Growing Sales Revenue Using High-Value Offers for ABM Engagement

Now more than ever, B2B sellers are struggling simply to identify real buyers, not to speak of then pulling them together as a coherent, forward-moving buying team.

So, your sellers probably need help. In this e-book we'll explore how, through a shift in thinking and close collaboration between teams, Sales and Marketing together can develop High-Value Offers (HVO) – a type of deliverable that is significantly different from other asset-based offers – to deliver stronger, more impactful engagement with the accounts that matter most.

TechTarget | **Gartner**

The increasing challenges for virtual sellers

Ever since the Gartner CEB unit released its Challenger Customer research, there's been general agreement that B2B buying decisions are made by collaborative groups. And as this and other studies are updated, it's become evident that the number of people involved in B2B purchase decisions has been consistently increasing. In the latest Gartner survey, that number is up to an average of 11 stakeholders involved – most of whom will never become "leads" in the traditional sense[1] (that is, they won't engage with a vendor's collateral material in a way that is visible in the vendor's own first-party data).

Over the last year, the pandemic pushed sales organizations towards all-virtual interaction – a change that many think will remain in place to a significant degree. Sales organizations are still adapting, so it's no surprise that research highlights these two major challenges: one is simply **getting access to key stakeholders** and the other is **bringing buying groups together**[2] around a coherent solution consideration process. As of right now,

many sales organizations are left doing much of the identification work, and essentially all the related multi-threading, without very much help from marketing. Concepts like account-based marketing (ABM) seem well positioned to add value here, but to date their focus has been elsewhere.

1 Source: *Gartner: Engage B2B Buyers in an Uncertain Environment*
2 Source: *Key Virtual Selling Challenges Sales Enablement Must Solve, February 2021*

Many ABM programs suffer from demand-gen thinking

Account-based marketing can solve these selling challenges, but not if it is constrained by classic demand-gen thinking and the related success measures. This is because while, as Gartner's TOPO team has shown, ABM and demand gen pipeline management processes can be consolidated, their front ends – how marketing should be used in each case – are very different indeed[3]. Whereas demand gen is largely a one-to-many efficiency play measured in terms of individual engagements (qualified leads), ABM is much more focused on overall effectiveness amongst a limited set of accounts. The problem is that, at the end of the day, many ABM programs are still being managed on the basis of marketing-qualified lead- (MQL) based KPIs. Thus, marketers will naturally continue to focus their energies on delivering that output rather than turning their attention to solving the tactical seller problems staring them in the face.

3 Source: *Gartner|TOPO*

Figure 1: ABM ≠ Demand Gen: The objectives are different, so the focus should be too.
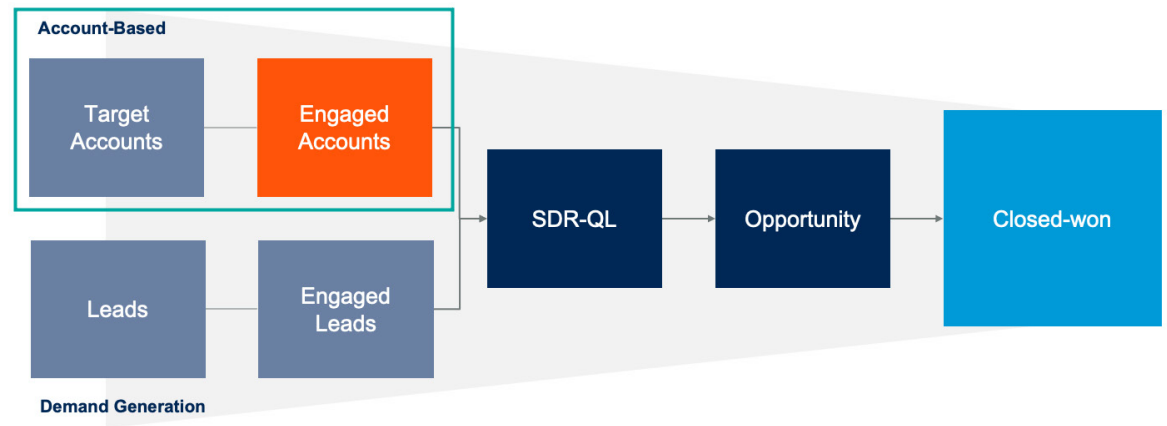
What's wrong with how we're thinking about qualification and engagement in ABM?

Three factors necessary for productive creation of meaningful engagements

So how do you create high-value engagements in a way that will scale? Three factors are essential to achieving strong engagement with members of a buying team in a scalable, economical way.

- **Timing.** Put yourself in front of a team at the right time, so they're open to conversations.

- **Relevance.** Use the right data to ensure the conversations you have align to their challenges and concerns.

- **Business value.** Construct your "presentation" to ensure that the deliverable solves for challenges the team is or will be experiencing.

ABM accounts are pre-qualified, so better "engagement" is the critical goal

In demand gen, leads can come from anywhere across a wide total addressable market (TAM). Thus, lead qualification and disqualification are important components of the approach. In contrast, by definition, all the accounts on an ABM list have been pre-qualified – lead-qualification adds much less value here and may even be a distraction to sales. When an ABM list is created, sales and marketing have agreed to invest more in specific accounts because of their outsized potential. The need for further qualification to guide and trigger sales focus has passed; it's time to work the account. So instead of overweighting on fishing for leads, marketing effort should be applied to helping sales to engage these accounts more comprehensively and productively. Since every account on the ABM list has huge potential, working harder on really getting into the account – creating and developing relationships and so on – now makes better sense than does generating a handful of disparate leads from a few accounts on the list. Now, even a stretch volume goal of 100% engagement with the accounts is simply a milestone in the longer-term process of getting more revenue out of them. To achieve this revenue, marketing and sales must together figure out how to better create the type of quality engagements that will yield more opportunities and higher close rates. These are the real measures of ABM effectiveness.

Real purchase intent data supports relevant ABM engagement

TechTarget's real purchase intent data delivers the critical insights into timing and relevance necessary to achieving high-value ABM engagement.

In this "account view" example from our Priority Engine™ Intent Data Platform, you're looking at E*TRADE from the perspective of a cybersecurity vendor's (our client) ABM list.

Whereas a classic demand gen approach might be to use marketing tactics to "nurture" these people towards qualifying some of them as "leads," in this ABM situation, the team should move directly to the next step of working to engage this team as a coherent opportunity in progress.

Figure 2: Behavior-ranked buying team members

Priority Engine is displaying a buying group of 19 people available to sales, none of whom are yet present in the client's CRM. These contacts need to get into the account executive's (AE) account record immediately to track and accelerate the multi-threading process.

E-Trade Financial Corp.

1. Buying Team — 19 Prospect(s) — 19 of which are new to you
PROSPECT

	PROSPECT HIGHLIGHTS	PROSPECT DETAILS
Bill Lake Vice President	★★★★★ Downloaded Your Content	CRM Status: **In your CRM** bill.lake@etrade.com 355-555-4367
Gina Davis in Security IT Engineer	★★★★★ Active on Your Entry Points Actively Researching	CRM Status: **NEW TO YOU** gina.davis@etrade.com 441-555-8696
Alaina Dixon Data Manager	★★★★★ Active on Your Entry Points Actively Researching	CRM Status: **NEW TO YOU** alaina.dixon@etrade.com 441-555-8696
Chris Henderson Information Analyst	★★★★☆ Active on Your Entry Points	CRM Status: **In your CRM** chris.henderson@etrade.com

Each individual has been scored and ranked in order of their demand intensity, so the AE now knows exactly who has the most pressing needs.

Additional organizational barriers to ABM buying group engagement

While sales and marketing have gone to great lengths to map out their ABM programs (Figure 3), documentation won't necessarily lead to integrated delivery, especially if the two organizations remain operationally siloed. Powering these efforts from the same dynamic intent data source can ensure that targeting and messaging are tied together based on shared understanding of proper timing and topical relevance.

Figure 3: Typical tactical programming still doesn't bring the buying team together.
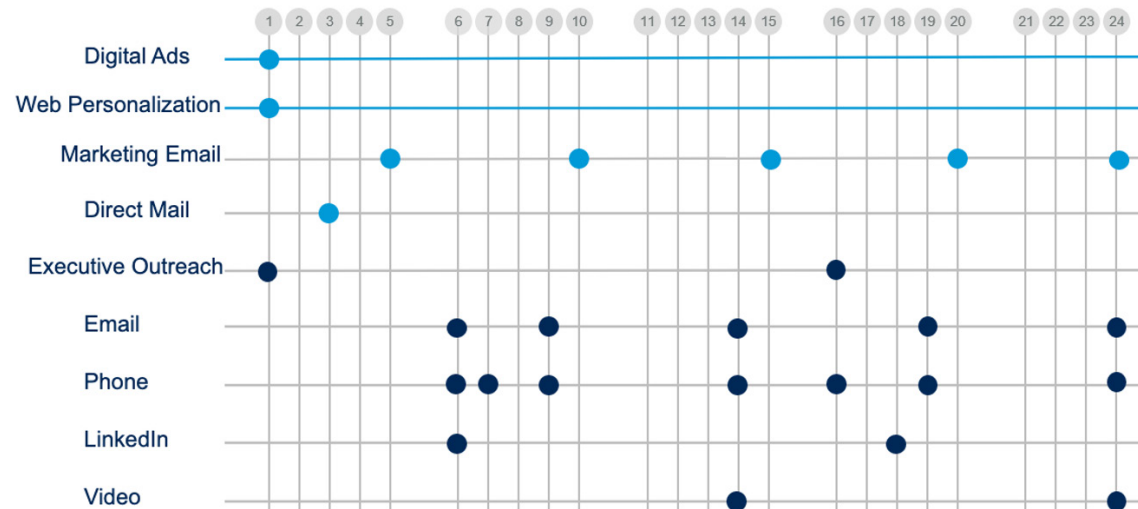
Teams that can use intent data to unify their ABM tactics around timing and relevance will deliver better experiences for targeted buying teams and better conversion for themselves. Then they need to add in HVOs

But the more vexing problem here is that since these tactics were conceived out of demand-gen thinking, they don't help much with the salesperson's challenge of bringing buying groups together. To turn an ABM program into a highly focused way of helping AEs grow account engagement, these threads need to be both more tightly knit together based on data and then augmented with High-Value Offer (HVO) tactics.

Figure 4: When added to ABM programs, High-Value Offers can pull together buying teams.

Demand Gen Offer %

- Market trends report is emailed to any contact who completes the landing page form.

- Account executives (AEs) email and call any lead that downloaded the market trends data.

Based on strong purchase intent signals

High Value Offer %

- Report is customized based on company's publicly available information on market and solution focus.

- To book a 30-minute review of the findings, key takeaways are summarized and communicated via email, phone and LinkedIn.

- In 30-minute review with AE and subject matter expert to explain key market opportunities based on insight into buyer's needs/purchase drivers.

The urgency for adding a high-engagement solution

If sales teams fail to engage real demand successfully, revenue will be lost. Given that all the accounts on the ABM list are considered especially high-value, it behooves any ABM team to take proactive action when the account exhibits buyer's journey behaviors as indicated by the data. If teams do not take advantage of these signals, they're letting a real chance – at engaging more productively – pass them by. Teams that can use intent signals to trigger delivery of a High-Value Offer can create engagement that will protect and grow opportunities in their favor.

Signals that you should use a High-Value Offer to engage more aggressively:
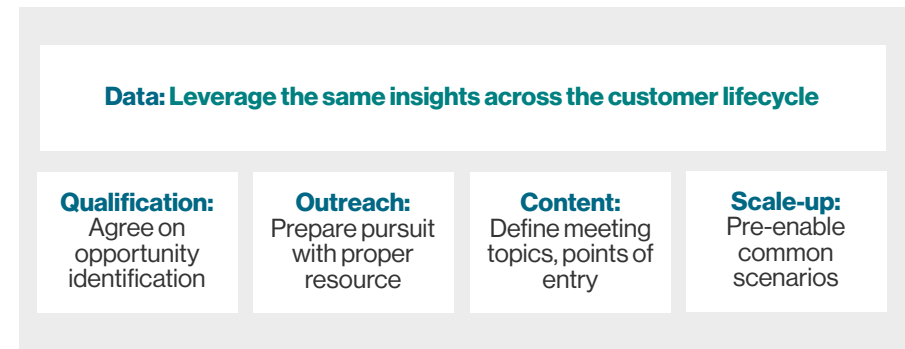
- If there is an **active buyer's journey.**

- If there are **multiple identifiable team members.**

- If there is a **clear need.**

- If the account is looking at **relevant competition.**

- If the account's interests **intersect** with your solution's strengths.

A more effective way to drive buying team engagement requires changes

To gain coherent engagement with a buying group, an ABM team needs to deliver a lot of value in a format that forces people together – thus an HVO usually involves a meeting. But while there may be indication of a potential deal taking shape, this meeting is about opening, not closing. Since the last thing you want to happen is to spook the target account, closing efforts really should be taken off the table as a matter of principle. That flies in the face of an "always be closing" mindset, so it makes sense that creating this type of meeting has eluded a lot of sales teams for cultural reasons. And while field marketing may be used to field customer events, the content needed here is quite different. The fact is that ABM HVO creation isn't currently part of any given team's job. Creating a sustainable HVO capability requires new work that crosses marketing, sales development, account executives and their management alike. It's a set of requirements that management will need to collaborate on continuously to fulfill effectively. Marketing can take a leadership role in initial pilots, building out the HVO framework and content necessary to scale the approach. Sales and Sales Development needs to modify their motions to properly offer up and deliver a new kind of meeting. And Sales Enablement must take on the task of customizing the core content (that Marketing initiates) to each particular session.

Establish a new type of meeting as a key ABM content type.

Figure 5: High-level Framework for Establishing an HVO Creation and Delivery Capability

Data: Leverage the same insights across the customer lifecycle			
Qualification: Agree on opportunity identification	**Outreach:** Prepare pursuit with proper resource	**Content:** Define meeting topics, points of entry	**Scale-up:** Pre-enable common scenarios

Purchase intent data highlights the need to pursue ABM engagement more effectively

Taking another look at E*TRADE from within TechTarget's Priority Engine™ Intent Data Platform, (at numbers 3 and 4) we've now drilled into the account to look at two of the top-ranked active prospects on the E*TRADE buying team. We're setting the scene for how an AE can identify and pursue key stakeholders and then bring them together with a High-Value Offer. In this scenario you have multiple identifiable members of the buying team and their interests intersect (at the "Entry Points") with the client's solution strengths. There's an urgent opportunity to act and engage these buyers. This is exactly where new thinking about engagement really comes into play.

Figure 6: Priority Engine helps identify multiple members of the buying team.
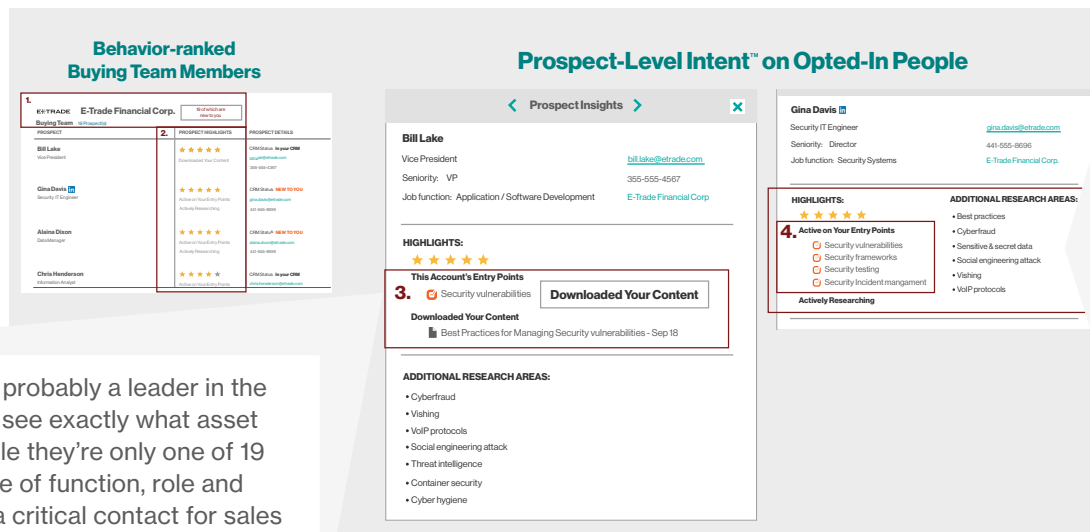
Here is a prospect that's probably a leader in the buying process. You can see exactly what asset they've downloaded. While they're only one of 19 people involved, by nature of function, role and behavior, they're clearly a critical contact for sales to pursue. **They certainly should also be included in High-Value Offer targeting.**

The second individual is a prospect who hasn't engaged with the cybersecurity vendor. Maybe sales won't be able to engage them individually, but because they are engaging with TechTarget editorial content on the Entry Points – the intersection of the buyers' interests and the cybersecurity vendor's strengths – they're likely a member of this developing buying group. **This person is an ideal target to bring together with others in the identified buying team around a High-Value Offer.**

Four useful High-Value Offer types for group engagement

There are four categories of effective HVOs that we see most often. While the over-arching concept for the meeting being presented differs, they all share a focus on value to delivery to the prospect team. As you work to enable your HVO capability, choose one or two of these categories as a framework to pilot in your organization based on what type of meeting you can most easily deliver well.

Figure 7: Creating an HVO: Understanding buying team activity is essential for maximum value delivery.

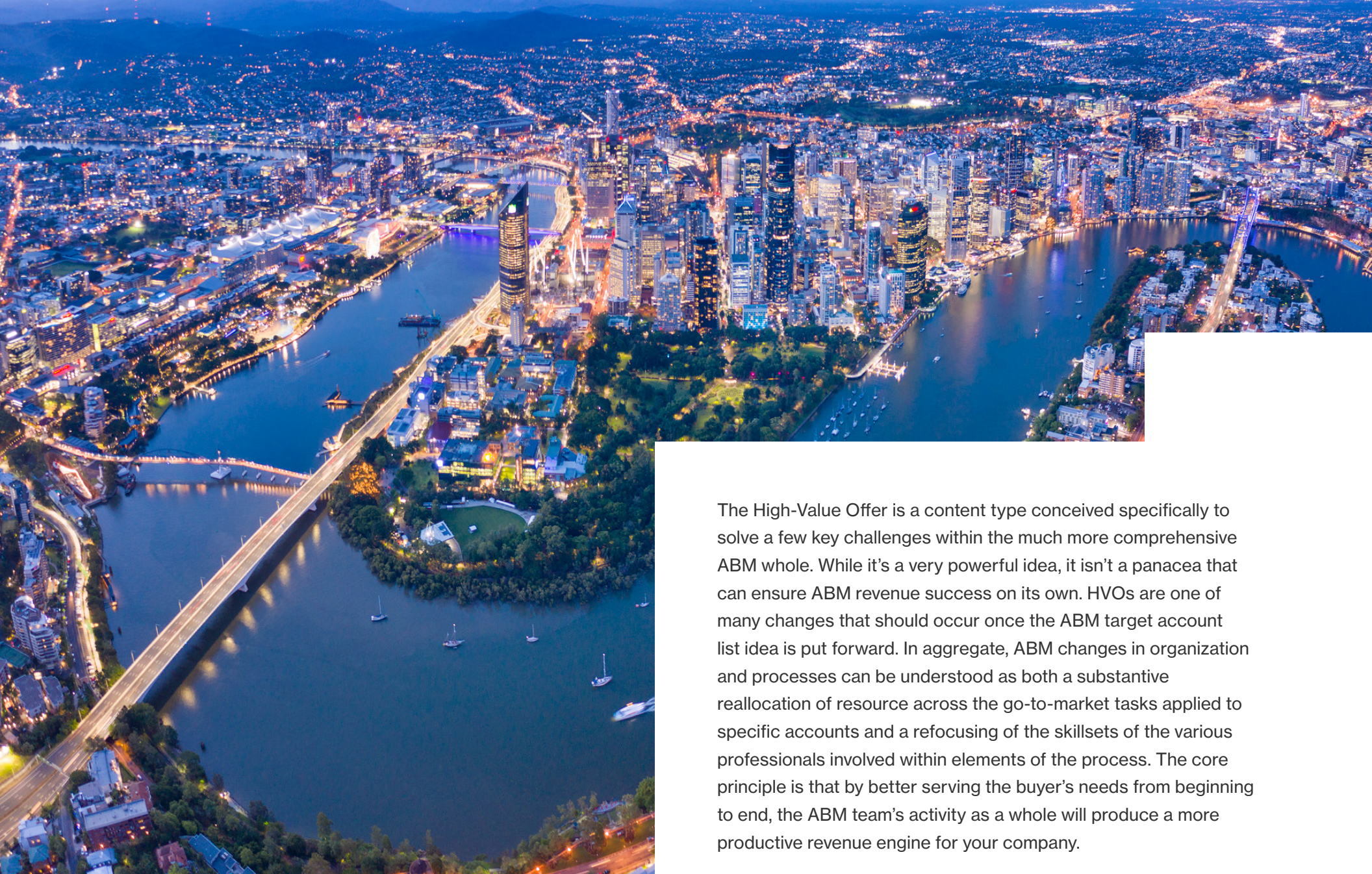| Market trends, data and vision	Collaborative planning	Customized experiences	Peer experiences
Inform or challenge a buyer **in a live session** covering the latest market vision, proprietary or third-party data and analysis.	**Deliver a session that** solves buyer challenges using a clear point of view and a collaborative plan of action.	Customize existing content – e-books, slides, whitepapers – to address known buyer challenges **for in-person discussion.**	**Meet virtually** to share similar situation use cases from industry peers with similar challenges, processes, tactics and tools.

Source: *Gartner*

Long-term ABM Evolution: Sales and marketing working more seamlessly everywhere

Some years ago, the ITSMA first conceptualized account-based marketing as a better way for B2B organizations to go about pursuing revenue improvement from a set of target accounts. They documented a framework of ideas and put forward substantial guidance on how companies could pilot it. No one could have predicted how strongly ABM would resonate with the marketing community. In the ensuing years, ABM has been implemented in a wide variety of forms with varied success. While ITSMA assumed sales and marketing partnership from the start, in practice, the vast majority of implementers have over-weighted marketing and under-involved their sales counterparts in the effort.

Figure 8: Seamless ABM Collaboration: Expanded roles and responsibilities for all teams

IDENTIFY ← ⋯⋯⋯⋯⋯⋯⋯⋯⋯⋯⋯⋯ → CLOSE

Account-based Marketing teams

Marketing complements sales efforts with supporting tactics, content and tools to provide a better buyer experience and demonstration of value in every touchpoint to accelerate deals.

SALES expands to the left (including XDRs, AEs, Sales Enablement and SOPs)

MARKETING extends to the right (including portfolio, demand and field roles)

Account-based Sales teams

Leaders of account-based sales are deeply aligned with Marketing, starting from account selection. They focus on driving productive, relationship-strengthening engagement with target accounts as quickly and as often as possible.

Source: *Gartner: 3 Pillars of Successful Account-Based Strategy*

The High-Value Offer is a content type conceived specifically to solve a few key challenges within the much more comprehensive ABM whole. While it's a very powerful idea, it isn't a panacea that can ensure ABM revenue success on its own. HVOs are one of many changes that should occur once the ABM target account list idea is put forward. In aggregate, ABM changes in organization and processes can be understood as both a substantive reallocation of resource across the go-to-market tasks applied to specific accounts and a refocusing of the skillsets of the various professionals involved within elements of the process. The core principle is that by better serving the buyer's needs from beginning to end, the ABM team's activity as a whole will produce a more productive revenue engine for your company.

About TechTarget

TechTarget (Nasdaq: TTGT) is the global leader in purchase intent-driven marketing and sales services that deliver business impact for enterprise technology companies. By creating abundant, high-quality editorial content across more than 140 highly targeted technology-specific websites, TechTarget attracts and nurtures communities of technology buyers researching their companies' information technology needs. By understanding these buyers' content consumption behaviors, TechTarget creates the purchase intent insights that fuel efficient and effective marketing and sales activities for clients around the world.

TechTarget has offices in Boston, London, Munich, Paris, San Francisco, Singapore and Sydney.

For more information, visit techtarget.com and follow us on Twitter @TechTarget.

TechTarget