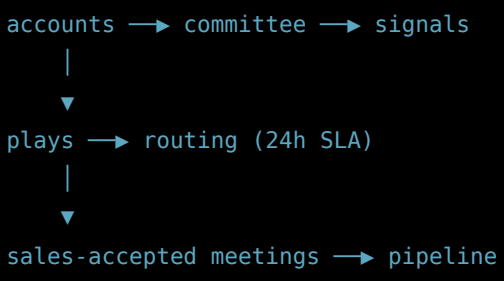
INSIGHTS ABM



INSIGHTS ABM GUIDE · 2026 EDITION

The 0-to-1 ABM playbook for seed to Series C teams

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SHORT ANSWER

Account-based marketing (ABM) for a seed to Series C company is a focused pipeline program, not a platform purchase. Pick 50 to 300 accounts that fit your ideal customer profile, map who in each account influences the decision, and run a small number of plays that sales has agreed to work. Measure it by sales-accepted meetings and pipeline, and expect the first meetings within 90 days.

Who this playbook is for

This playbook is for founders, heads of marketing and RevOps leaders at B2B companies between seed and Series C. It assumes an average deal size of at least $15,000, a sales team of one or more people (or a founder who sells), and a CRM, or a plan to set one up. If you sell a low-priced product to thousands of small customers, a product-led or inbound motion will usually beat ABM.

ABM is now standard practice, not an experiment. Demand Gen Report's 2026 ABM Benchmark Survey found that nearly 80% of organizations are actively running an ABM strategy. Execution is the gap: in N.Rich's 2025 study of 107 B2B teams, only 31% said marketing and sales collaborate effectively on ABM.

Step 1: Check that you are ready

Most failed ABM programs fail before launch. Use this checklist before you buy a platform or build a list.

REQUIREMENT	READY WHEN	IF NOT READY
Deal size	Average deal is $15,000 or more	Use inbound and product-led motions first
ICP	You can name 3–5 firmographic traits your best customers share	Interview your last 10 closed-won customers
Sales capacity	Someone can work 10–20 target accounts a week	Have the founder or an SDR own follow-up
CRM	Accounts, contacts and deals live in HubSpot or Salesforce	Set up the CRM first; it takes 2–4 weeks
Agreement	Sales agrees on the account list and what counts as a qualified meeting	Write the definition down before launch

If you have no CRM or sales team yet, you can still start. Insights ABM regularly implements HubSpot or Salesforce and runs meeting follow-up while a company hires its first sales reps.

Step 2: Build the target account list

A good target account list is short enough for sales to know every account by name. Start with fit, then add intent.

Fit is who could buy: industry, employee count, revenue or funding stage, region, and the technology they already use. **Intent** is who is buying now: research activity on topics you solve, visits to your site, engagement with your ads, or adoption of your free or open-source product.

Split the list into three tiers so effort matches value:

TIER	ACCOUNTS	TREATMENT	TYPICAL OWNER
Tier 1 (1:1)	10–25	Custom research, personalized outreach and content per account	Account executive + marketing lead
Tier 2 (1:few)	25–100	Plays and content by industry or use case	SDR + marketing
Tier 3 (1:many)	100–300	Targeted ads and automated sequences	Marketing

Review the list every month. Move accounts up when intent rises and down when they go quiet.

Step 3: Map the buying committee

You are not selling to a person. You are selling to a group. Forrester's 2026 State of Business Buying research found that 13 internal stakeholders and nine external participants influence the average B2B purchase. Purchases that include AI features double the size of the buying group.

For each Tier 1 and Tier 2 account, name at least one person in each role:

- **Economic buyer:** owns the budget (often a CEO, CFO or VP).
- **Champion:** wants the change and will sell it internally.
- **Technical evaluator:** checks fit with the current stack and security requirements.
- **End users:** the team that will use the product every day.
- **Procurement and legal:** Forrester reports procurement is named as a decision-maker by 53% of buyers.

Coverage matters. In Gong Labs' analysis of 1.8 million opportunities, won deals had twice as many buyer contacts as lost deals. A practical target is three or more engaged contacts per Tier 1 account before you expect a meeting.

Step 4: Choose signals and tools for your stage

Buy tools for the stage you are in, not the stage you hope to reach.

STAGE	SIGNALS THAT MATTER	RECOMMENDED STACK
Seed, no ABM tooling	Site visits, LinkedIn engagement, product sign-ups	CRM + LinkedIn Ads + Apollo for contact data
Open-source or freemium product	Package downloads, product usage by company	Scarf or product analytics + Apollo + CRM
Series A–B, defined ICP	Third-party intent, account engagement scores	6sense or Demandbase, connected to CRM
Series B–C, multiple buying groups	Buying-group engagement, predictive stage	Full ABM platform with buying-group tracking and advertising

The choice between 6sense and Demandbase depends mostly on how well you already know your buying committees. Our 6sense vs Demandbase guide covers the decision by stage.

Integration is worth more than features. Demandbase's State of ABM 2026, based on 1,452 companies, found that teams connecting CRM, marketing automation and predictive models reach a median 22.3% MQA-to-pipeline conversion, versus 14.2% for less mature programs.

Step 5: Run plays sales has agreed to work

A play is a defined sequence of marketing and sales actions triggered by a signal. Start with three plays, not ten.

1. **New logo play.** Trigger: a Tier 1 or 2 account shows intent or a spike in site visits. Marketing runs targeted ads to the buying committee; sales sends personalized outreach to two or three roles within 48 hours.
2. **Stalled deal play.** Trigger: an open opportunity goes quiet for 30 days, then shows renewed research. Marketing serves proof content to the full committee; sales re-engages with a new angle.
3. **Expansion play.** Trigger: a current customer's other business units research your category. Marketing introduces use cases for those teams; the account owner asks the champion for an introduction.

Our buying committee recipes give step-by-step versions of these plays, plus plays for product launches and renewals.

Advertising multiplies plays when it supports them. Demandbase found that companies using four advertising products reached a 58.7% win rate, a 71% lift over companies running none.

Step 6: Route accounts with a clear SLA

Signals are worthless if nobody acts on them. Write the routing rule down and put it in the CRM.

A simple marketing-qualified account (MQA) rule for a seed to Series A team:

- The account is in Tier 1 or Tier 2.
- Two or more contacts engaged in the last 14 days.
- At least one of them is in a buying committee role.

When an account meets the rule, the CRM assigns it to its owner, starts the right sequence and sends an alert. The owner makes first contact within 24 hours. Review missed SLAs every week.

Step 7: Measure by sales-accepted meetings

Clicks, impressions and engaged accounts are leading indicators, not results. Report on the numbers sales and finance care about.

METRIC	WHAT IT TELLS YOU	REVIEW
Sales-accepted meetings	Whether ABM creates real conversations	Weekly
Meeting → SQL rate	Whether those conversations are qualified	Weekly
Pipeline created from target accounts	Whether ABM produces revenue opportunities	Monthly
Win rate and deal size, ABM vs non-ABM	Whether ABM accounts close better	Quarterly
Buying committee coverage	Whether you reach enough of each account	Monthly

Many teams cannot answer the basic question. In N.Rich's 2025 study, 26% of ABM teams could not estimate ABM's contribution to revenue. Set up attribution before launch so you are not in that group.

To work out how many meetings your target needs, use the pipeline calculator.

Your first 90 days

WEEKS	FOCUS	OUTPUT
1–2	ICP and readiness	Written ICP, qualified-meeting definition, sales sign-off
3–4	Accounts and committee	Tiered list of 50–300 accounts, contacts for Tier 1–2 roles
5–6	Systems	CRM fields, MQA rule, routing, SLA alerts, dashboards
7–8	Launch	Ads, sequences and the three plays live
9–12	Learn and adjust	Weekly meeting review, first pipeline report, list changes

Expect the first sales-accepted meetings in weeks 7 to 12. Pipeline and win-rate comparisons take two to three quarters to read with confidence.

FAQ

How many target accounts should a seed or Series A company start with? Start with 50 to 150 accounts. That is enough to produce meetings and small enough for one or two sellers to work every week.

Do we need 6sense or Demandbase to run ABM? No. A CRM, LinkedIn Ads and a contact data tool such as Apollo are enough to start. Add an ABM platform when you have a defined ICP, a sales team, and more accounts than people can track by hand.

How long does ABM take to work? First sales-accepted meetings usually arrive within 90 days. Reliable pipeline and win-rate comparisons take six to nine months.

What is the most common reason ABM fails? Sales and marketing do not agree on the account list or on what counts as a qualified meeting. Write both down and get sign-off before launch.

How does Insights ABM help? Insights ABM builds and runs ABM programs for seed to Series C B2B companies, from the account list and CRM setup to plays, advertising and reporting. Engagements start with a four-week GTM audit.

Want this built for your team? Insights ABM builds and runs ABM programs for seed to Series C B2B companies. Book a 30-minute consult at calendly.com/joe-cantu/30-minute-meeting or email contact@insightsabm.com.