	One-to-Few ABM Tactics: 68% online, 32% offline	One-to-Many ABM Tactics: 81% online, 19% offline
Account-specific custom content and thought leadership	In-person events	Email marketing/e-newsletters
Executive-to-executive relationship programs	Email marketing/e-newsletters	Reverse IP/targeted digital ads/retargeting
In-person events	Account-specific (custom/bespoke) content and thought leadership	Paid social media
Direct mail	Paid social media	Webinars and virtual events
Paid social media	Executive-to-executive relationship programs	Paid search
Email marketing/e-newsletters	Reverse IP/targeted digital ads/retargeting	In-person events

Note: Respondents were asked to rank the most effective tactics for each type of ABM, with up to five responses allowed.
 Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019

Spotlight on Events: Most effective in-person events for each type of ABM

As companies continue to invest in events as part of their ABM programs, they are cutting back on large-scale sponsorships and participation in third-party events in favor of smaller, often executive-level, in-house events. This is most evident for One-to-One ABM but increasingly apparent with One-to-Few ABM and One-to-Many ABM programs, as well.

What specific types of in-person events are most effective for ABM accounts? % of respondents



Note: Respondents were asked to rank order the three most effective types of events. Other event types in survey included ceremonies/galas and product launches

Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019

ABM programs work best with a truly integrated and multichannel approach

“We do custom communications for an account, relying on existing content that we personalize. The other area that we do exceptionally well is custom events. And then within those two categories, there’s probably 20 different ways that we execute.”

“We have an always-on digital campaign, which we run for our ABM accounts, and we track the digital footprint and engagement with our accounts using multiple platforms. We do targeted advertising to change perception and generate interest. However, I always say that I can have all the fancy tech, but if the salesperson can’t back it up with a strong narrative, it’s going to fall flat.”

“We created highly targeted messaging for personas, or in the case of One-to-One ABM, very specific to the company. We built a sequence of emails, phone calls, and direct mail touches. Our next step is to add retargeting and events. The single most impactful thing that our ABM program has driven is our ability to get our new sales folks up and running very quickly because everything’s prebuilt. Just drop your accounts in and go.”

“We needed to retrain our account development reps (ADRs). With ABM, they couldn’t just call into accounts anymore. They needed to understand the messaging so that when they were following up, the messaging was consistent and relevant.”

“The idea is to take our message and surround the individuals that we want to talk to at the accounts with that message. They’re seeing us online, they’re seeing us in their mailboxes, they’re getting voicemails.”

“There is a significant operational understanding an ABM-er has to have. A true ABM function should cover a lot of different channels that traditionally have been broken out across different marketing roles. It’s tough to find people that have that broad of a skillset.”

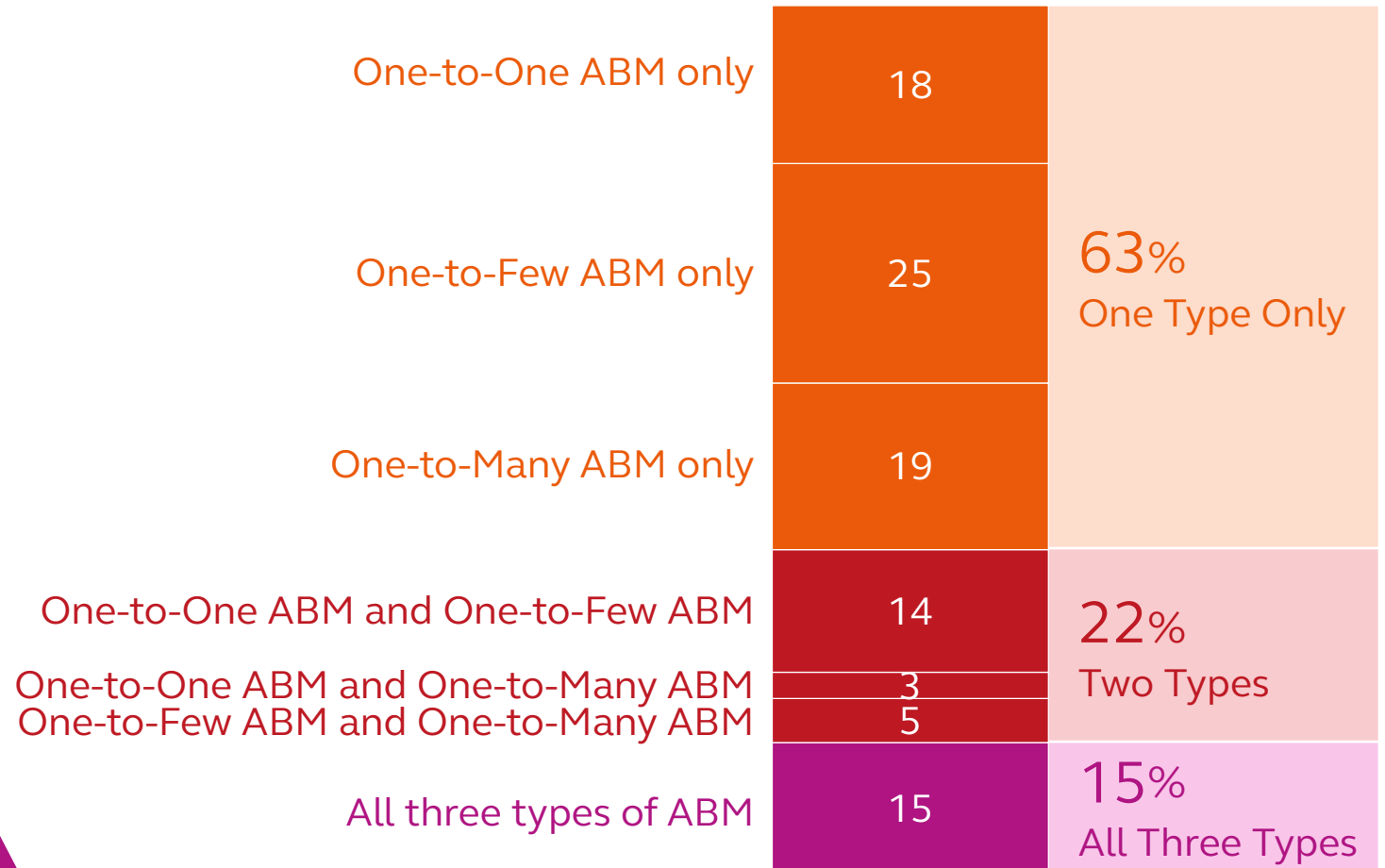
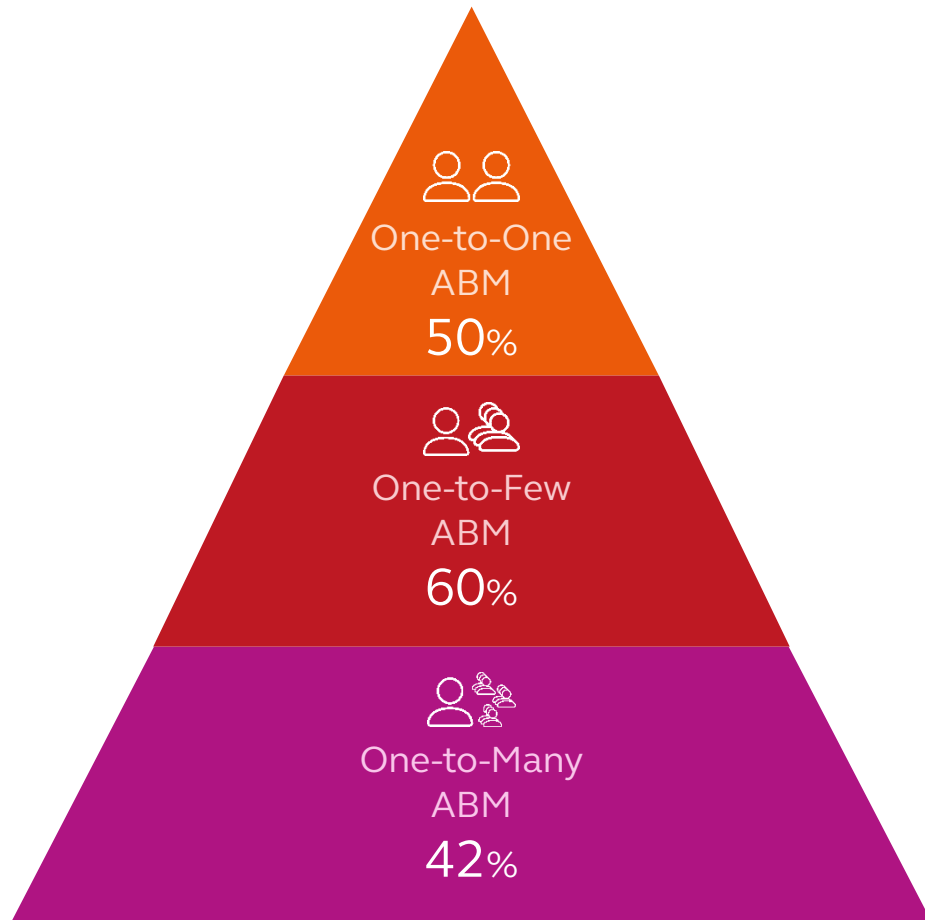
“We’ve seen the most pipeline growth with our One-to-One ABM efforts. We’ve invested in omnichannel campaigns that integrate digital and personal touches: Digital display and native plus content syndication for air cover, and even some out-of-home near headquarters and airports that buying committees fly from. We use direct mail with hyper-personalized insight. We do organic social media outreach based on what buyers are saying and responding in appropriate ways. And then private events centered on key areas of interest.”

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Amid the rise of three types of ABM, most companies currently have just one type

The distribution of ABM programs across the three types—One-to-One, One-to-Few, and One-to-Many—is roughly similar, with about half of all programs practicing each type. For most companies, though, one is enough. Almost two-thirds of companies are just practicing one type. Almost one quarter of firms are now implementing two types, and just 15% are practicing all three.



Note: Multiple responses allowed. % of respondents (N=142)
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019

“

Most companies are still relying on just one type of ABM, but the most effective programs use two or three. More companies will try multiple types of ABM in a blended strategy to keep up with demand from their sales and account teams if they started with One-to-One ABM, or to increase their focus on their most important accounts if they started with One-to-Few ABM or One-to-Many ABM.

This is not as straightforward as it sounds, as even the most experienced companies struggle to define the different approaches and delivery mechanisms.

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Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2018 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2018

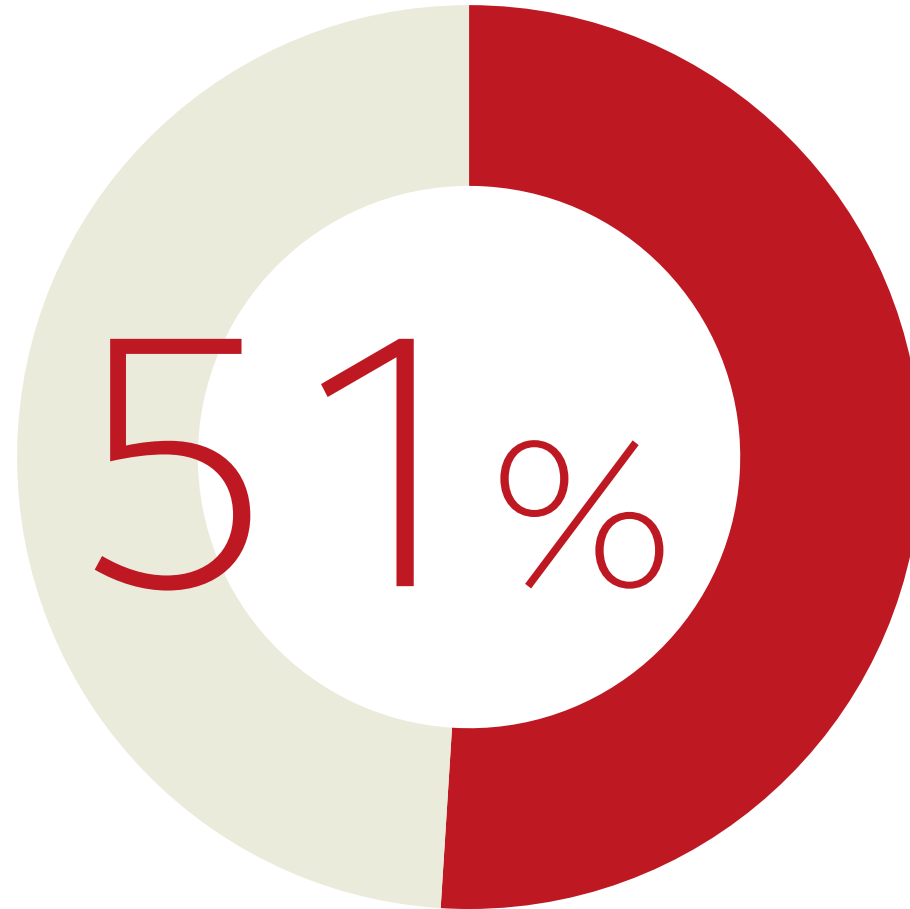


Bev Burgess
Senior Vice President
and ABM Practice Lead
ITSMA

About half of all programs plan to adopt a blended approach to scale ABM

As companies look to strengthen their programs in FY20 and beyond, about half of all programs are planning on adopting a blended approach with more than one type of ABM to enable breadth and depth of coverage across the accounts that matter most. For companies doing One-to-One ABM or One-to-Few ABM, this allows coverage of more accounts. For companies with One-to-Many ABM, a blended approach supports going deeper with the most important customers and prospects.

Adopting a blended approach using more than one type of ABM to cover more accounts/clusters/segments



“We launched the program with One-to-One ABM. At the time, leadership thought exclusivity was a good thing. Touching a small number of accounts is how we defined the program. Our current leadership wants us to ramp up the number of accounts, so we’ve moved to a blended model.”

% of respondents (N=130)
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019

The most effective ABM programs are further along in using blended strategies

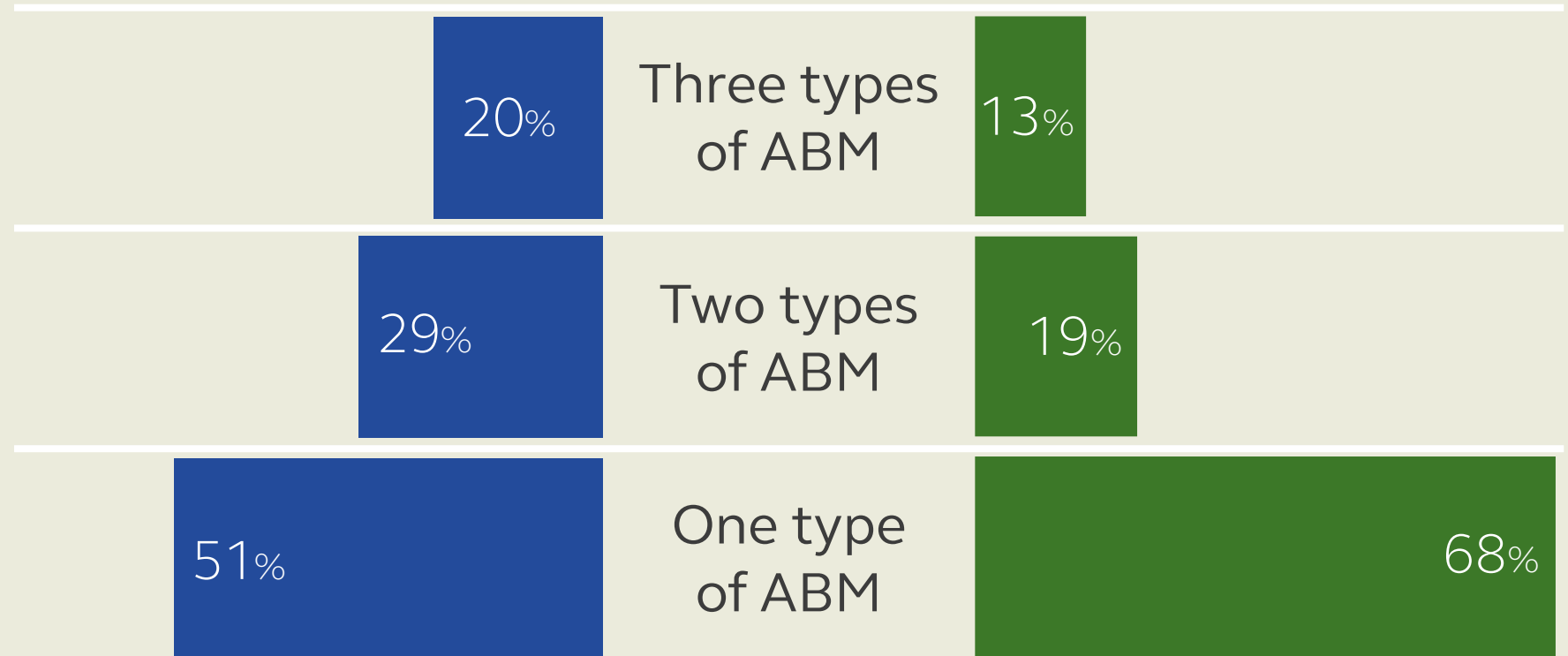
The most effective ABM programs are much more likely to have a blended strategy already. About half of the most effective programs are implementing at least two types of ABM, compared with less than one third of all other programs. As companies look to increase ABM impact, moving to a blended strategy is one of the most important ways to grow.

ABM program types

Most Effective (N=45)

All Others (N=96)

% of respondents



Note: Differences are statistically significant.
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019

A blended approach with more than one type of ABM enables both breadth and depth of account coverage

“Right now we're thinking we'll have three tiers. One-to-One ABM will be the most personalized, our mid level will be One-to-Many, and the third tier will be the remainder of our accounts. Our plan as we're rolling out the One-to-One ABM program is to rotate our top accounts, largely due to resource constraints. We'll start with 10 accounts and for the next 12 weeks execute a high-touch ABM program. At the end of the 12 weeks, a new set of accounts will get pulled in and we will repeat the high touch programs.”

“Most companies don't have the luxury of having One-to-One ABM across 100 accounts. You can drive greater efficiencies by focusing on 10 to 20, or even 30 accounts. You can tailor the message to that group of target accounts and then ramp up where you need to on individual accounts.”

“We've maximized our One-to-One ABM approach to the best that we can. Now we're looking at One-to-Few ABM as our way to get further scale. We're looking at it two ways: clusters by vertical, then by region.”

“For us, ABM is business as usual. We have ABM everywhere and we align 100% with our sales colleagues to provide ABM for our strategic accounts. It is a mixture of One-to-One strategic ABM and what we call Lite ABM. For us, Lite ABM is still strategic, but it's only doing lite-touch activity for a cluster of about 20 accounts. It also means that we don't invest as much time in the insight piece as we do in the strategic One-to-One ABM accounts.”

“We started from both ends of the spectrum. We had targeted marketing that we evolved into One-to-Many ABM. At about the same time, we started One-to-One ABM to grow our strategic, existing accounts. Then we found an opportunity to play in the middle by deploying learnings from both types into clusters of accounts with a One-to-Few approach. Now it's about evolving in and out and flexing based on business needs and the maturity of the business overall.”

“We are doing a combination of all of it. We have approximately 8,000 accounts globally that we look after. We work with the sales organization to determine the key accounts for One-to-One, One-to-Few, and One-to-Many ABM approaches. Next year, we are going to add a tier of new logo accounts. But by getting even more targeted at more accounts over the next three years, we're going to move up to, and everybody thinks we're crazy, 40,000 accounts!”

Five keys to ABM success in 2020

- **Practice patience!** #ABM can generate substantial results quickly but takes time to develop fully; the most mature programs drive far greater business impact
- **Strengthen #salesalignment:** ABM programs do a good job working with sales, but there's substantial room for greater collaboration across the range of approaches and programs
- **Invest in insight:** The best #ABM is customer-centric and based on deep insight; we're still early in tapping tools and data for sustained and high impact success
- **Master multichannel:** Amid the rush to digital, the most effective #ABM programs use a balance of online and offline approaches, fully integrated across sales and marketing
- **Build a blended strategy:** Most companies are still relying on just one type of #ABM but the most effective programs use two or three: One-to-One, One-to-Few, and One-to-Many



Research Methodology and Respondent Demographics

ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance survey participants*



*Partial list
Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM
Benchmark Study, October 2019

ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance Qualitative Interviews



Source: ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2019 ABM Benchmark Study, October 2019

About ITSMA and the ABM Leadership Alliance

ITSMA For more than 25 years, ITSMA has led the way in defining, building, and inspiring B2B services marketing excellence. With a dedicated focus on services and solutions for the connected economy, we provide our corporate member community with insight, advice, and hands-on help to strengthen reputation, increase revenue, and deepen customer relationships.

ITSMA pioneered the concept of account-based marketing in 2003 to help marketers stop generic sales pitches and instead zero in on the essential needs of their most important clients and prospects.

 The ABM Leadership Alliance unites industry-leading technology partners to educate B2B marketers about how developing and deploying an ABM strategy can help them improve their reputation, strengthen relationships, close bigger deals with target accounts, and increase pipeline velocity.

Members include Bizzabo, Demandbase, Engagio, InsightSquared, LeanData, ON24, PathFactory, PFL, Salesforce Pardot, SalesLoft, Sigstr, and Vidyard.

More info

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