



Collaborative ABM as a Business Accelerator: Google Cloud Gets Close to Sales and the Customer to Win Big

Robert Hollier

Partner,
Momentum ITSMA

Alice Clarke

Head of Strategic Accounts
Marketing, Google Cloud,
EMEA

Google Cloud revamped its ABM approach to become a trusted partner in a customer's digital transformation journey and elevated its reputation as a strategic partner within the pharmaceutical industry – in just six months!



Reproduction or disclosure in whole or in part to other parties shall be made only upon the express written consent of Momentum ITSMA. CS230309 © 2023 Momentum ITSMA—Reproduction Prohibited.

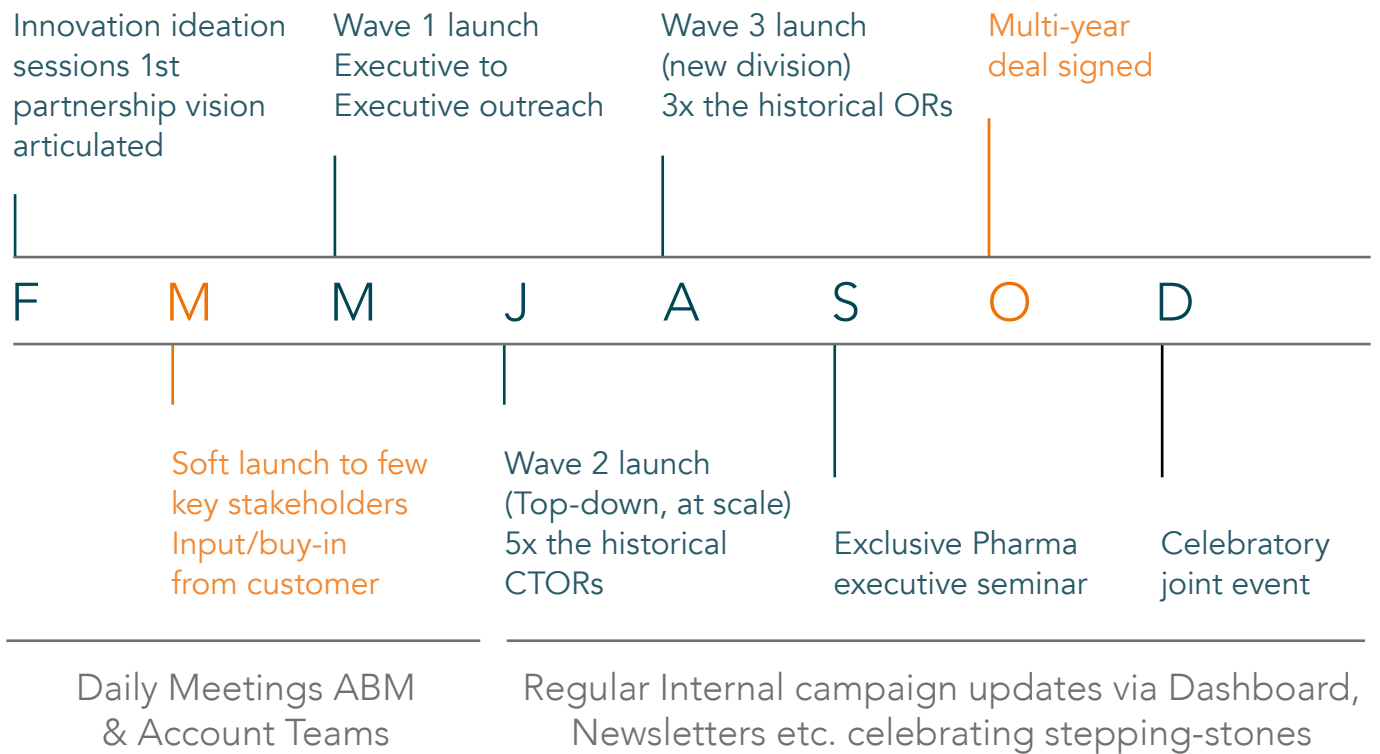
In 2022 Google Cloud made a strategic decision about its Account-Based Marketing (ABM) program to focus on deepening relationships with existing customers, this initiative was positioned as a pilot ABM team.

One of the first accounts in the pilot was a pharmaceutical company with which Google Cloud already had a relationship. The opportunity turned out to be significant, as the customer sought a digital transformation partner, not just a solutions provider.

The challenge was twofold: persuade the customer that Google Cloud was more than a vendor and could be a long-term business partner and do this within 6 months to help secure a strategic deal before year end.

Key takeaways:

- Working side by side with the customer allowed for deeper insights and connections and early customer buy-in to the vision for a transformational partnership
- 2-step stakeholder engagement strategy, first with Executive levels, then top-down to broader teams ensured Google Cloud's message was timed and aligned to the customer's own internal communication
- Partnership within Google Cloud, with dedicated and consistent collaboration between sales and marketing helped build trust and accelerated adoption of and adherence to the ABM process
- Executive-to-executive communications showed Google Cloud's commitment to the customer, leading to strong positive responses
- Establishing relationships with multiple agencies reinforced the ABM lead as Account CMO and ensured the customer received high-quality content
- Education and celebration of stepping stones along the ABM journey connected the dots for the account team and sustained internal support for the long haul of an ABM program



Partnering starts with collaboration

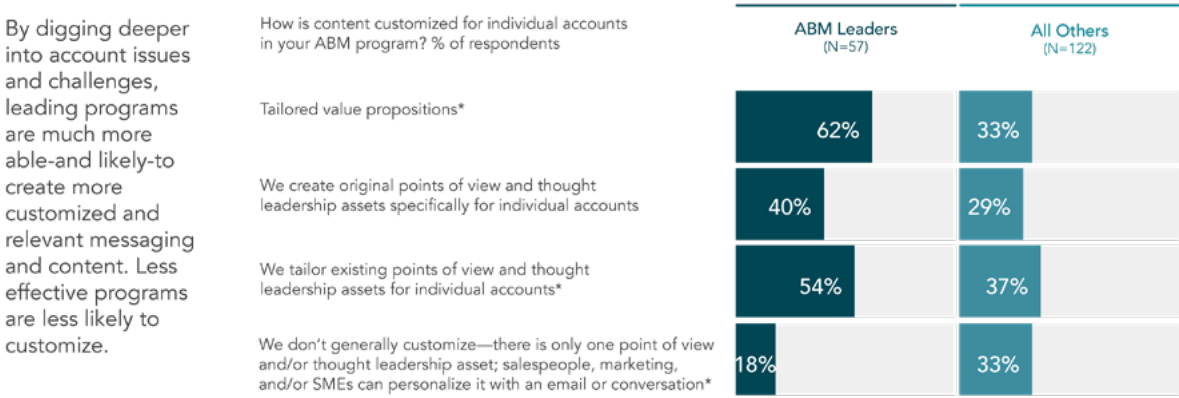
The customer was seeking a partner that could anticipate future challenges and opportunities and help them accelerate their go-to-market strategies with innovative ideas and support earlier in the process.

Once the opportunity was identified, Alice Clarke, Head of Strategic Accounts Marketing for Google Cloud in EMEA, and her ABM team got to work. Clarke knew that the success of her team — and the customer’s success — hinged on a strategic partnership between marketing and sales.

They began by learning what the account team knew about critical stakeholders, previous projects, and growth objectives. Then, together, sales and ABM determined how the customer operates, who the stakeholders are, the complexities of the business, and more. They also conducted stakeholder mapping exercises to ensure they would target the right decision-makers.

Prior to bringing an ABM focus to this account, Google Cloud’s messaging was not quite landing with the customer. Knowing that customizing a value proposition is an effective ABM strategy (figure 1), Clarke’s team took information from those deep dive sessions to deliver lighter, relevant, and inspirational messaging.

FIGURE 1: Customizing value propositions, points of view, and content to ensure relevance and impact



Note: Multiple responses allowed. * Indicates a statistically significant difference.

Source: Momentum ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2022 ABM Benchmark Study, December 2022

The stakeholder mapping and value proposition development were just the beginning of the ABM response. The team balanced periods of piloting and testing with feedback to understand what worked, what didn't, and what they could do more of. The ABM and account teams met daily, sometimes for just 15 minutes, as the campaign ran. This was essential not just to report results but also to establish strong working relationships.



The ABM and account teams met daily, sometimes for just 15 minutes, as the campaign ran.

White glove engagement makes a difference

Leveraging the insights from the account team, the customer, and other sources, the ABM team developed a campaign with a library of content to share with different stakeholders at different times throughout the journey.

The campaign included content presented in multiple formats to appeal to different stakeholder preferences, such as longer videos, snippets, graphics, voice and audio formats, etc., which is a best practice, according to Momentum ITSMA research (figure 2).

FIGURE 2: There is a need for multi-channel orchestration, both on and offline

Stage 1 Epiphany	Stage 2 Awareness	Stage 3 Interest	Stage 4 Confidence	Stage 5 Loyalty
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-form content • Provider's own website • Phone conversations with sales and SME's • Social Media • Video 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone conversations with sales and SME's • Webinar • Technical briefing center/innovation lab • Social Media • In-person meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Technical briefing center/innovation lab • In-person meetings • Video • Social Media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical briefing center/innovation lab • Social Media • In-person meetings • Webinar • Provider online communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile app to access content • Executive round table • Direct mail • Experiential marketing • In-person event

Note: Multiple responses allowed.
Source: Momentum ITSMA, CBX® Survey 2022, Wave 2

This hands-on, orchestrated approach and “white glove” engagement made a big impact on the customer.

After receiving some of the ABM-crafted messages, C-level customer stakeholder was convinced, sharing this sentiment: “Thanks for the inspiring campaign. The message is on spot. How can we make this happen? I shared with the leadership team and look forward to our session.”

True customer-centricity requires a robust ABM ecosystem

The key to the ABM program is ensuring that the messages are tailored and that the team does not take a one size fits all approach to every customer. Clarke’s team embraces a notion that the ABM Lead is akin to the CMO of that particular account. They are responsible for working with internal and external stakeholders on the ABM strategy, orchestrating content, channels and timing, and managing campaigns from end to end.

For this customer, the ABM Lead/Account CMO orchestrated the work of multiple agencies rather than partnering with just one agency. It was the ABM Lead’s responsibility to ensure each agency understood the customer, the tone, the voice, the journey, and the deliverables.

Clarke recognizes that this is a lot of work for the ABM Lead, but, “We are doing everything on behalf of the account. Early in the process, we thought we wanted one agency to do it all, but we quickly determined that it would not work,” she explained. “Even though it would be much easier for our ABMers to manage just one external vendor, it would not be respecting the customer.”



Thanks for the inspiring campaign. The message is on spot. How can we make this happen? I shared with the leadership team and look forward to our session.”

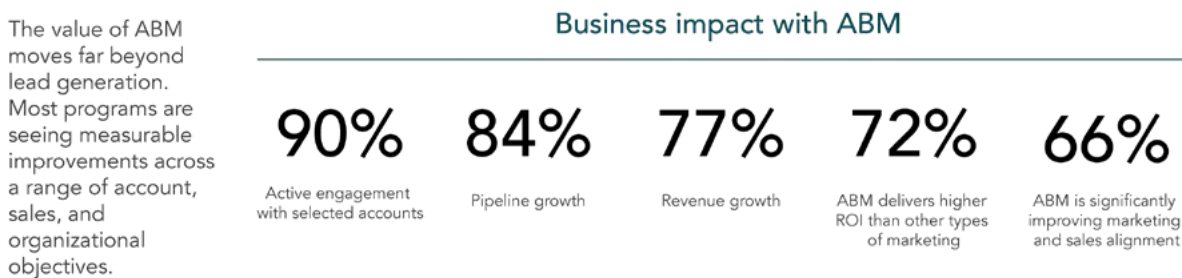
C-level Customer stakeholder

Sustaining sponsorship by sharing small successes

Internal communication was vital throughout the process of the ABM campaign. Recognizing the need for tight alignment with Sales on business impact objectives, the ABM team embarked on an effort to educate internal stakeholders on the 3Rs of ABM measurement: reputation, relationships, and revenue (figure 3).

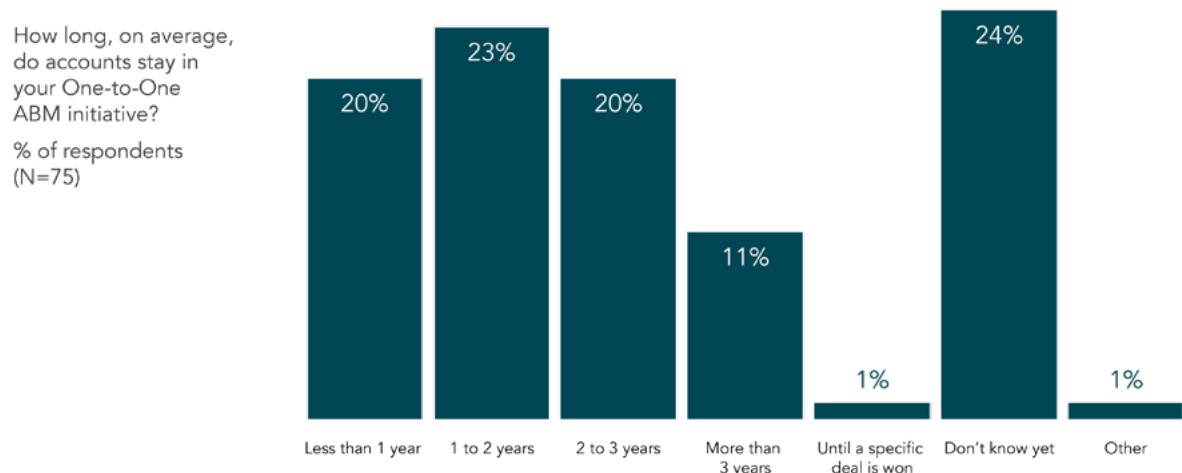
Sustaining sponsorship and internal interest in the program is essential, as ABM is a long game. The sales cycle is lengthy, and accounts can be in the ABM program for up to three years (figure 4).

FIGURE 3: Companies are investing in ABM because it works; most programs are driving substantial business impact



Note: % of respondents (N=149)
Source: Momentum ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2022 ABM Benchmark Study, December 2022

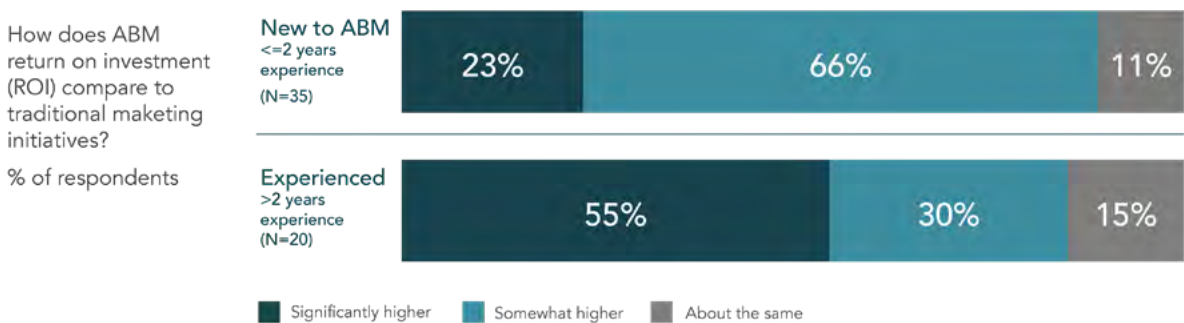
FIGURE 4: Tenure in the program: One-to-One ABM accounts



Source: Momentum ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, 2022 ABM Benchmark Study, December 2022

However, patience pays off as results improve as an organization’s ABM experience accrues (figure 5).

FIGURE 5: ABM is a long-term game; business results improve with experience



Note: Differences are statistically significant
Source: Momentum ITSMA and ABM Leadership Alliance, ABM Benchmarking Survey, July 2017

Google Cloud strategic customers’ ABM team found that showing progress along the way in terms of reputation and relationship gains bought them time and goodwill in the eyes of the account. The ABM team celebrated small successes along the way with the broader stakeholder team. Sharing “droplets” of progress – event attendance, engagement with content, etc. – helped the internal audience remember that the ABM program was moving in a positive direction, even if it was a slow journey.

Clarke reminded her business colleagues that the ABM team had the same goals as the account team.

“We were always clear that we were not looking for people to open an email or go to an event. We wanted the end result to be a business outcome, and we will work with you and persevere until we get that outcome,” she said.

Celebrate the big win, together

In just six months, the ABM team, together with Sales, at Google established an approach, launched a campaign, and signed the deal. The accelerated time frame left room in the fourth quarter for the team to pause, reflect, and celebrate. Despite the well-established relationship, they were applauding not just any deal but the most significant deal they'd ever signed with this customer.

Get collaboration right, and celebrations will follow

A signed contract did not mean the ABM team's work was done. In December, the team hosted an activation event with the account team and the customer to reflect on what they had achieved and anticipate what they would still achieve together.

The motto of the night was "Celebrate the past, collaborate now, and change the future." It's a good motto for the ABM team as well.

Collaborating with sales to truly understand the customer's needs and opportunities and working alongside the customer with a "white glove" approach helped the ABM team at Google Cloud deliver a transformational program.

Next, Google Cloud will focus on delivery and transformation for the customer, and the strategic account ABM team will move to the next phase: program expansion.

When the foundation of an ABM program is solid and the execution is excellent, the growth opportunities are limitless.



The motto of the night was 'Celebrate the past, collaborate now, and change the future.'

It's a good motto for the ABM team as well.