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A roadmap for Generative AI in ABM

Jaspreet Bindra and Bev Burgess

Artificial Intelligence has been helping and empowering marketers for many years with its ability to predict and forecast buyer behaviour, but Generative AI (GenAI) has the potential to change the game. While it is early days for GenAI, it has already started showing great promise in a few industries and functions — and marketing is one of them. GenAI and Large Language Models (LLMs), as the names suggest, are creative and cognitive technologies that help ideation, messaging, text and visual content creation and personalisation, which are traditionally the core competencies of marketers.

Adoption of AI in ABM to date

One specific area of B2B marketing that has already benefited enormously from the application of AI, and which could be further enhanced with the support of GenAI, is account-based marketing. Defined as ‘treating individual accounts as markets in their own right’*, the power of account-based marketing (ABM) lies in the development and personalisation of propositions, content and experiences for individual stakeholders in key accounts, based on a deep understanding of their specific context.

ABM has created a conundrum for B2B companies. It is a resource-intensive exercise, and a change to the typical approach to marketing investment decisions, which are usually concerned with minimising costs and headcounts as part of an organisation’s sales, general and administrative overheads. And yet it delivers the highest ROI of any B2B marketing approach, and so businesses predictably want to scale it across more accounts — but without adding more resource.

ABM platforms have emerged to model propensity to buy and actual buying signals from key stakeholders and serve up digital content through their buying journey in an attempt to help scale ABM. These tools have been largely adopted by ABM-ers, but they aren’t enough. They can’t provide a 360 view of the customer, don’t allow for deep personalisation, nor deliver offline or in-person experiences. Yet.

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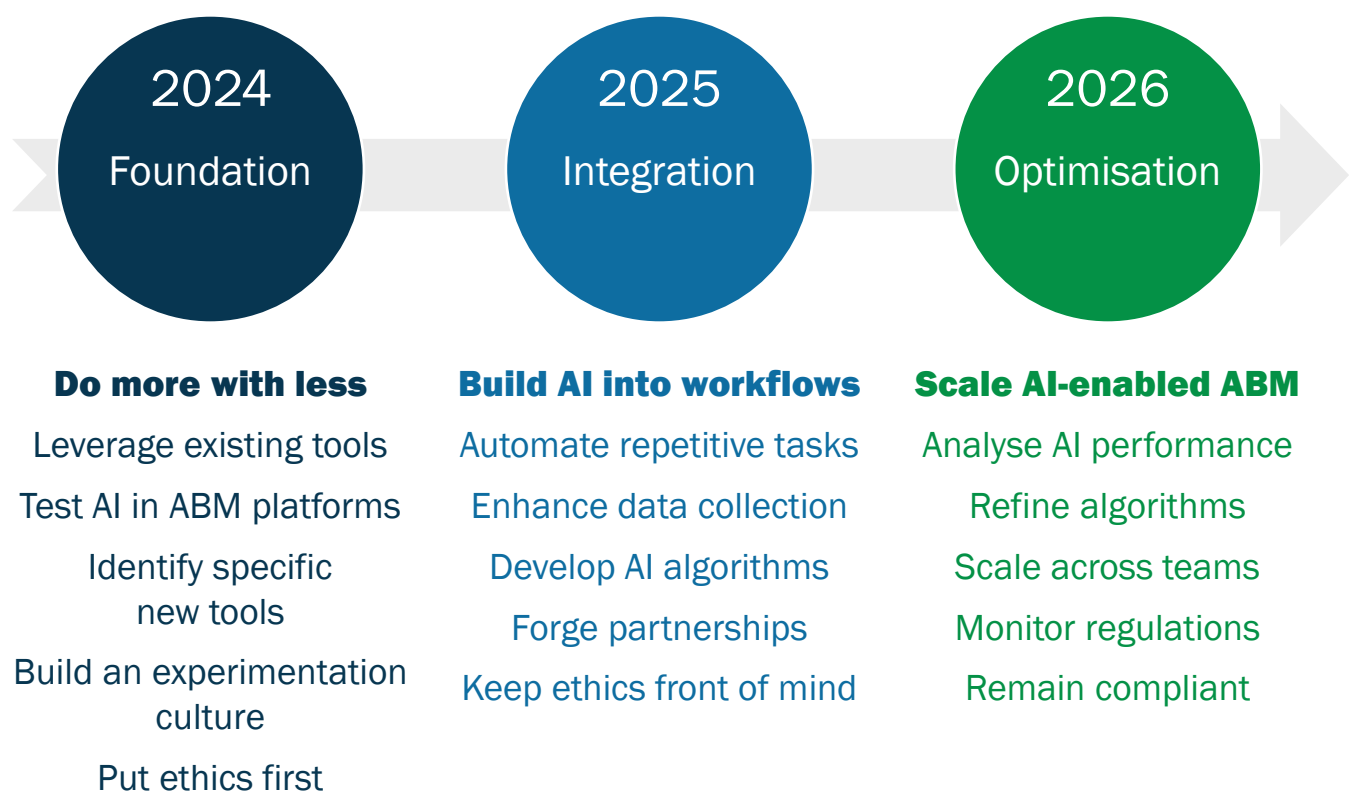


*Source: *A Practitioner’s Guide to Account-Based Marketing*, 2nd Edition (Kogan Page 2021), p. 3.

The art of the possible

We're used to thinking about technology in terms of a roadmap, and this is a useful way to consider how to harness the power of GenAI in ABM. Looking at a three-year time horizon (Figure 1), the first year's focus will be on laying down the foundational elements for GenAI to do more with less. The second year moves on to integrating GenAI technologies into ABM workflows and strategies, then the third year focuses on optimising AI-enabled ABM initiatives and scaling implementation across all customer-facing teams.

Figure 1. A three-year roadmap for AI in ABM

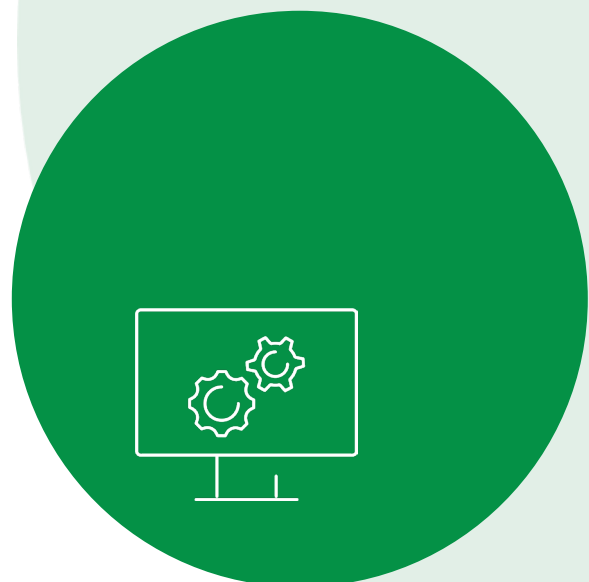


2024: Doing more with less

Let's explore how you can use GenAI in 2024 to enhance the productivity of your ABM team. Here are five areas to consider.

1 Do more with the software and tools that you already have.

Almost every large tech company has started integrating GenAI into its products, most of which B2B marketers and ABM-ers will already be using. For example, Microsoft has developed a range of Copilots that allow you to do very creative and productive work with existing 365 products like Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. Adobe has also been very proactive, and has introduced several products; one of them, Firefly, builds on top of Photoshop and can let every member of your team try their hand at graphic design. Similarly, Salesforce has launched a number of GenAI products, including Einstein GPT. A GenAI for CRM, this can help create hyper-personalised content across the Salesforce cloud, potentially making your ABM team more productive. Oracle and SAP also have GenAI layers on top of their existing offerings promising to make us more productive, creative and efficient marketers. Even Zoom or Teams offer to summarise your online meeting and automatically minute the issues and action points discussed.





ABM teams can efficiently create personalised, targeted, and on-brand email campaigns that engage customers and prospects

2 Test and shape GenAI tools in your ABM platform.

Many ABM teams are leveraging ABM platforms such as 6Sense, Demandbase, and Terminus in their programme, and each of these vendors has its own roadmap for building GenAI functionality into their products. For example, 6Sense launched its AI Writer functionality in June 2023, so that ABM teams can efficiently create personalised, targeted, and on-brand email campaigns that engage customers and prospects. At the same time, Demandbase One™ was launched to use GenAI to analyse millions of data points, drawing from more than 150M B2B contacts combined with advertising, intent and engagement data to generate dynamic B2B buying groups, assign roles and personas, and recommend new contacts. It also aggregates buying signals across the group and streamlines engagement, saving ABM-ers hours of manual research and guesswork.

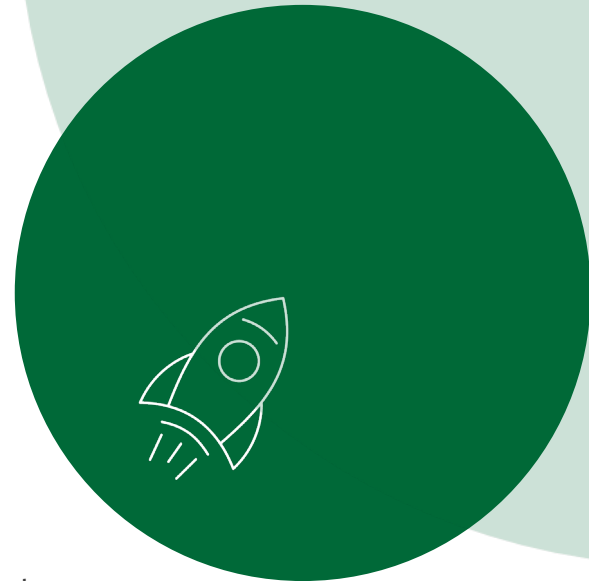




you can embrace this innovation by tracking and experimenting with some of the tools that allow you do both more and better work with your existing resource

3 Pilot new tools.

GenAI has unleashed a tidal wave of innovation, with both large companies and start ups launching great new tools every day. Marketing is a particular focus of this activity, and you can embrace this innovation by tracking and experimenting with some of the tools that allow you do both more and better work with your existing resources. Jasper.ai, for instance, excels at generating various types of marketing copy, including blog posts, email subject lines, website copy and advertising copy. Surfer SEO helps optimise your content for search engines (SEO) and analyses top-ranking content to provide data-driven recommendations on keywords, content structure and other factors that influence search visibility. MarketMuse is a GenAI-powered content analysis and strategy platform that evaluates your website against competitors to identify gaps and opportunities. Albert.ai automates and optimises digital advertising campaigns across various platforms like Google and Facebook and can analyse large amounts of data to refine targeting and advertising performance. Beautiful.ai and Gamma.ai, among many others, can help you make pitches and presentations more powerful, with the tool helping you not only with the design, but also with the content.





leaders need to encourage experimentation and risk-taking, data-driven decision making, and collaborating with technology colleagues to learn more

4 Learn to co-work with GenAI.

There is a lot happening in the GenAI world. Besides the hundreds of tools launching every week, there are now more than two million GPTs available on the ChatGPT store, which also offer to help us work and live better. As a leader, your most important job is to build an 'AI culture.' As with all things cultural, this is difficult to define exactly, but it involves instilling a healthy curiosity in your team to explore new innovations and learn continuously from them. Leaders need to encourage experimentation and risk-taking, data-driven decision making, and collaborating with technology colleagues to learn more. The biggest part of this cultural shift is to learn to work with AI, almost as if it were a co-worker, not fear that it would take or replace your job. AI will not replace us a marketer, but another marketer using AI could.



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as responsible marketers, we need to be careful of ethical conundrums around plagiarism and copyright issues, and data protection and security must remain paramount

5 Keep the ethics in mind.

As we embrace GenAI and experiment, a core part of the cultural shift is to use it in the right way. Every powerful technology comes with its problems and ethical issues and GenAI is no different in this respect. As responsible marketers, we need to be careful of ethical conundrums around plagiarism and copyright issues, and data protection and security must remain paramount. AI hallucinations (where an AI model generates incorrect information but presents it as if it were a fact) or deepfakes (AI-generated media that appear to be of real people saying or doing things they never said or did) could adversely impact our brand. And the environmental footprints that these LLMs have challenge our sustainability goals. Large tech providers, including Microsoft and Google, are building offerings that protect your data and have offered to indemnify their customers against copyright infringement risk. Most countries are racing to frame regulation around these issues, including the EU with their EU AI Act. At the same time, companies are putting together frameworks around responsible, safe and ethical AI usage for their people. As leaders, we need to make sure that we are aware of the ethical issues and work within these frameworks as they evolve.



Get started with GenAI

There's no doubt AI continues to evolve at pace, and GenAI tools offer ABM-ers the opportunity to do more with less, solving the conundrum of how to scale their programmes across more accounts without adding significantly more resource.

So, it's time to get started on your own GenAI journey. Use our guidelines for 2024 to help you plan your first steps if you're not already underway. Or use them as a check and balance for your own initiatives this year if you're already experimenting.

This is a fast-moving picture, so be ready to review the landscape and adjust your plans at least quarterly. If you would like our help in building out your plans and staying up to date, please get in touch.

About the authors

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About Inflexion Group

Inflexion Group was founded in March 2021 by Tim Shercliff, Bev Burgess and Louise Jefferson bringing together over 100 years of marketing, sales, operational management and consulting experience between them.

Like the rest of the Inflexion Group team, they are all practitioners. The team has run marketing, sales and services at Accenture, BDO, Cognizant, CSC, Deloitte, DXC, Fujitsu, HP, HPE, IBM, Microsoft, Micro Focus, NCC Group, Oracle, Sopra Steria, Salesforce, Telstra, Virgin Media O2 and Vodafone, driving growth and aligning sales and marketing.

We help companies choose the right accounts, get aligned internally to focus on them, and engage with them through orchestrated account management, ABM, customer success and executive engagement programmes.

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