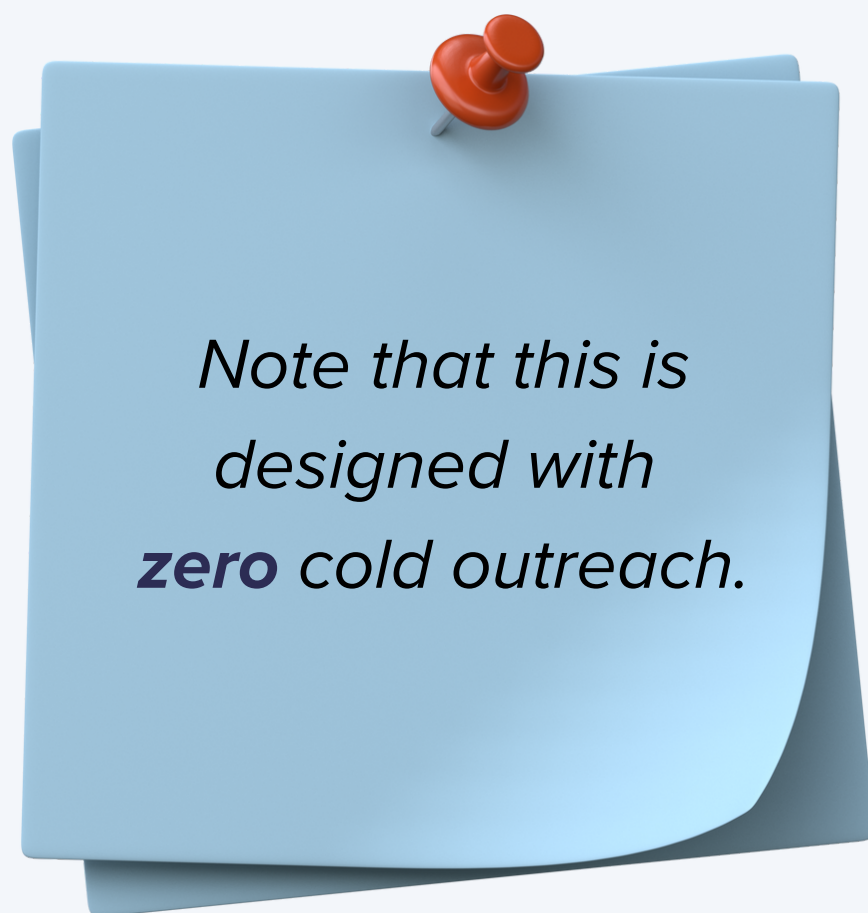




ABM BY DESIGN: **FIRST-PRINCIPLES** **TO REVENUE**

What is First-Principles Thinking

Strip a problem to the things that never change, then rebuild your approach from those truths, i.e., no “best practices,” no tool bias. In ABM that means starting from revenue mechanics (accounts, buying groups, risk, timing), not channels.



When Should a Marketing Team Use It

Use it when any of these are true:

- Pipeline stalls even as you add programs/spend
- Anonymous account engagement is up, but Access = 0 (i.e., no known contacts)
 - Diagnosis: aVTR/repeat visits/clustering ↑, yet net-new known contacts = 0 and role coverage < 1 for target accounts over the last 30 days. Many accounts touched 3+ campaigns without anyone opting in.
 - Implication: Your Access primitive is the bottleneck—fix value exchange and consent paths before adding more campaigns.
- New ICP/segment or repositioning requires re-grounding assumptions
- Sales signal wrong accounts
- Stack bloat*+ attribution noise make decisions fuzzy

CAC

Customer Acquisition Cost

ICP

Ideal Customer Profile

MQL

Marketing Qualified Leads

*See Appendix: Stack Bloat (what it is + examples)

How It Benefits the Team

Clarity

Aligns everyone on the few invariants that move pipeline.

Speed

Fewer, better experiments with pre-set kill/scale rules.

Waste reduction

Cuts vanity metrics and channel thrash.

Message-market fit

Forces de-risking, not cute CTAs.

Measurement that matters

Account stage progress > clicks.

01

Define the Immutable Truth (aka Your Constraints)

SQL

Marketing Qualified Leads. Use mostly in inbound marketing.

- Outcome ≠ MQLs. Outcome = pipeline and revenue from named accounts.
- The unit of progress isn't a click; it's an account moving a stage (unaware → engaged → active evaluation → opportunity → closed/won).
- Buying happens in committees and risk beats novelty, thus messaging must reduce risk and effort for each role.
- Time & tempo: Quarters for outcomes, weeks for decisions. ABM results compound over 1–3 quarters; we use 2–4 week Minimum Viable Plays (MVPs) to generate stage-movement signals and decide scale/kill. Not to “close deals in 14 days.

02

Reduce ABM to Its Primitives

Before channels or tactics, ABM runs on five parts. Think of them as a multiplication formula:

Pipeline $\approx$ Signals $\times$ Trust $\times$ Access $\times$ Relevance $\times$ Timing

Score each area 0-2 for the target account. If any one is zero, your pipeline is zero. Thus, fix the lowest score first.

0 = Missing | 1 = Partial | 2 = Strong

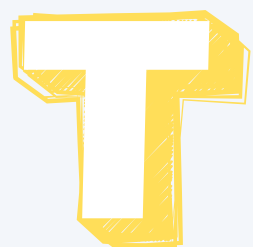
The Five Primitives in Plain English :



Signals *Are they actually showing interest?*

Examples Repeat visits to pricing/solutions, intent topics from trusted sources, event Q&A, chat opt-ins, partner intros.

Use Define what qualifies in-market.



Trust *Why should they bet on us now?*

Examples Peer proof, benchmarks, risk-reversal pilot with success criteria and exit clause.

Use Track multi-persona consumption of proof assets and fewer late-stage objections.



Access *Can we legally and with permission reach the buying group?*

Paths Opt-in email, community membership, LinkedIn connections, partner/customer intros, event registration.

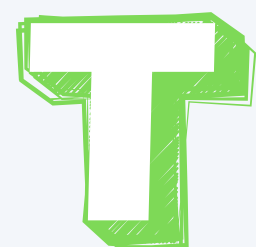
Use Measure % role coverage (e.g., Finance/Ops/Tech). No cold outreach.



Relevance *Do we speak their language and to their pain?*

Example Proof you understand their problem better than their current approach.

Use Persona-specific ROI Snapshot and Implementation Plan; watch reply rate on value emails (not clicks).



Timing *Now or later?*

Example Recency and density of signals determine when to act.

Use Prioritize fresh clusters (last 14–30 days); keep “later” accounts in 1:Many programs.

- 
- *Signals* tell us who's warming up.
 - *Trust* earns the right to engage.
 - *Access* gives us a path to the buying group.
 - *Relevance* proves we understand their problem better than the current approach.
 - *Timing* aligns touchpoints to in-market windows.

START is a multiplicative checklist, **not** a timeline

03

Instrument Only What Maps to Truth

CTR

click-through rate. Individual ad/email clicks, and often a poor ABM success proxy.

aVTR

account view-through rate. People from a target account later visit the site after seeing ads.

Ditch individual CTR obsession. Track:

- Account-level movement: stage changes, opportunity creation, deal speed.
- Signal clusters: # of accounts with 2+ distinct signals in X days.
- Access coverage: # of buying-group roles with a known touch.
- Message resonance: reply rate on risk-reduction emails, not just opens. Content consumption on each landing page.
- Creative effectiveness: account view-through (aVTR) and post-click behavior by persona

04 Translate Truths into Testable Hypotheses

Examples:

- Signals → Sequence (stage C, known contacts): If an account shows ≥ 2 distinct signals in 14 days (e.g., competitor research + repeat pricing/solutions visit), then a 1:1 multi-threaded sequence that includes an ROI Snapshot + Implementation Plan will 2× meeting rate vs. generic outbound.
- Finance-first angle: If Finance is a key decider, then sending a 1-pager: ROI drivers, payback window, and TCO vs. status quo will increase opportunity creation within 30 days.
- Ops-first angle: If Operations cares about effort, then a Before/After workflow + time-saved estimate + 30/60/90 rollout will lift stage movement from engaged → evaluation.
- Skepticism/risk: If deals stall, then offering a Risk-Reversal Pilot (success criteria, timeline, exit clause) will reduce cycle time by $\geq 15\%$.
- Creative signal check: If account view-through (aVTR) rises while CTR is flat, then your message is resonating but CTA feels risky, swap “Book demo” for a “ROI Snapshot for {{Persona}}” or “Implementation Checklist” opt-in.

04 Translate Truths into Testable Hypotheses

Minimum assets per hypothesis:

- ROI Snapshot (persona-specific)
- Cost of Inaction calculator
- Implementation Plan (timeline + resources)
- Peer Proof (similar size/industry)
- Risk-Reversal Pilot spec

05

Build Minimum Viable Plays (MVPs)

Stage Evaluation Windows:

- Stage A: 4–6 wks → optimize for permissioned contacts & role coverage.
- Stage B: 2–3 wks → optimize for meeting accept & advance to Evaluation.
- Stage C: 2–4 wks → optimize for pilot scoping/opps.

(Decide scale/kill/swap at the window, not by ending the campaign.)

Continuous ABM Delivery (no end dates ≠ evergreen)

Unless time-sensitive, ABM campaigns should have no end date. We timebox evaluation windows, not flight dates. You should swap ads, update landing pages, and ratchet spend. Do not stop and restart.

Stopping/Restarting resets delivery learnings, shrinks retargeting pools, and breaks attribution continuity.

05

Build Minimum Viable Plays (MVPs)

Dynamic Enrollment

Accounts enter/exit automatically based on your triggers (signals, exclusions, customer lists). No “new campaign” every window.

Change in Place

Rotate ads/landing modules inside the shell; don’t change objective/optimization mid-flight (forces re-learning).

Spend Ratchets, Not Resets

Adjust budgets up/down at each window; avoid pausing. Use caps to throttle cohorts instead of stopping the campaign.

Guardrails

Frequency caps, message sequencing, stable inclusions/exclusions, one major variable change per window (offer or audience slice or concept).

06

Minimum Viable Play Examples by State*

Using A/B/C as operating states, not funnel steps as buyers don't move in straight lines.

State A / 1 : Many / Anonymous / Early Engagement

We often build Trust (proof assets in ads, social, events) before we have Access (opt-in).

Personalization

Account-level programs only. No cold outreach.

Goal

Create consent.

Plays

- Account-level air cover: LinkedIn + programmatic targeted to buying-group roles; ungated asset = “ROI Snapshot / Implementation Checklist”.
- Interactive proof: ungated ROI simulator or Cost-of-Inaction calculator; retarget visitors back to the tool outcome page.
- Website personalization: show the ROI/Implementation modules only for target accounts (reverse IP).
- Community & events: panel/webinar with problem-first angle; drive to “Get your personalized ROI snapshot” (explicit opt-in).
- ABM chat (account-aware): on return visits, invite “Build my ROI snapshot” (chat = consent).

06

Minimum Viable Play Examples by State

State B / Warm Engagement / Known

We gain Access, then dial Relevance (persona-specific ROI/Implementation).

Personalization

Run clustered plays for small cohorts, and send permissioned 1:1 follow-up to the specific contact who engaged.

Goal

Convert engagement into a scoped conversation; still value-first, not pushy.

Plays

Light touch, permission based.

- One-to-one follow-up referencing their specific ROI/tool result or event question; offer Implementation Plan (30/60/90) tailored to their context.
- Multi-thread via value only (no outreach to new contacts until consent): share persona-specific proof (Finance = ROI Snapshot; Ops = workflow time-saved; Tech = feasibility notes). No “book a demo” unless requested.
- Matched ads continue with the same claim the contact engaged with (message mirroring).

06

Minimum Viable Play Examples by State

State C / Active Evaluation / Early Decision

We tighten Relevance and Trust to de-risk timing and close scope.

Personalization

1:1 full account-specific motion across buying group with assets such as ROI snapshot, implementation plan, risk-reversal pilot.

Goal

Reduce risk and lock scope.

Plays

- AE + SDR multi-thread across Finance, Ops, Tech **because we have consent.**
- Asset trio: ROI Snapshot (Finance), Implementation Plan (Ops), Risk-Reversal Pilot Spec (all).
- Value email (no links) offering a personalized ROI snapshot or Implementation checklist recap; confirm success criteria and timeline.

Scale/Kill Rule: Scale if $\geq 10\%$ of targeted accounts enter active evaluation or accept pilot scoping; otherwise, swap the weakest asset and rerun on the same triggers.

07

Create a Weekly Operating Cadence

15-minute signal standup (Sales + Marketing + RevOps):

- Which accounts flipped to “in-market”?
- Which hypotheses hit thresholds? Kill, keep, or scale.

Friday retro: one slide, three bullets and brainstorm the following:

- What created stage movement?
- What didn't?
- What we're testing next.
- No 30-page reports. No pixel peacocking.

08

Guardrails Most Teams Skip

- Don't treat ABM as a 60-day "campaign." Keep dynamic enrollment rolling as signals change.
- Don't let inbound metrics drive ABM. If it doesn't move accounts, it's theater.
- Do align SDR SLAs to signals, not lead forms.
- Do pre-write kill criteria so you can say "no" quickly and reallocate to what's working.

Appendix

Stack Bloat (what it is + real examples)

Definition

Not necessarily “too many tools,” but overlapping tools that don’t improve Signals, Trust, Access, Relevance, or Timing, and slow decisions down.

Practical Examples

Identity & Data

- Running ZoomInfo + Apollo + Clearbit for enrichment → conflicting firmographics; SDRs don’t trust any of it.
- Two schedulers (Chili Piper + Calendly) → broken routing and double-bookings.
- Poor CRM hygiene

Signals / Intent

- 6sense + Bombora + G2 bought “for coverage,” but you only export weekly CSVs; nothing hits CRM/Slack in real time.
- 10+ pixels (LinkedIn, Meta, programmatic, ABM vendor) firing on every page → page speed tanks; noisy “conversions.”

Activation & Orchestration

- Salesloft + Outreach both live (AEs vs SDRs) → sequences are out of sync; reporting is split.
- Demandbase + StackAdapt + LinkedIn native ABM all targeting the same accounts with no frequency cap → creative fatigue; no account-level lift.
- Drift + Intercom + HubSpot Chat on site → three playbooks, no unified consent path

Stack Bloat (what it is + real examples)

Measurement / Attribution

- GA4 last-click, ad platform “conversions,” and 6sense influence all disagree; nobody can answer the only question that matters: Did target accounts move a stage?

First-Principles Fix (30-day cleanup)

- Map jobs-to-be-done to the 5 primitives:
 - Signals (detect) / Access (reach with consent) / Relevance (personalize) / Trust (prove) / Timing (prioritize).
- Assign one primary tool per job. Anything overlapping becomes backup or kill candidate.
- Adoption gate: Keep a tool only if, in 30 days, it can prove one of:
 - Delivers unique signals you can't get elsewhere and auto-routes tasks within 1 hour.
 - Lowers cost per permissioned contact or cost per stage advance by $\geq 20\%$.
 - Increases account stage movement by $\geq 10\%$ in the test cohort.
 - If not, turn it off (or shelf until a hypothesis needs it).
- Freeze new purchases until you can run the manual version of the play and show lift.

Mini Glossary

- ABM: Account-Based Marketing; programs aimed at specific accounts/buying groups.
- ICP: Ideal Customer Profile; accounts you should win (fit + pain).
- Signal: A meaningful account action (repeat pricing/solutions visits, event Q&A, tool completion, partner intro, trusted 3rd-party intent topic).
- In-market: Account shows ≥ 2 distinct signals in 14 days.
- aVTR: Account View-Through Rate; people from a target account later visit your site after seeing ads/content.
- CTR: Click-Through Rate; individual ad/email clicks (often a poor ABM success proxy).
- Reverse IP: Tech that resolves anonymous visits to likely companies (used for personalization, not for cold outreach).
- AE / SDR: Account Executive / Sales Development Rep.
- Multi-thread: Engage multiple roles at an account (Finance, Ops, Technical).
- TCO: Total Cost of Ownership; costs to run/maintain a solution over time vs. status quo.
- Cost of Inaction: Economic impact of doing nothing (lost revenue, wasted time, risk).
- Risk-Reversal Pilot: Short, scoped trial with success criteria and an exit clause to de-risk a decision.
- Proof asset: Evidence that reduces risk (case, benchmark, comparison, architecture).
- Safe CTA: Low-risk next step (ROI Snapshot, Implementation Checklist, Pilot Spec).
- Reply bait: Short, specific question that invites a plain-text reply (no links).
- Stage progress: An account advances ≥ 1 stage (e.g., Engaged $\rightarrow$ Evaluation).
- 1:Many / 1:Few / 1:1: Personalization levels by stage.
- Cohort: A small set of similar accounts used for a shared play.

60-Second Scoring Grid (per account)

Rule: Fix the lowest score first. Zero in any row? Stay in Stage A until it's ≥1

Primitive	0 = Missing	1 = Partial	2 = Strong
Signals	None or stale	1 week/old signal	≥2 distinct signals in X days
Trust	Thin social proof	One proof asset	Multi-persona proof + pilot
Access	No permissioned contacts	1 role permissioned	2-3 roles permissioned
Relevance	Generic messaging	Persona-aware asset	Persona-specific ROI, implementation
Timing	Old interest	Some recent	Multiple fresh touches

START is a multiplicative checklist, **not** a timeline

Ready to put your strategy to the test?

Try the ABM strategy GPT I built; your free testing ground.



<https://tinyurl.com/DYC-GPT>



Diana Chang

/in/dianaychang0704