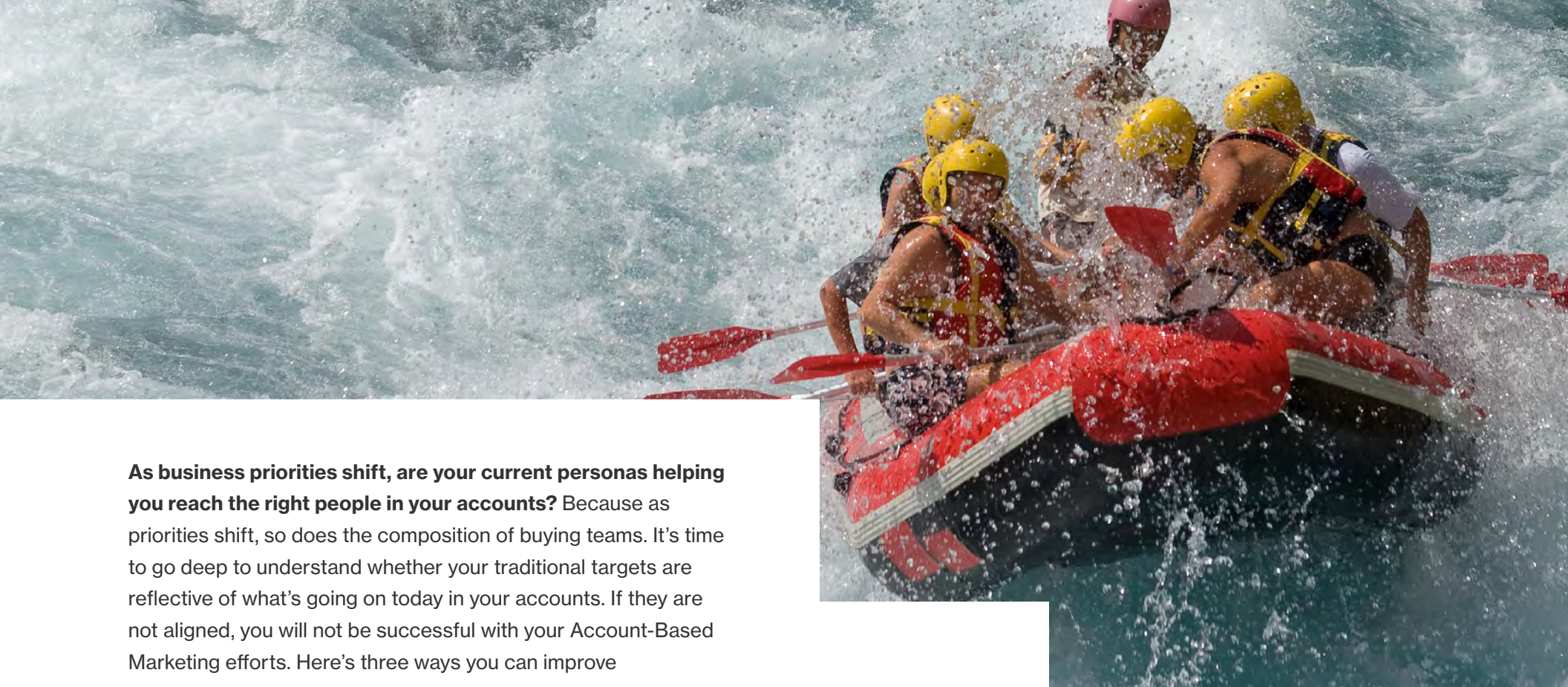




Three Ways Personas Can Improve Your ABM Performance

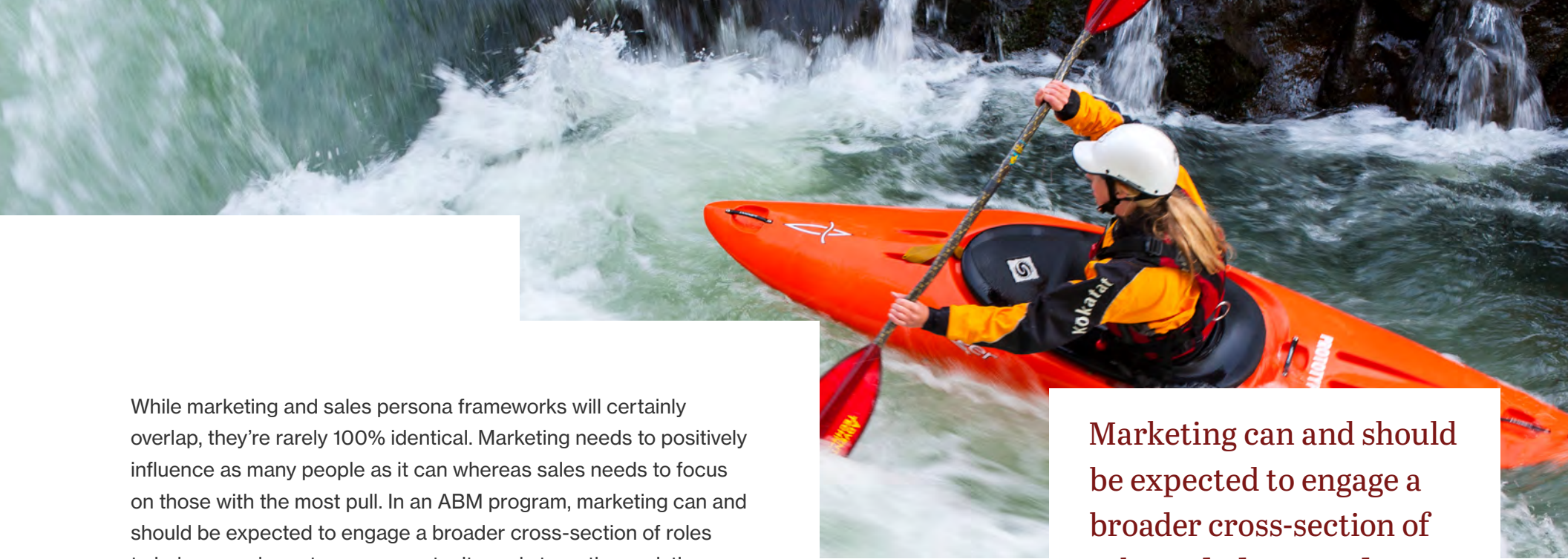


As business priorities shift, are your current personas helping you reach the right people in your accounts? Because as priorities shift, so does the composition of buying teams. It's time to go deep to understand whether your traditional targets are reflective of what's going on today in your accounts. If they are not aligned, you will not be successful with your Account-Based Marketing efforts. Here's three ways you can improve your personas.

Avoid overweighting persona frameworks toward typical titles and targeting

While it's important to leverage institutional learning into the creation of a persona framework, stay cognizant of the fact that the learning embedded in this insight reflects both historical and functional (role-based) preferences and biases. Most deals today

are decided by a business decision-maker (BDM "director or above"), the CFO, the CTO, et al., so why not go after them and only them? It's not that you shouldn't develop relevant content for those personas, but if you limit yourself to them, you're likely missing new personas on today's buying teams who may yield significant influence over the BDM's decision. While you need to influence senior people, targeting them directly is the hardest way in.



While marketing and sales persona frameworks will certainly overlap, they're rarely 100% identical. Marketing needs to positively influence as many people as it can whereas sales needs to focus on those with the most pull. In an ABM program, marketing can and should be expected to engage a broader cross-section of roles to help open doors to new opportunity and strengthen existing footholds alike.

Understand that personas change fast in today's environment. In fact, they might not even exist.

Here are two examples where classic persona thinking can limit marketers' ability to make progress against their company's business objectives:

1. New intersections creating important net-new personas –

As enterprise technology advances, expertise grows more and more specialized. From a persona targeting perspective, for a

time, that seemed to make things a little bit easier for the marketer: if you sold a security product,

you just targeted the security guys. Now, however, organizations have realized that solutions targeting one type of issue can have important implications in other areas. New titles are being created reflecting cross-pollination between areas. To be maximally effective, therefore, a vendor's persona frameworks need to accommodate this new reality and be agile to change them as business conditions change.

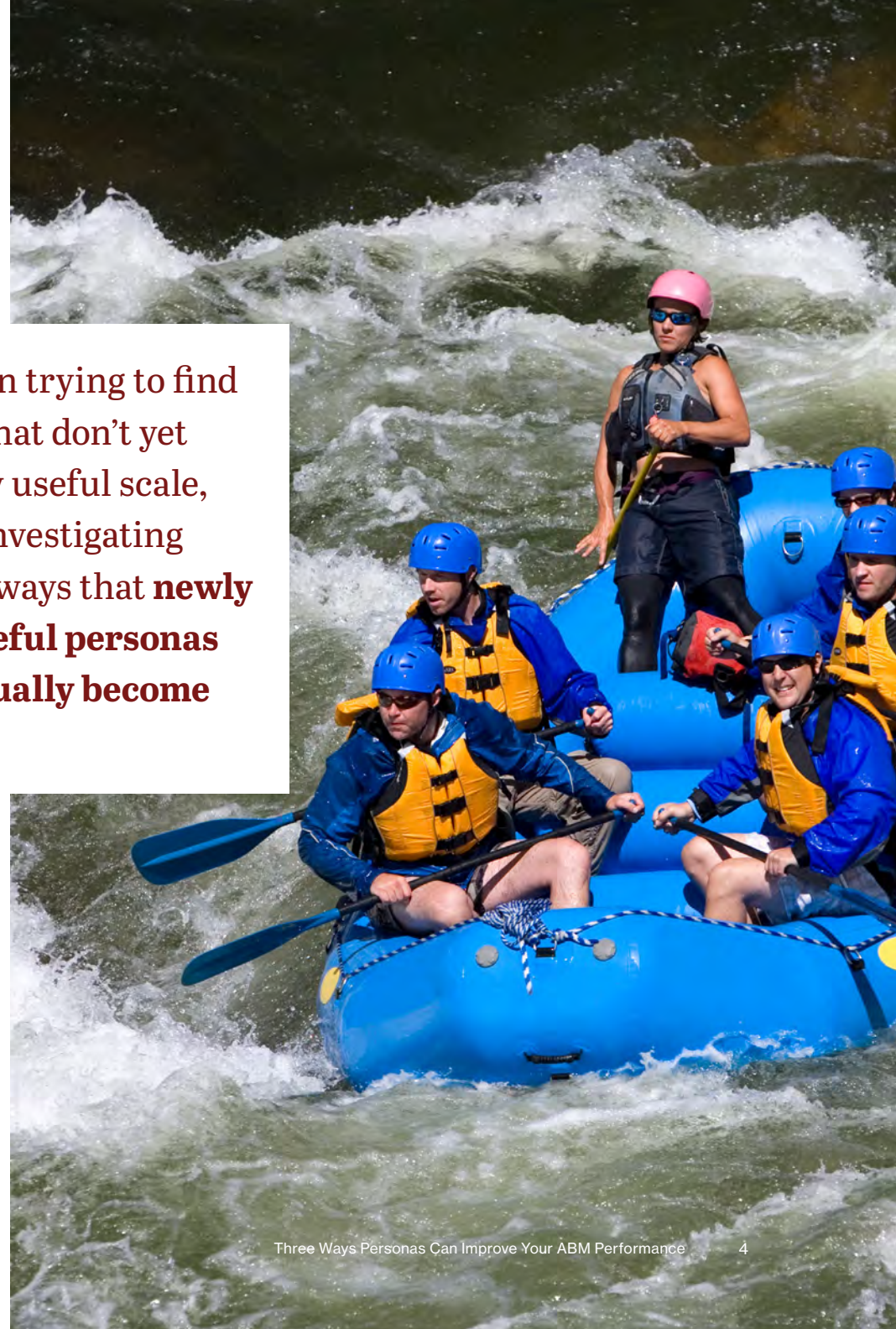
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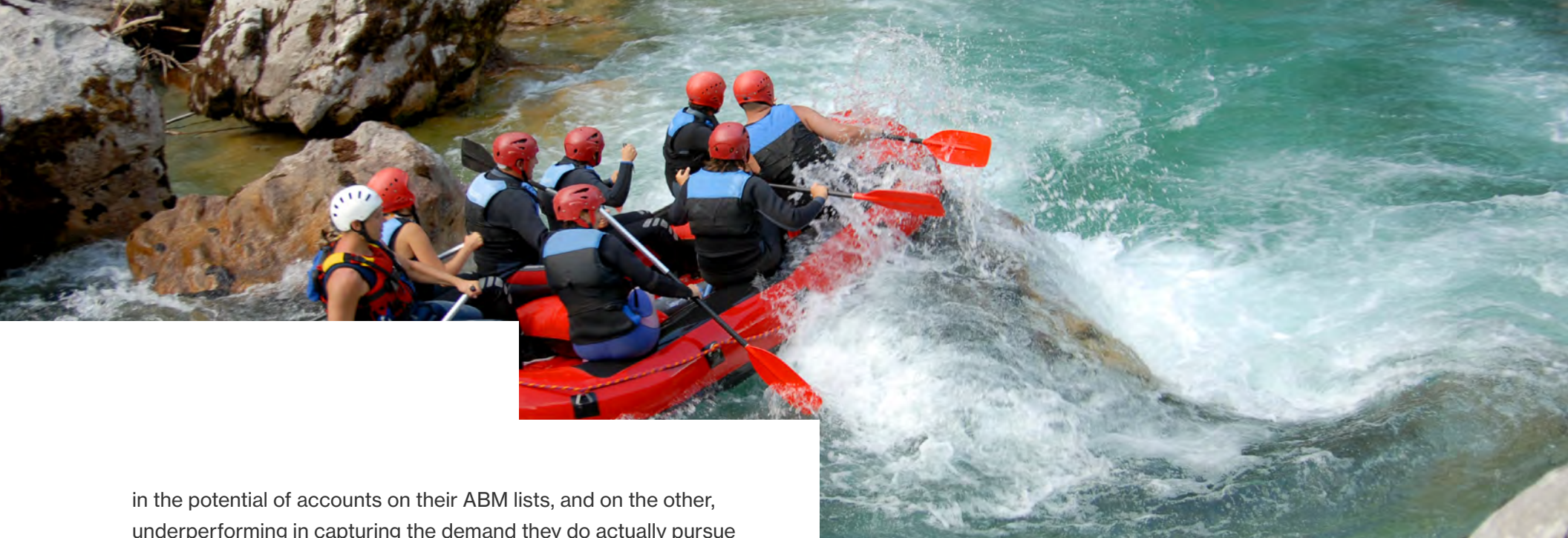
2. Big, exciting ideas in search of fans—When introducing a new concept, persona building beyond the early adopters who sign on with you is rarely successful because it's too early for either the market or the relevant roles to be clearly articulated. Take big ideas like the Internet of Things (IoT) or digital transformation, for example. It's still too early yet to be able to put together a powerful persona framework. Instead, a marketer should be focused on educating markets broadly and evaluating engagement evidence towards establishing a pathway to repeatable, scalable success. Rather than trying to find personas that don't yet exist at any useful scale, it's out of investigating those pathways that newly arising useful personas will eventually become apparent.

People buy, not personas: More effective lead and opportunity management requires insights on real buyers

ABM has shined a spotlight on the continuing challenges most companies face that start with targeting and flow from lead management all the way down the pipeline. It's become more and more obvious that on the one hand, companies are underinvesting

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in the potential of accounts on their ABM lists, and on the other, underperforming in capturing the demand they do actually pursue there. These observations intersect with persona thinking on at least three fronts:

- If all the potential buying centers in an account are not mapped into your CRM, then you have much less chance of influencing and engaging them. This is particularly obvious if you are looking to extend your use cases into new areas within existing accounts.
- And once you've populated all the roles in the CRM, you need to adjust your scoring, your MQL definitions and your lead tracking and follow-up processes so that upstream targeting changes are not undermined elsewhere in your process.
- Furthermore, whenever you're pushing into new areas, there's an even greater need for new insight and learning. This is

exactly where an evolution in your approach to opportunity management—like SiriusDecisions' [Demand Unit Waterfall](#) concept—can deliver tremendous benefits.

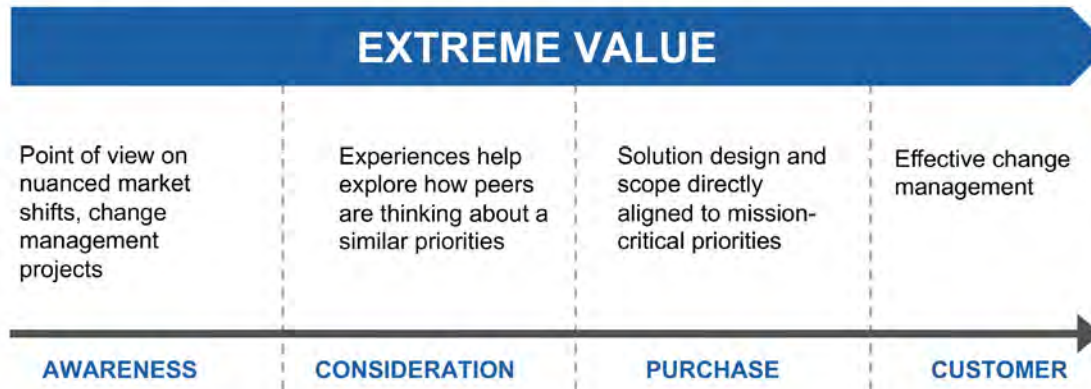
When you look to promote new use cases or an entirely new concept, you can't fairly claim to really understand how opportunities will appear in and move through your pipeline. You must first proactively populate your opportunities with prospective personas and, as you progress, update these with the real people who you are discovering and interacting with. Going forward, it will help grow account penetration, accelerate product ramp times and optimize investments up and down the customer lifecycle management continuum.

Marketing Tactics Must Change to Reflect Extreme Value

Keep in mind that in addition to creating new personas, the current business environment has created a sweeping change in marketing tactics with extreme value becoming a critical differentiator. Offer extreme value at every opportunity to help buyers address mission-critical priorities.

OFFER EXTREME VALUE AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY

Offer insight and experiences to help a buyer address mission-critical priorities; ask for less in return.



Source: Evolving Buyer Messaging and Insights to Provide Extreme Value, TOPO April 2020

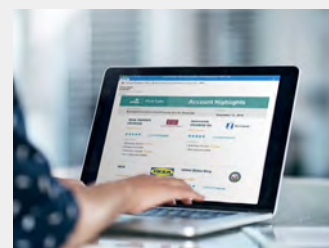
Conclusion

ABM is fundamentally driven by quality, not quantity, especially where many companies have refocused their account priorities.

ABM success requires acknowledging that personas and buying priorities are changing more rapidly than ever before.

This is where purchase intent data can provide real answers. From helping you prioritize accounts based on observed buying signals that reveal a buyer's interests and priorities, to identifying buying team members and personalizing outreach, purchase intent can measurably impact your ABM performance.

Adapted from articles by TechTarget CMO John Steinert, previously published in Marketing Land.



To learn more about how **TechTarget's Priority Engine™** real purchase intent platform

can help you drive more success with Account-Based Marketing, [click here.](#)

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