B2B ENTERS THE EXPERIENCE ERA

2020 Data-Driven Marketing & Advertising Outlook

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Customer experience has become critical to B2B marketers.

Business-to-business organizations have become as focused on providing a superior experience as their consumer counterparts. Over 80% of B2B marketers said delivering a consistent customer experience (CX) across their various online and real-world channels is extremely or very important to their companies. And almost 90% feel that B2B organizations need to be as focused on customer experience as their B2C counterparts. Interestingly, while 38% of B2B marketers believe they outpace their competitors in terms of CX, a quarter say they are lagging.

The biggest obstacle to customer experience success? Data.

Transforming into an experience-focused enterprise requires a data-driven approach. And data is the biggest barrier B2B marketers are facing. However, it's not a lack of data, but actually leveraging the data and tools they already have in place, as cited by a 33% of respondents. Once that occurs, organizations will have a clearer picture into the B2B journey, necessary to delivering personalized outreach.

Data governance needs to improve for B2B marketers to take full advantage of the power of this valuable asset.

It's become a cliché, but a true one—data really is the new oil, insofar as it is the most valuable fuel for B2B marketers. They actually have more information about their customers than they ever have had before. But more data doesn't mean better data—or deeper insights—and they are still stymied by things like data silos across marketing and inaccurate or incomplete customer data. The solution: clearer data governance.

Measurement and analytics are 2020's data priority for most B2B marketers.

To deliver a better experience, B2B marketers need to know who their customers are, how they behave, and what they like and do. That's really true for all organizations. To make that happen, they're investing in all kinds of tools and technologies, but they are putting a particular emphasis on measurement and analytics (the top priority for nearly 70% of respondents), which is necessary for anticipating customer needs, understanding intent and predicting the best prospects.

Account-based marketing is an essential tool for improving omnichannel experience, but challenges remain.

ABM remains a critical way for B2B marketers to use data as a competitive advantage. It helps them understand the complex journey that B2B buyers go on, and it gives them the insight to improve their CX at each step that journey. Still, ABM is new for many organizations and they are hampered by a lack of a cohesive strategy.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MICHAŁ BEDNARSKI

ARE YOU EXPERIENCED?

Customer experience has become the key way brands are able to differentiate themselves in today's data-driven marketplace. Using data and insights to identify the customer's unique path to purchase, they are able to customize and personalize their interactions, removing friction and improving effectiveness not only along digital channels but also in real-world interactions.

Simply put, better, more personalized omnichannel experiences mean more sales, stronger loyalty and greater long-term customer value. A good, consistent CX accelerates the buyer's journey, creates brand affinity and inspires people to take action.

But does this logic apply to business-to-business marketing?

Clearly it does, if for no other reason than corporate purchasing decisions are made by people who have become accustomed to the convenience and customization of ecommerce and data-driven personalization. They know that when they go to buy a car, they can go online and see how all the different colors and options look before entering the dealership, so they expect the same experience when building out a fleet of delivery vans. When they go on vacation,

they expect the resort or cruise line to make it easy for them to check in, see the sites they want and get dinner reservations that align with their meal preferences, so they want the same when organizing a business conference.

Call it the consumerization of corporate purchasing. And it's something that B2B marketers need to manage. In fact, a survey by Salesforce found that 80% of business purchasers want consumer-level customer experience and two-thirds have switched vendors to get it. Even more startling, fewer than 30% of B2B customers say that their suppliers provide an excellent customer experience.

That's why B2B organizations are turning to data and analytics, ad tech, marketing automation and more recently, customer data platforms—the tools that empowered B2C digital transformation. And while they are as cognizant of the value of data as consumer brands, they also face many of the same challenges related to managing the deluge of data and turning what they know into actionable insights that benefit their bottom line.

Like their consumer counterparts, B2B advertisers have made digital marketing a critical part of their toolkit. According to

eMarketer, U.S. B2B digital ad spend has increased about $1 billion each year since 2017, and is forecast to hit $6.08 billion in 2019, up 18.7%.

This is a key turning point for B2B digital marketing. The companies that master data and analytics will gain a unique understanding of the needs and behaviors of their customers, setting them on course for providing the kind of personalization buyers now expect, even during the longer B2B cycle. Those that don't could find themselves irreparably behind.

To gain deeper insights into the challenges B2B marketers face in delivering a great customer experience, Adweek Branded, on behalf of Dun & Bradstreet, conducted a comprehensive survey of B2B brand marketers and agencies in September 2019. This is the fifth annual report that looks at B2B digital marketing. While previous versions examined the challenges of programmatic buying and selling, this year's report looks deeper into CX and the challenges of creating a strong and impactful data strategy. It also looks at how data is enabling the selling process through tactics like account-based marketing, and how B2B brands and agencies are looking at emerging technologies and channels.

DIVING INTO CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Customer experience (CX) is more than just a marketing buzzword. It has changed how B2C marketing is done, and the brands that are disrupting the marketplace have found ways to understand and anticipate the unique needs of their customers, personalize their interactions and even make seemingly mundane purchases not just frictionless but fun.

How does that relate to business-to-business marketing?

While business customers want an experience on par with what they've come to expect from their personal purchases, it is important to understand some of the fundamental differences in purchasing behavior between consumers and businesses. Consumer purchases are often made emotionally based on factors like price, perceived quality and the product's look and feel. Business decisions, on the other hand, are often much more complex covering everything from specific product requirements and price and payment terms to logistics and legal considerations.

And, of course, frequently B2B buying decisions are made by a range of decision makers, not a single person. Sirius Decisions notes that 78% of B2B buyers are

teams of three or more people; others state a higher number. And while businesses use "buying groups," the people in that group are just that: people. In fact, Sirius goes on to say that a fundamental truth of B2B is that buyers look like individuals as they are researching, but really they are already members of coordinated buying teams.

B2B buyers want their vendors to anticipate their needs, make relevant suggestions and deliver the right level of engagement across the entire buying journey. B2B buyers have come to expect streamlined, digital transactions and they expect their partners to deliver these kinds of omnichannel interactions across all the critical touchpoints. However, with multiple individuals involved in a B2B buying decision, it can be difficult to deliver a consistent experience to all members of that group, especially online where most traffic remains anonymous.

This shift was not lost on respondents to this year's survey.

Over 80% of B2B marketers said delivering a consistent customer experience across digital and offline channels is extremely or very important to their companies. [Fig. 1] Just 2% said CX was not important.

In addition, B2B marketers indicated that CX was as important to their success as it is for consumer brands—88% agreed that B2B organizations need to be as focused on customer experience as their B2C counterparts. [Fig. 2]

While B2B marketers openly acknowledge the importance of CX, there is room for improvement in their performance. While 38% of survey respondents believe they outpace their competitors in this area, fully a quarter (25%) indicate they are lagging. [Fig. 3]

To provide a superior experience, B2B organizations need data on and insights into the requirements and behaviors of their customers. They need to map the customer journey and design programs that personalize the various touchpoints. They need to constantly incorporate feedback into their marketing programs. And they can't stop this communication once the transaction takes place—post-sales support and outreach are often just as critical and organizations that help their customers implement their solutions can ensure greater value and loyalty.

It's no surprise that in every year this report has been done, B2B marketers

FIG. 1

How important is it for your company to deliver a consistent customer experience across your various digital and offline channels?

- 43% — Extremely important
- 38% — Very important
- 14% — Important
- 4% — Somewhat important
- 2% — Not important
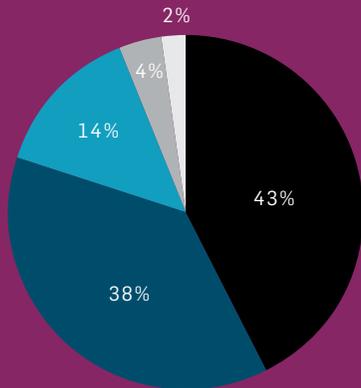
Legend:
- Extremely important
- Very important
- Important
- Somewhat important
- Not important

FIG. 2

Agree or disagree? *B2B organizations need to be as focused on customer experience as their B2C counterparts.*

- 46%
- 41%
- 7%
- 5%
- 1%
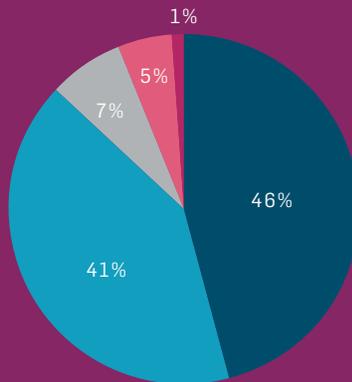
Legend:
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

FIG. 3

How would you rate your company's ability to provide a consistent customer experience across your various digital and offline channels?

- 7%
- 31%
- 36%
- 25%
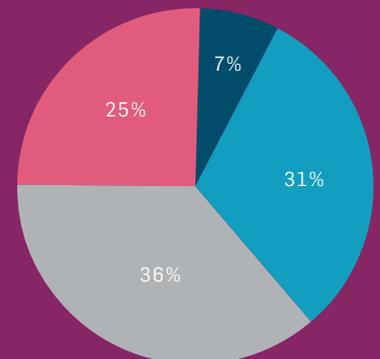
Legend:
- Well above our competition
- Above our competition
- On par with our competition
- Below our competition
- Well below our competition

acknowledge the importance of data on their path to success.

So, what's stopping B2B brands and agencies from delivering a superior CX? It's not a lack of data, but actually leveraging the data they already have.
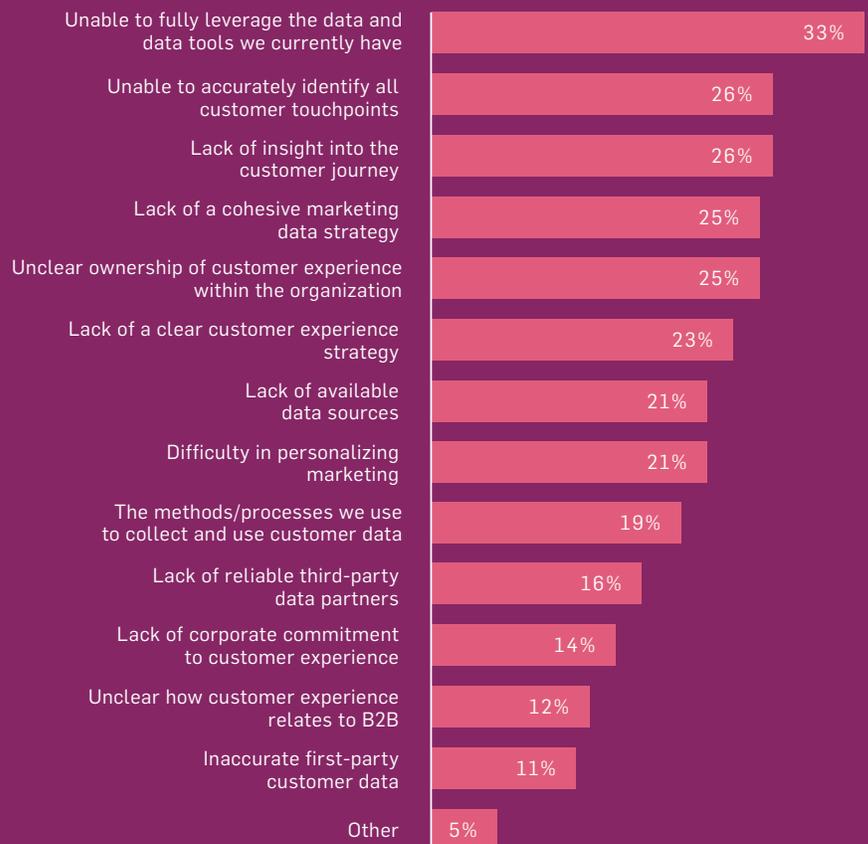
The top response cited by more than a third of B2B marketers, when asked to name their biggest CX hurdles, was their inability to leverage the data and data tools they already have. [Fig. 4] They have more data about their customers than they ever have had before. But they are frustrated in their ability to access and activate that data to create personalized experiences that will give them a competitive advantage.

They also need greater insight into the customer journey. They may have a picture of who their customers are, but they still don't have clarity into when those touchpoints take place or how multiple touchpoints with different people within a single company relate to one another during the buying process.

Again, it's not the lack of data but the ability to derive actionable insights from what they already have. It often comes back to having a cohesive marketing data strategy that consolidates information about a given customer and creates the foundation to give the B2B company a single view to identify where spend and effort should be focused. Bridging this data gap is going to be the critical next step in delivering on the promise of a great customer experience.

FIG. 4

What do you feel are the biggest hurdles your company faces in delivering a better cross-channel or omnichannel customer experience?

- Unable to fully leverage the data and data tools we currently have — 33%
- Unable to accurately identify all customer touchpoints — 26%
- Lack of insight into the customer journey — 26%
- Lack of a cohesive marketing data strategy — 25%
- Unclear ownership of customer experience within the organization — 25%
- Lack of a clear customer experience strategy — 23%
- Lack of available data sources — 21%
- Difficulty in personalizing marketing — 21%
- The methods/processes we use to collect and use customer data — 19%
- Lack of reliable third-party data partners — 16%
- Lack of corporate commitment to customer experience — 14%
- Unclear how customer experience relates to B2B — 12%
- Inaccurate first-party customer data — 11%
- Other — 5%

THE NEED FOR DATA GOVERNANCE

The bottom line is that B2B brands don't need more data. They simply need to make sense of the data they already have. And that's what is going to be driving their strategies over the next year.

There's little doubt that organizations of all types are dealing with a data deluge. There's more data than ever and it comes in more varieties and at a faster pace. Data sources and data dashboards are growing relentlessly. Every data-driven tactic returns more data that requires more analysis and more action. Data overload can be exhausting.

Turning data into actionable insights requires a broad, company-wide strategy that keeps customer data accurate, consolidates it into a complete unified view, makes it accessible and ensures it delivers insights that are actionable. For years marketers have been investing in technologies like customer relationship management (CRM) and marketing automation that can help them manage their data and target customer segments. With personalization growing in importance, they need to be able to tie all of their marketing systems together to help them accurately identify their customers.

And, because buying groups are critical to B2B purchasing, it is essential to be able to recognize when multiple people

How will your marketing team's focus on data and analytics change in 2020?

- 1%
- 27%
- 16%
- 56%
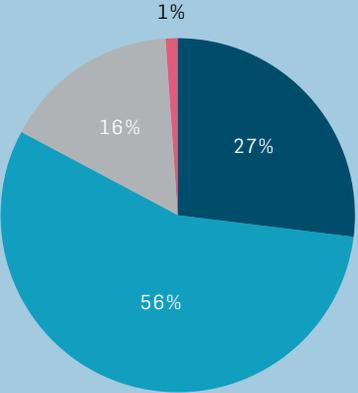
- ■ Significantly more focus on data and analytics
- ■ More focus on data and analytics
- ■ About the same
- ■ Less focus on data and analytics
- ■ Significantly less focus on data and analytics

from a single company are interacting with you and to adjust the experience accordingly to accelerate the path to closing the sale.

In this year's survey, 84% of respondents indicated their marketing teams will be putting more focus on data and analytics over the coming year. [Fig. 5] Hardly any companies said they'd be putting less emphasis on data.

After all, a great customer experience requires a brand to understand who their customers are and how they behave. That means being able to identify them no matter which device they're using or whether they are online or offline.

One challenge is selecting the right system to tap the power of data. While many organizations have systems like CRM in place to store and organize their customer data, fewer are using tools like a customer data platform (CDP) or data management platform (DMP) that can really unlock their data's value. [Fig. 6] CDPs are used for online/offline ominichannel activation, while DMPs are generally for digital activation.

Progress is being made, however. It's important to point out that in last year's survey, 45% of respondents said they are using a CDP. This year, that figure jumped to 54%. The percent using a DMP went from 52% to 59%.

While B2B marketers will be making investments across their technology stacks, they'll be putting particular emphasis on measurement and analytics. [Fig. 7] Again, this relates directly to the need to deliver a

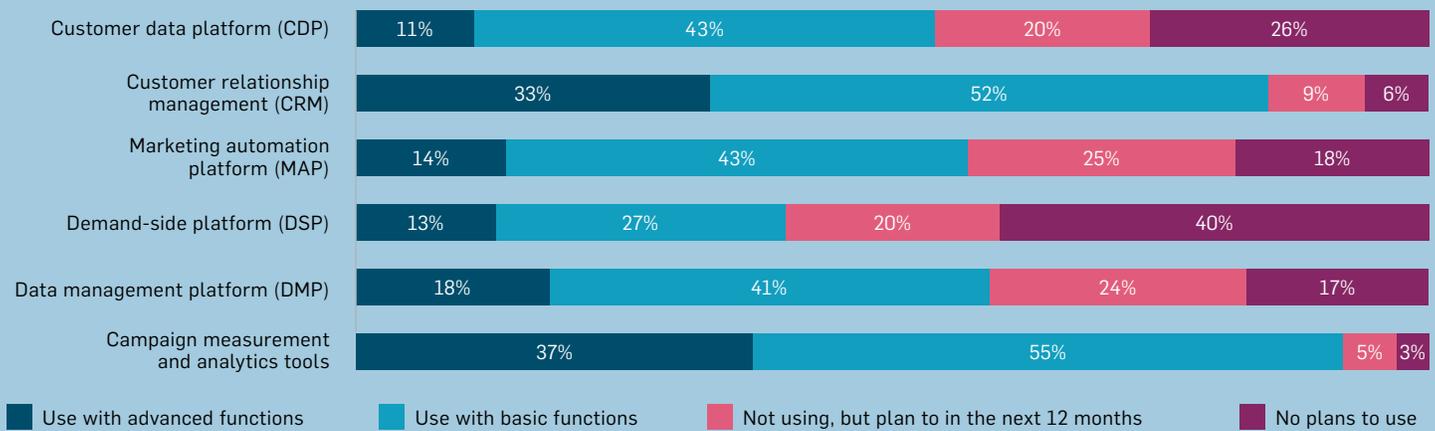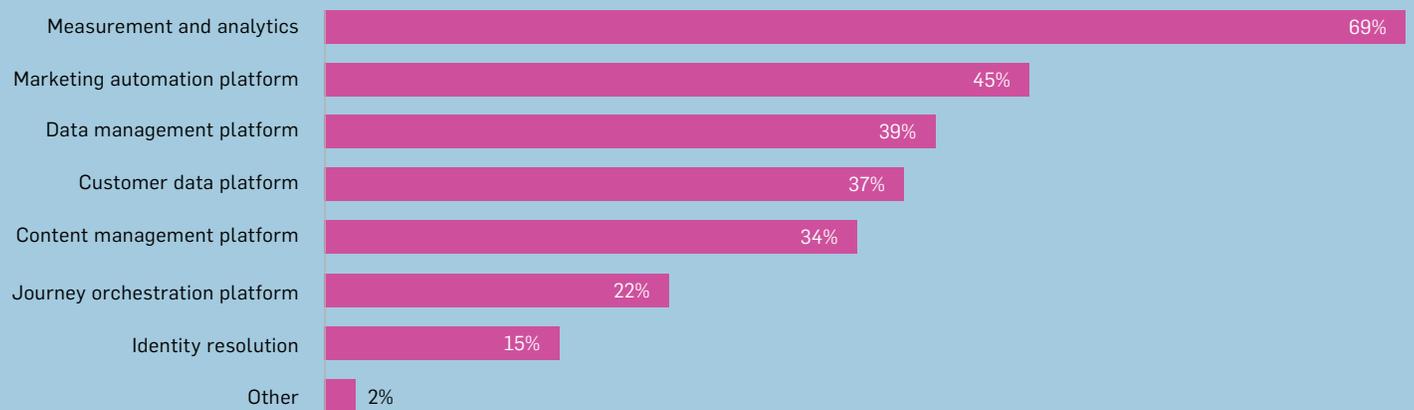**FIG. 6** How are you currently using the following technologies in your organization's marketing stack?

Technology	Use with advanced functions	Use with basic functions	Not using, but plan to in the next 12 months	No plans to use
Customer data platform (CDP)	11%	43%	20%	26%
Customer relationship management (CRM)	33%	52%	9%	6%
Marketing automation platform (MAP)	14%	43%	25%	18%
Demand-side platform (DSP)	13%	27%	20%	40%
Data management platform (DMP)	18%	41%	24%	17%
Campaign measurement and analytics tools	37%	55%	5%	3%

Legend: ■ Use with advanced functions ■ Use with basic functions ■ Not using, but plan to in the next 12 months ■ No plans to use

FIG. 7 Which technologies do you consider top investment priorities to achieve your data-driven marketing and/or advertising goals?

Technology	Percentage
Measurement and analytics	69%
Marketing automation platform	45%
Data management platform	39%
Customer data platform	37%
Content management platform	34%
Journey orchestration platform	22%
Identity resolution	15%
Other	2%

great CX. They need to measure the impact of their campaigns and anticipate customer needs. Rich analytics provide a window into customer behavior and can provide the insights that brands need to refine their personalization efforts – and also focus their sales and marketing activities. Algorithms turn data into actionable insights.

Of course, the importance of a strong data strategy cannot be overstated. Data governance—the practices and processes that help ensure the formal management of data assets within your organization—is necessary to ensure that needed data is kept current, accessible and actionable.

Unfortunately, a lack of data governance is what is hampering many B2B marketers today. Asked to identify the biggest obstacles they face, they pointed to siloed or inaccessible data (which also topped the list last year) and the problem of incomplete customer data. [Fig. 8] In a separate question, 57% agreed that their organizations can't become data-driven until they eliminate their marketing data silos. If B2B marketing is to fully embrace CX, silos and incomplete customer views cannot remain a perennial problem, and B2B marketing leaders must unify data across their organizations and create a complete view of customers and prospects.

FIG. 8 What do you see as your company's biggest obstacles to succeeding with data-driven marketing?

Obstacle	Percentage
Siloed or inaccessible customer data	27%
Incomplete customer data	27%
Lack of data expertise	26%
Integration of marketing and sales platforms	24%
Lack of internal data resources	23%
Lack of analytics capabilities	22%
Accuracy of customer data	21%
Data privacy regulations (GDPR, CCPA, etc.)	19%
Unclear metrics	18%
Cost of third-party data	18%
Unclear customer identity	16%
Reliable third-party data sources	14%
Inability to get corporate buy-in for a data-driven approach	13%
Lack of internal data policies	9%
Other	2%

ABM SHOULD BECOME EXPERIENCE-FOCUSED

What does a great business- to-business selling experience look like? And how should it be implemented?

This question can be answered in one-term: account-based marketing (ABM). When data and analytics are used to understand the customer journey, identify the roles different contacts have within a specific account and pinpoint all the key touchpoints with those different individuals, ABM provides the foundation of a targeted, cadenced, data-driven campaign.

ABM enables B2B marketers to zero in on their highest value accounts and reach stakeholders at those accounts in a targeted, personalized manner. If a great consumer CX comes from anticipating an individual's needs, then a great B2B experience comes from understanding and predicting an organization's unique needs and aligning relevant solutions to those needs. That is ABM at its best.

ABM's focus on the organization holistically—groups of people, not an individual—changes the nature of the B2B pipeline. Instead of being made up of separate leads, it tracks engagement across the organization, identifying the touchpoints and decision makers as an account moves through the pipeline and then reaching those targets with tactics designed to speed the conversion. It's analytical, measurable and designed to generate more revenue by focusing on account value.

Last year's B2B outlook report looked at how ABM was starting to take hold at most companies. It remains a foundational part of most B2B marketers' strategies. This year, 43% of respondents said they are currently doing ABM. That is a 6-point increase over last year's survey results. Another 17% have it in their 2020 plans. [Fig 9]

Still, ABM is new to many companies, and there are still growing pains, many of which relate back to the same data issues that are impacting CX and overall data governance. Simply put, they need to more clearly understand the benefits of using data to guide which accounts to put into an ABM program, and map out a clear strategies and tactics per account.

There's also the challenge of measuring ABM success. With ABM, you're no longer asking "how many leads did we get from that campaign?" Instead, you need to build metrics around engagement within a key account. That requires B2B organizations to recalibrate and realign their goals, KPIs and measurement strategies.

In the survey, we again asked marketers to identify their biggest hurdles to succeeding with ABM and several issues bubbled to the top. [Fig. 10] The first was having an unclear ABM strategy (35%) followed by a lack of time and resources (32%). Just below that, they indicated that they were challenged by measuring ABM success (27%), with a similar number citing a general lack of knowledge about ABM overall.

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES? NOT THERE YET

The news is filled with emerging technologies that promise to disrupt marketing. But B2B marketers are not yet buying in. For example, respondents were asked about their blockchain plans, but 74% said they're not using the technology in any of their marketing or advertising. They were also asked about connected TV, seen as one of the key consumer channels of the near future, but 63% said they had no plans to use it. Not surprising, as connected TV for B2B is likely to lag B2C adoption, and it may be a trend worth watching as those who are experimenting could have an early mover advantage.

FIG. 9
Does your company do account-based marketing (ABM)?

- 43%
- 17%
- 20%
- 20%

- Yes
- No, but plan to in 2020
- No
- Don't know
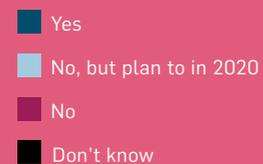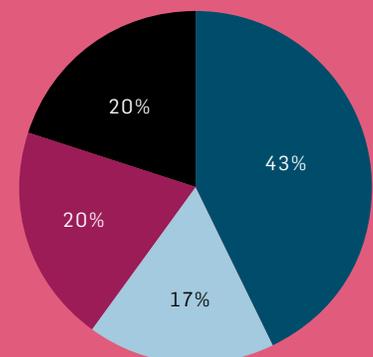
FIG. 10 What do you see as the biggest hurdles to succeeding with account-based marketing?

Unclear ABM strategy	35%
Lack of time/resources	32%
Difficulty measuring ABM success	27%
Lack of understanding about ABM	27%
Lack of alignment between marketing and sales departments	26%
Unclear picture of customer journey/touchpoints	19%
Too many legacy technologies and processes	17%
Inaccurate or incomplete first-party data	14%
Inability to understand online customer behavior	12%
Difficulty understanding buyer intent	12%
Poor statistical models and forecasting techniques	11%
Inaccurate or incomplete third-party data	10%
Other (please specify)	5%

NEXT STEPS

As business-to-business marketing sharpens its focus on customer experience, there needs to be a clearer focus on getting past many of the data issues that have hindered their efforts. The following are some specific thoughts around how to overcome the obstacles noted in this report:

Create a solid data foundation.

Your data needs to be consistent across your mar tech stack. Standardize your data across MAP/CRM and other silos by leveraging a data cleaning/enrichment tool can help unlock the value of the data you have today. A consistent account identifier is essential to data standardization. Once account information is consolidated and understood across the stack, it becomes far easier to personalize web experiences at one end of the experience spectrum and prepopulate web forms at the other end.

Gain a complete customer view.

You need a 360-degree view of your customer, whether they're online or offline and no matter what device they're on. And you can't do that unless you have a unified customer view across your different marketing systems. This is not trivial and must start with entity identification. A CDP can help marketers get this unified view while also helping to orchestrate a consistent buyer experience across channels.

Unmask web visitors.

Marketers must deliver relevant messages that are consistent across channels. Solutions that support account-based digital display advertising across programmatic, social and TV are essential. The majority of the B2B buyer journey takes place on digital channels, so be sure you know who is visiting your website. Web de-anonymization can help unmask account activity on your website, provide insights into the digital journey and ensure that your programmatic ad campaigns are driving the right traffic to your site. It is also essential to delivering personalized digital interactions via your CMS or personalization platforms. Again, the ability to connect digital identities to companies is central to this.

Leverage analytics for better customer segmentation.

Segmentation is a great starting point to a fully personalized customer experience. Treat groups of customers in a consistent manner. Marketers are increasingly dependent on analytic insights to drive better targeting and segmentation. AI-powered analytics that learn and adapt based on customer engagements across email or advertising can help refine your segmentation efforts and let you go to market quicker than the competition. Even better are tools that continually and automatically refine segments based on changing behaviors, saving time, increasing accuracy and enabling scalability in your campaign efforts.

Don't forget the power of data at the start of your ABM program.

Marketers have an opportunity to leverage better data, analytics, and technology to help scale and measure ABM programs. However, it is also important to remember that ABM starts with a solid understanding who to target. AI-powered segmentation is essential to home in on your most promising accounts. Follow the steps above and you are in a great position to undertake that segmentation.

Don't ignore emerging tech.

While B2B generally lags B2C in adopting new ways to engage customers, it's important to be aware of trends and stay ahead of the curve. Early adopters have a chance to gain first-mover advantage by learning how best to use these new approaches before their competitors do. For those not yet engaging in these emerging technologies, it is vital be ready for when disruptive solutions become mainstream. For example, connected TV can become part of an account-based program that already uses programmatic display and social.

ABOUT
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Dun & Bradstreet's sales and marketing solutions deliver data and analytics that help eliminate waste and improve precision across the buyer's journey, enabling clients to close more sales faster, improve marketing ROI and drive ABM strategies.

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