We all know the story: the golden solution that aligns sales and marketing to fight for a common goal. Analytics and clever martech allow tailored, targeted campaigns to key accounts at scale, and mean that marketing can support sales in ways that were never possible before.

But businesses have learnt that it’s not quite as simple as that. Because truly effective ABM relies on something that historically B2B companies have been poor at: humanizing their marketing and leading with story. When you’re talking in a highly personalised, direct way, it’s even more important to be clear why prospects should buy into you, and not just from you.

The impact of the pandemic means businesses are looking for transparency on values as well as value from their partners and suppliers – and with the economic slowdown making it tougher to achieve growth, it’s more crucial than ever to fit effective ABM into your marketing mix.

Many companies have struggled to define what ABM means in the context of their business models, and how it should be applied by region, product category, and customer segment. Our framework helps organisations to implement truly effective ABM programmes that address their business challenges, by combining an insight-first approach with personalised, emotionally engaging storytelling.

Storytelling acts as the “wrapper” for your proposition, allowing you to organise your content and align your messaging across every touchpoint. Inconsistency of message destroys trust and credibility. Conversely, when absolutely everyone who influences customers’ perception of your brand – from marketing, leadership, sales, support and even operations – is aligned behind a clear, differentiated narrative, that’s when results skyrocket: a phenomenon we call Storynomics.

At Rooster Punk, we’ve learnt a lot about what insight-first storytelling techniques can do to supercharge ABM. So with that in mind, here are our 10 new rules of account based marketing:
1. Think long term: It is important to move away from looking at the performance of a single campaign, the quantity of ‘MQLs’ generated, and the amount of ‘reach’, to the quality of engagement, growth in opportunities, increase in revenues, and the enablement of success aligned with strategic plans with key accounts over time. The marketing plan should support the (5+ year) business plan, not just the quarterly sales target. And constantly test and optimise the strategy!

2. Work together: Marketing, sales and customer services must work together and tell a consistent, yet personalised message. Our approach of Insights, Nurture and Results links these teams to align the message so they resonate with every part of the buyer’s journey. Phase 1 research & insights (marketing), Phase 2 nurture (sales) and Phase 3 results and optimisations (service).

3. Use Storytelling: This allows everyone, every step of the way, to emotionally engage with the customer. Humanising your message, engaging empathetically, builds trust and loyalty way beyond just transactional buying relationships. Understanding their challenges, professionally and personally, allows you to communicate a story that reflects a desire to not just sell to them, but to support them to succeed in their goals.

4. Leverage social listening: It allows you to know what is relevant to your audience, what they are talking about, and what their concerns are – at a macro level within their industry and a micro level within their organisation. This allows content to be relevant and speak their language, telling a story that will resonate and therefore engage them emotionally.

5. Use intent data: This ensures that quality of engagement is maximised with relevant qualified leads, and you understand the right content needed to enable growth in opportunities realised by tapping into ‘dark’ funnels, ultimately leading to tangible increases in sales by targeting only the most engaged audiences.

6. Invest up front: Planning and organising your campaign, strategy and content allows you to align departments; money spent on research and insights provides valuable information that will determine the success of the campaign and maximise ROI.

7. Define a content strategy: Combining all the insights, the personal profiles and the social listening allows you to create a bespoke content strategy with target campaigns that will deliver a higher ROI, across departments, with longer lasting relationships.

8. Map accounts: Personalised profiles and human intelligence allow for detailed account mapping. By understanding the account and key profiles within it, you can design a customised, bespoke, human approach under a single organising story – consistently building a proposition’s momentum across multiple prospects within an organisation.

9. Think globally: ABM targeted at international organisations demands a global viewpoint. Collaboration through the regions and divisions within your organisation requires effort, but using budget to deliver long-term relationships dramatically increases ROI.

10. Use personal branding: Supercharge your sales teams’ effectiveness and align with the organising story by building a personal branding strategy into your ABM. Often overlooked, this is a real opportunity to provide value to sales and uplift results through existing channels and new ones such as social selling.

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