

Is it a waste of time for your company? Account-Based Marketing (ABM) continues to buzz in B2B marketing circles. But for every ABM program success, many fail. So how do you mitigate risk? Here is relevant content from our webinar series: [What Do B2B Marketers Do Now?](#)

Below is an excerpt from our recent webinar: [Are You Ready for B2B Account-Based Marketing?](#) In this short webinar excerpt, our featured guest, Alisa investigates: [B2B Account-Based Marketing Success or Failure: The Determining Factors – Part 1](#)

DISCLAIMER:

Note: The following is the output of transcribing software from the webinar recording. Although the transcription is largely accurate, in some cases it may be incomplete or inaccurate due to inaudible passages or transcription errors. Quite often unanticipated grammatical, syntax, and other interpretive errors are inadvertently transcribed by the computer software. Please disregard these errors.

Rick: Hello, everyone. Do you need to assess if Account-Based Marketing or ABM is the correct B2B marketing strategy to drive sales growth for your company this year? I'm Rick Endrulat, President of Virtual Causeway and we produce the insightful series, *What Do B2B Marketers Do Now?* I know everyone's busy. So today I have a segment from our recent webinar, "Are You Ready for B2B Account-Based Marketing?" Our featured guest in that webinar is Alisa Grocock, VP, Principal Analyst of Demand Generation and ABM at Forrester. In this webinar segment, Alisa is addressing two of the five critical requirements that determine ABM success. Understanding these requirements is important for you to determine whether an ABM strategy is the right fit. So let's join Alisa now.

Alisa: So I want to touch on this notion of the SiriusDecisions Demand Spectrum Model. We introduced this in a webinar that Rick just alluded to, what we kind of walked through this model in a fair amount of detail. And this model is meant to help our clients figure out what their marketing mix should look like. How should they apply resources with sales against a whole range of accounts that may go everywhere from 10 whale accounts that our existing clients that you want to be doing a lot of cross-sell, up sell, all the way on down to what does it look like if I have territories and I need to have a coverage model that goes after five thousand or ten thousand accounts, how do we

think about that decision? How do I figure out how to apply resources as a marketer against that whole landscape and make sure that I'm putting the best dollar towards the best opportunities? And so this model helps our clients to think about that along three axis that you see the first axis being the degree of insights. How many data points do you have? What do the insights look like? And that's going to have a big impact on where you can and should be with regards to the type of marketing that you do, collaboration, cadence, how strongly are marketing and sales collaborating and then levels of customization? Are we doing existing content off the shelf and kind of putting that out into market? Or are we doing very customized kinds of approaches? And so when you put those three things together, you end up with a mix of different marketing approaches.

Alisa: And most of our clients tell us they really need to be in a variety of places along this spectrum. They need to be doing in the lower left-hand corner more traditional kinds of demand, marketers where they scale and they reach a large number of accounts. But those opportunities might not be worthy of very bespoke content or very expensive sales and marketing resources. They're just broadly kind of covering the market. That's one end of the spectrum at the top, upper right hand. End of the spectrum is kind of the opposite of that. Hey, I've got fifteen accounts that represent multimillion dollar deals. We need to do everything we can to win these large deals. And we're going to throw very bespoke resources and some of our best sales reps and some of our best marketing techniques at it and then everything in between. So I wanted to introduce this because we're going to be focused today is in that upper right hand area. What we think of is the Account-Based Marketing efforts. And there are two flavors of that. And the materials that we cover today will apply to both of those flavors. There's a named account marketing. Typically, we're working with clients that have in the high dozens, hundreds, or maybe even in the low thousands of accounts.

Alisa: Typically, those are low to medium size average deals. When you've got to get some scale and some volume going, you're working with maybe BDRs to vet those accounts in the first place. And then the upper right-hand side again is those wale accounts. You're dealing with very strategic account sales reps and that sort of thing. So that's the focus of our conversation today. And what I want to do is start to tee up what are some of these readiness factors, prerequisites, if you will, that you really want to think about before you even get started. As you start to say, hey, we think Account-

Based Marketing makes sense for us. We definitely have accounts that we care about more than others. Where do we start? So these are some of the things that you're going to want to address. First of all, what is the proposed scope, really getting your arms around? And we'll talk a little bit more about this later in the presentation. But what is the account universe and what accounts are potentially in scope? What geographies are you talking about? Which vertical industries? What is the number of accounts that just starting to get your arms out? It's one thing to say I want to do Account-Based Marketing or organization wants to do Account-Based Marketing.

Alisa: But it's a whole other matter to say we're going to hone in here for that, for that very bespoke approach that we're going to take and what we're what we're going to do and what we're not going to do. What's out of scope is just as important as what's in scope, what are the business goals. So being able to say, here's where our organization here's where our company is going and those are going to be things like, hey, we need to unseat competitors. We have a competitive attack kind of approach that as a company we really need to be accomplishing in the market or we need to grow market share in particular ways, or we need to be going into new geographies. So having that context around where what the business is trying to achieve and how Account-Based Marketing might fit into that is really important resource allocation. So what does it mean from a budget and human perspective? So how Account-Based Marketing as a change management initiative? There's just a kind of. A way around that it's very difficult to take existing resources and simply say we're going to do a much better job with this subset of accounts, with the existing resources that we have today, you might use the existing people and even the existing budget, but you're going to have to shift some things in order to make that happen. So beginning to wrap your heads around that and then finally, stakeholders.

Alisa: So, again, ABM is a change management initiative. So having stakeholders board in any kind of change, as we all know, requires that key individuals in the organization are going to be available to help take stock and be really honest with themselves and with everybody else about what can be done and what can't be done and how that might be phased over time. So let me introduce with that background our ABM Readiness Model for named account marketing. And so what you see here are the five categories that we're going to dive into and talk a little bit more about. I'm going to start with the organizational fit that's kind of at the 11 o'clock on this circle. So

organizational fit are some of the things I was just alluding to. Is there leadership support? Is there a cultural fit? Is there an appetite for change and transformation in our organization right now? Do we have go-to-market alignment? And by that we mean our product and marketing and sales all on the same page with what the key segments and the business strategy of the company are, because those are all very underlying factors that you want to lay in ABM effort into. You don't want the effort to be trying to change those sorts of things. You want to make sure that that leadership and cultural sort of milieu is already there before you start doing a company's marketing.

Alisa: Second category is marketing readiness, things like demand management, waterfall's, measurement, reporting or is the content in place? Delivery mechanism, maturity and delivery mechanism is often referred to as channels or tactics. So are those kinds of things in place that you can tap into as an as an Account-Based Marketing leader, or do you need to be building some of those channels that you may not have had in the past? Sales readiness? What is the relationship between marketing and sales and what are the sales capabilities? Does sales have the ability to hone in on a set of named accounts or is it really, you know, territory reps? Right. Do you do you have a difference between hunters and farmers and do they know how to operate in those two different motions? And that ties into the whole question of sales talent. Right? Are there skills in place that can really be able to execute in a very focused way, technology and insights, readiness? So this is all about the tech infrastructure. Do you have data? Do you have analytics capabilities? Do you have platforms that can kind of orchestrate using information that you might have about accounts and the buyers within those accounts and get the right content to the right people at the right time? And the delivery mechanisms has to do with things like your marketing automation platform and maybe your Salesforce automation platform.

Alisa: Do we have the ability to just literally get things out at in a scaled way and then resourcing adequacy, budget people skills? So those are the five things we're going to dive into those a little bit deeper throughout the course of the rest of this this webinar. But that's the overview. So let me dive in a little bit to organizational fit. I've talked a little bit about go-to-market alignment. So having that sense of company strategy and also having a data driven account selection process, marketing and sales should be doing this account selection together. That should not be a situation where sales is doing all of that heavy lifting on their own. This should really be a situation. Instead of marketing,

getting accounts thrown over the wall, marketing and sales should be in this together. So this can be about acquiring third party data. It might be about going to predictive analytics vendors. There's a lot of ways to do account selection, but marketing and sales need to be in that in a data driven way and they need to be targeting together. The second area is cultural fit, and I've talked about this a little bit. Is there an appetite to be adaptable and to change and transform and be in a kind of a test and learn mode? And is there a buyer centric approach? Is the organization willing to talk about buyer personas and buyers journeys? And if that's not where your organization is at, ABM is going to be pretty tough.

Alisa: So that cultural fits very important. And I touched on leadership support, marketing, sponsorship, sales, sponsorship, product sponsorship. All of those functions need to be in the boat on this or it's very hard to move forward on an ABM model. So we recommend a couple of things, secure commitment by producing what we call an ABM scoping statement. So the ABM's scoping statement is a way of getting everything onto one page in terms of what it is that you're trying to do, what the goals and objectives are and who needs to be involved, frankly, and what kinds of budget and resources are going to be required. We also encourage clients to think about ABM goals, reflecting account level views. So the recording must be account level specific. And that's where a lot of our clients run into trouble. They might have a waterfall, they might have reporting and dashboards and a view, but they have a really tough time doing it end to end on an account or on a specific group of accounts. And so that's one of the things that clients need to be able to get to. And that can be hard. So we encourage them to do that short term, medium term and long term. So what are some short term metrics that you can show in terms of getting clients engaged in increasing website visits, those kinds of things, so that you can show some success out of the gate? And then how do you build

Alisa: towards more of those engagement metrics and ultimately pipeline and close business metrics over time, that's you we all want those those pipeline and bookings numbers in our accounts, but sometimes it takes a little while to get there. So we encourage clients to think about their ABM goals and different timeframes. The next category is marketing readiness, so demand management. Again, that's about your waterfall. So this is really thinking through. Do we have an effective waterfall in place right now? It's very difficult to run an even program if you don't have a way of reporting end to end on the things that you're doing. You need a performance management

system, and that means that you have demand stages that are clearly called out all the way from the top of the waterfall on down to the bottom. And that marketing and sales are looking at those collaboratively that you know how buying groups move. It's not about individuals, it's not about individual leads. This is a very important piece of research for Forrester right now. And one that we publish and talk about quite a lot is that we need to get our clients to move away from the notion that one person who downloads a white paper is somehow a great lead that's going to convert because most of the time you're reaching folks who may not be a decision maker.

Alisa: Right? Or they may be one decision maker, but they're part of a much bigger buying group. Most of us are selling in the B2B environment into very complex situations with very large buying groups, sometimes 12, you know, 10, 12, 14, 15 people, sometimes on up to 20 people. Big committees. Right? So you need to be reaching that entire buying group and seeing how those fine groups are actually moving through the waterfall and then scoring an SLA is kind of goes along with all of that. So we encourage clients to make sure that they're ready from a demand management perspective before they start an account based measurement. We've talked about this a little bit. The metric spectrum, that's that spectrum of thinking about everything from what are my activity metrics, click through rates and those sorts of things all the way up to pipeline and close business. And we call that a spectrum because it has implications for short term, medium term and long term. It also has implications for the spectrum of what I'll call impact. So activity metrics are really good in terms of understanding how you're doing operationally, but you're not necessarily going to get executive level folks very interested in those kinds of activity metrics. So the spectrum of how do we report operationally, but then how do we also make sure that we're reporting on the things that really are going to move the needle in the end? Again, the pipeline, the bookings, the increase in average deal size is the ability to cross-sell into new buying groups.

Alisa: Those are all very, very impactful metrics. And so we want clients to be thinking about that metrics spectrum and the account level recording I've alluded to a couple of times now being able to hone in on a very small group of accounts, sometimes even hundreds of accounts, but being able to apply that filter content, you need to have good content or be willing to build it quickly. Things like buyers journeys, buyer personas, being able to customize for clusters or groups of accounts. Right? That might be by vertical industry where it might be that you're doing a competitive attack program and

you want to customize content to go after clients who have a particular competitor in their tech stack. But all of that requires being able to deliver content that isn't just product content that's off the shelf. It's needs to be customized at least by buyer persona, but probably by additional factors as well. If you're going to do this right, localization capabilities, obviously, if you're delivering things in other countries and regions and you're going to need to be able to do something other than English, you need to have those local localization capabilities for your content. And then finally, delivery mechanism, maturity. And again, delivery mechanisms are our term for fear tactics or what some people sometimes call channels.

Alisa: So you need a range of inbound and outbound tactics. What we find with a lot of our clients is they do a lot of paid media. They're doing a lot of top of funnel outreach in terms of advertising. And then they say, OK, I've got my ABM program up and running and that's just not the case for our clients. We encourage to say top of funnel is a great place to start. And yes, marketing is taking the lead in that area. But you need to be thinking all the way through the buyer's journey. What are you doing to then engage your clients? And by the way, engaging them doesn't mean you just keep bringing them back to your website over and over again. There are about twenty five different ways that you can engage clients everywhere, from chat bots to virtual events in the old days, regular events, and those will come back at some point, direct mail gifts that can be sent. I mean, there's so many different ways to engage clients that you need to be thinking across that journey. And even sales enabling sales to be successful with their reach outs can be a very important part of an ABM program. So integrated programs that include both inbound and outbound tactics very, very important. So what do we encourage people to do? Evaluate their dashboards, really work with the marketing operations team to make sure that the demand management is in place and that the ability to report by account is there, or at least that you can begin to build that portfolio marketing, product marketing, solutions, marketing, whoever it is that owns developing your content to make sure that you've got persona based content and buyer's journey based content.

Alisa: You take an inventory of what you've got and where you have gaps, that there's a road map to kind of fill that. And then finally request a content audit. So that's what I was just talking about. You really want to make sure that the content marketing team or maybe its content and portfolio together, whoever it is that owns both short form and

long term, but long form content. So some of it is that going to be that promotional email copy and some of it's frankly going to be your data sheets and your product brochures. All of that should be on the table when you're talking about an ABM program, because you need to be able to take people through that entire buyer's journey, including the deep dives into your product. And that requires a long form content that your product marketers might have to take the lead for. So those are some of the things we talk about with marketing readiness. I'll stop there for a moment. And Rick, I think there might be some thoughts or questions that we want to take on here.

Rick: Yeah. So I think this might be a good a good chance to interrupt for a moment here. I mean, I think. In my experience with sales and marketing, specifically with a lot of our clients and a lot of work we do with Virtual Causeway, we often find sales and marketing pulling in different directions. And I know that we're about to talk about sales readiness next but many times we're acting as these referees between sales and marketing. And we do a lot of the stuff that you mentioned already previously in the marketing on the marketing readiness side, which is working through scoring, working through SLAs and trying to think about the whole buyer's journey and think about the whole process. But how do you see for an ABM program to be successful? How do you see marketing aligning with sales in a way that benefits everyone? I mean, it's great to talk about this, but what are some of those other things that you see that really help to keep sales and marketing aligned?

Alisa: Yeah, I mean, I think it's a combination of there's some very specific things that we give to our clients in terms of processes and documentation and things like that. And I'll talk about a couple of those in a moment. But before you even get to, you know, here's what marketing's role is and here's what sales role is like, all those roles and responsibilities. And I think I mentioned before this idea of an ABM's scoping statement. All of those things improve marketing and sales plummet because it gets everybody on the same page. And what gets written down on paper tends to kind of take on a life of its own. So we encourage clients to do those ABM scoping statements. We encourage them to make sure that they set up time on calendars of key executives who need to be sponsors. So a lot of our marketing clients, when I do my inquiries each week and I work with our clients, will sometimes say, you know, what's the relationship of sales like? And a lot of times people will say, you know, it's fine, it's good. We have a good

working relationship with sales. And then I'll say, well, what are your sales leader? What is his or her three key goals for the year? And they'll say, well, I'm not entirely sure.

Alisa: Well, when was the last time you sat down with that person and talked about what they're trying to accomplish and how you can help them meet their goals? Well, gee, I haven't really talked to that sales leader one on one in quite a while. And so part of it is just the trust and the good old fashioned building of relationships. And there's no document or tool or technology that can help you do that. That's just about really good listening skills. And then sometimes I encourage my clients to have the beginnings of an ABM plan in their back pocket. So if they go and talk to a sales leader, spend the first. If they can get an hour on that person's calendar, take that first half an hour to listen, just listen, ask a lot of questions and then have some plans or some ideas in the back pocket that you can pull out and maybe talk about in that second half an hour and be willing to have a very I don't know if it's a free form conversation, but a very fluid conversation about what you've heard and what you can bring to the table and be willing to change your plans. I think one of the mistakes a lot of our clients make is they put this 15 slides together about what they envision for the ABM program and they go in and try to sell, you know, executives or people they need to have on board on that plan.

Alisa: And so I encourage clients to kind of back up a little and do more of a collaborative conversation and gather inputs and gather ideas. And so that can really improve alignment. And then once you've got those early discussions going and you've got basic buy-in and you've incorporated the ideas of these key functions that you need to be in alignment with, then you start to go into tools and templates and roles and responsibilities and all that kind of stuff that we tend to we have a lot of templates and tools that we give our clients to help with that. But if you go to that too soon, you kind of you can't skip over the trust. You can't skip over the, you know, the listening and the meeting where you are. And I understand what you're trying to accomplish and how will we how this program can kind of fit in. So those are those are some of the things we would talk to clients about.

Rick: I hope you found that segment helpful. I'd be happy to send you the link to the full webinar playback and the related research brief that goes along with it. You can email us at info@v-causeway.com or drop by our [website](#).

And I want to say that while the content of that webinar is really important, it may not be the most important growth strategy for your business right now. At Virtual Causeway, we've identified several B2B growth strategies. So let's schedule some time when we can figure out the One Big Thing that will have the most impact right now in our Strategy Session. With you we'll investigate the sales and marketing challenges you're currently facing, utilizing tools to discover your current customer experience and map these findings to a spectrum of potential growth strategies to identify that One Big Thing that will have the most impact right now. I look forward to arranging a strategy session with you to identify that One Big Thing so you can accomplish all of your growth objectives. You can reach me at **866-211-6549**. Let's talk soon and have a great day.