



eBook

You Need B2B Ad Tech in 2024. Here's Why.



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Introduction

This year (2024) will see a lot of change. Organizations using B2B ad tech will have an advantage over their competitors and B2B ad tech vendors with unique targeting methodologies will thrive.

Competition for customer attention and spend is at an all-time high, which is why investments in digital advertising continue to climb. At a time when your marketing budget needs to do more with less — are you getting the most bang for your B2B advertising buck?

In short, B2B advertising that fails to target the right people with relevant, timely messaging is akin to tossing money into a fire. Beyond monetary wastefulness, no B2B customer wants to be spammed: “spray and pray” tactics simply signal that you don’t care enough to know B2B prospects are and/or what they might need.

B2B digital advertising isn’t about spamming and hoping for the best. Instead, it’s about targeting accounts with the most likelihood to purchase your B2B offerings — and doing so with messaging tailored to account needs and the appropriate buying journey/stage. It means advertising smarter, putting the quality of engagement above quantity (i.e., it’s anti-spam), measuring your impact as you go, and

scaling with purpose.

As a potential economic recession looms, investments in B2B advertising need to focus on what works, instead of hoping for good luck. Your B2B marketing team can’t waste its limited time, efforts, and budgets chasing the right buyers with a high volume of ads. When done right, and we’ll explain how you can do it right later, B2B advertising enables you to maximize your resources via focused engagement on the right target accounts and buying groups when they’re ready to buy.

Lastly, and equally important for your ongoing B2B advertising success, we’ll explain how you can gain the capacity to prove and improve the value of your B2B advertising spend, measuring the KPIs and metrics that matter most for driving revenue outcomes. Put simply, you need to connect specific touch points/interactions with revenue-generating outcomes, otherwise known as “influence” or “attribution.” B2B advertising influence enables you to not only close the loop on actions-leading-to-revenues, but also to gain campaign insights and optimize what you’re doing as you move forward.



B2B advertising with impact

So a big question remains: is your B2B advertising reaching the right people at the right accounts to drive your ROI?

It's important to begin with a foundational truth about B2B advertising: B2B buying is not the same as B2C buying, nor are the tools and technologies built for B2C advertising conducive to your success with B2B advertising. While an advertiser might get lucky by selling to a single B2C customer via a single touch point (reaching the customer at the exact moment she wants to buy - think shoes), **B2B buying cycles are longer** and vastly more complex, with buying groups/committees that can have double-digit memberships and touch points in the triple digits (100 or more).

While you might occasionally get lucky with a lead, you can't rely upon luck with accounts: instead, you need intelligent targeting and tailored engagement organized and coordinated around an account context. How can you get there?

Targeting your ICP

B2B advertising is all about targeting the right accounts and the right people within them, responding to their intent signals/needs during each stage of their buying journey. Casting a wide net and focusing on quantity, the traditional B2C approach, simply doesn't work for B2B advertising.

Increasing the volume of leads won't help you, and is more likely to lead to untargeted, undifferentiated engagement that can actually diminish your brand reputation, while wasting your budgets. What matters for B2B advertising is identifying the people you need to engage with (i.e., the buying group at the account) and offering them relevant, timely information/messaging about your B2B offering.

Effective B2B advertising begins with carefully defining an ideal customer profile/ICP, engaging intelligently with them, and then measuring the quality of the engaged audience by the percentage of impressions, clicks, and conversions associated with that audience or ICP. We'll talk more about measurement best practices later.

Adtech Must Be Designed for B2B

Despite the popular 1980's TV show, you can't **MacGyver** your way to B2B advertising success by repurposing mismatched tools built for B2C advertising. You need adtech actually designed and **built with B2B in mind**. An account with a buying group of 12, a dedicated budget in six figures, and a massive list of potential software vendors is nothing like an individual lead who wants to buy a new hat. How you as a B2B marketer approach each context and the tools necessary to drive success within each context (account versus lead) are utterly and irreconcilably different.

When you invest in B2B advertising, you should be driving account awareness, opportunities, and revenue with adtech built specifically for an account context. Marketing budgets are finite resources, especially in uncertain economic times when every dollar is put under a microscope. If your B2B advertising isn't maximizing efficiency, allocating enough budget across all accounts to drive ROI, and lacks a strong account context for reporting and improving performance, you're doing it wrong.

How to optimize B2B ad spend

Let's move to a more positive, prescriptive tack. What should you actually be doing to optimize your B2B advertising spend?

Get an account context.

You guessed it, the right B2B advertising solution understands and contextualizes accounts. This is simply a must-have in 2024. Your adtech solution must enable B2B advertisers to target messaging to accounts at each stage of the account's buying process, while ensuring larger accounts from using all of your spend and impressions.

Target buying group members within accounts.

The very best B2B ad tech solutions, beyond providing an account context, lets you identify, target, engage, and report individual members of each account buying group. It uses bid prioritization for known contacts, key personas, and high-intent individuals while simultaneously accessing real-time updates to track account-level intent signals. Knowing what accounts (and what individual buying group members) to target and when to engage with them is absolutely critical for optimizing your B2B advertising spend.

Optimize spending across accounts.

Be sure to load-balance your B2B ad spend in order to prevent overspending on large companies that have multiple people from a buying group conducting research on your website. Smart B2B advertising tools will automatically shift budget toward accounts requiring more nurture/outreach. You need to know what stage the account and buying group is in, whether it's gathering research, winnowing down their prospective vendor list, or getting ready to negotiate a deal.



10 Advantages of B2B DSPs

A demand-side platform, or DSP, is adtech that allows advertisers working at brands and ad agencies to buy inventory (i.e., ad space) on an impression-by-impression basis from publishers by way of supply-side platforms (SSPs) and ad exchanges through real-time bidding.

Using a DSP specifically built for B2B advertising, a platform such as **Demandbase Advertising**, offers a number of important **advantages**, as detailed by Demandbase's Russell Martin, Director of Product Marketing:

1. Higher quality impressions cut waste

A DSP built for accounts considers data such as the IP address and/or cookies, historical intent, content on the page, and the current pacing of your campaign before bidding for the impression. That account context is essential – lead-based DSPs are optimized for quantity, not quality (wasting your budget) and will NOT enable you to target decision makers within account buying committees.

2. Identifying the right people

During real-time ad auctions, a DSP built for accounts should be able to identify your target accounts by their corporate or home network IP, or a browser cookie (account, industry, revenue, etc.). DSPs that are lead-first focus on cookies as a major identifier associated with a persona, not a company/account. They utilize lead-first and consumer-related data categories to build identities instead of using the account context you need.

3. Protecting your brand

A DSP built with accounts in mind should provide full control over which publishers' ads are served on and which pages within the publishers to use. This control results in a white-list of B2B safe inventory, never putting your brand reputation at risk. Lead-first DSPs offer advertising on non-specific pages – and since segments are based on cookies, less concern is placed on the ad environment, which can present risks (and unwelcome surprises) for your brand image.

4. Reporting at the account level

A DSP built with accounts in mind provides transparent account-level reporting for each campaign, driven by top performing publishers and creatives, along with custom reports with any campaign parameters. Trying to advertise to buying committees within accounts on a platform designed for leads, on the other hand, doesn't offer you account-level reporting, leading to confusion, manual workarounds, as well as fragmented and unreliable insights.

5. Spend optimization

With a DSP designed for accounts, all campaigns are optimized for the highest possible business outcomes. The ability to optimize by account lift, engagement, and account reach occurs automatically. With lead-based DSPs, optimizations are mainly to save costs and achieve the lowest possible CPM and CPC. For B2B purposes, a lower CPM does not equate to better outcomes.



6. ABM platform integration

Having a DSP with an account focus provides a fuller, seamless integration into your other ABM platforms, enabling consistent cross-channel segmentation and account-level activation. You can use the same cross-channel segmentation for web personalization campaigns, and more. You give people a unified, singular experience of your brand, not a fragmentary one.

From a vendor management and cost perspective, economies of scale are enabled when you combine your license for an ABM platform/PaaS with your ad campaign spending under one end-to-end ABM partner.

7. Frequency capping

With a DSP for accounts, the pacing of each campaign and the balancing of impressions should be managed automatically. This results in an even distribution of impressions across all **accounts and individuals**, ensuring each account is treated the same way. Because B2C DSPs don't deliver an account context, they're unable to limit impressions at the account level. This results in an unequal distribution of impressions across accounts in your campaign, which negatively impacts ROI.

8. Measuring what matters

With a DSP for accounts, campaign measurement focuses on account-level sales outcomes such as pipeline and revenue, not typical consumer-related advertising metrics. The B2C DSP's heavy emphasis on cost-per-click fails to show B2B advertisers how their ads impact ABM outcomes such as pipeline and revenue. We'll share more on this measurement issue later.

9. Planning

A DSP built for accounts should offer a dynamic (or fixed) CPM. This allows you to correctly plan your yearly budget with no hidden costs or extra charges. With lead-based DSPs, each competitor has a different pricing model, with hidden costs being the only thing they share in common. Although they may offer a lower CPM, oftentimes they'll limit the number of campaigns you can run and/or limit the number of accounts you may advertise to on a monthly basis.

10. Adapting to a cookie-less future

A DSP built for accounts must be able to adapt effectively to a cookieless environment. DSPs built with B2C/leads in mind will first determine how to better identify consumers, not accounts. This puts all competitors that rely on cookies for B2B advertising in a negative posture since they're dependent on the innovation of others.

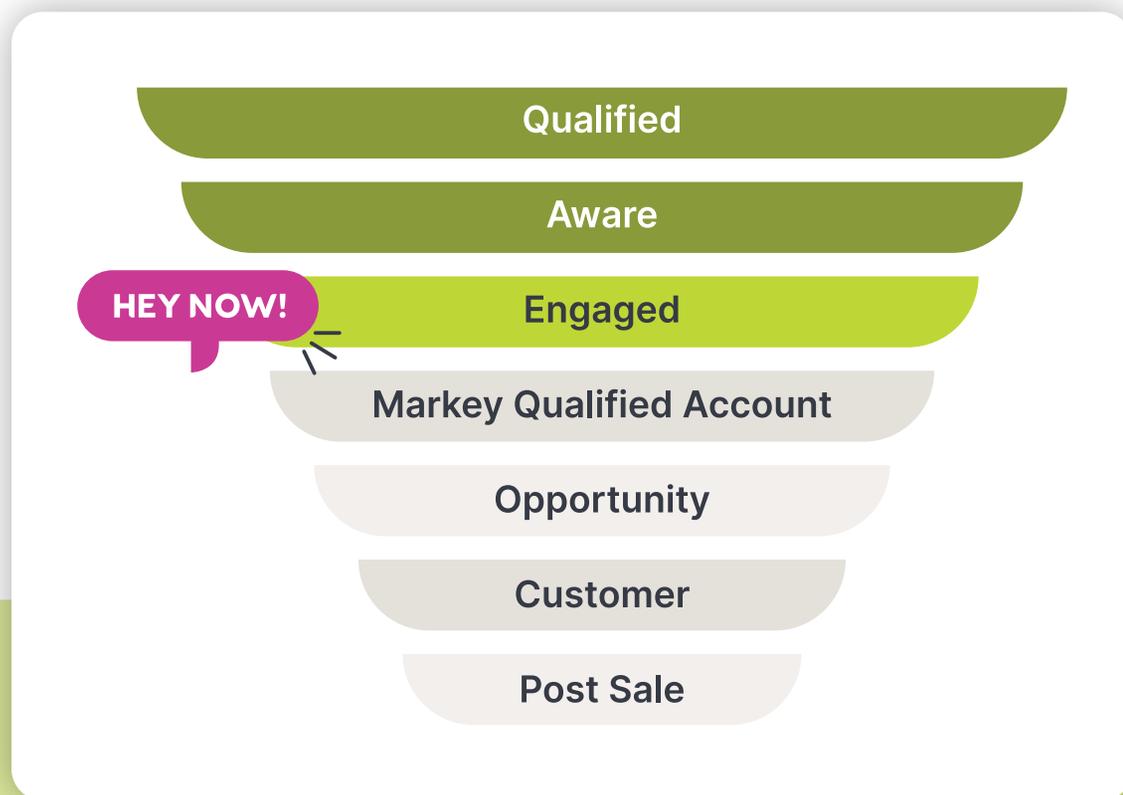
Advantage #6 listed above, ABM platform integration, can be an especially important advantage when using a DSP designed for accounts. B2B DSPs, unlike B2C DSPs, harness data insights and optimized account profiles that are generated from your ABM platform. Having a solid tech integration around accounts also helps you share and better act upon account data across your entire organization – also helping you align the marketing and sales functions. This data connectivity provides multiple benefits, as described by Demandbase's Gareth Noonan, GM, Advertising :

- **An ABM platform generates critical insights that help identify and target essential in-market accounts.** Because B2C DSPs aren't connected to ABM source data, they're less targeted in their reach. If you're committed to true end-to-end ABM execution, consider separating your programmatic ad spend from your more brand-oriented programs.
- **B2B DSPs provide more visibility into ad performance.** B2C platforms lack visibility into key metrics that measure the success of ABM-related campaigns. With B2C DSPs, you aren't able to identify whether you've delivered the ads to your target accounts. Also, you're not able to measure key metrics like lift and engagement, nor confirm if bids were optimized for on- and off-site intent.
- **B2B DSPs enable better alignment between revenue-impacting teams.** Marketing and sales alignment is enhanced when shared, easily-accessible account data is available, leading to better reporting as well as fewer obstacles (as compared to a B2C DSP) around coordinating/orchestrating account outreach between marketing and sales.
- **B2B DSP performance reports drill down to the engagement of key decision-makers in your target accounts.** Agency trading desks and mainstream DSPs have been built to target individual users and lookalikes based on their prior actions, not to reach and engage buying committees. And they do so almost exclusively based on cookie retargeting.



Top B2B Advertising Strategies

Let's assume you now have access to the best B2B ad tech. What are the top strategies of 2024? There are well established strategies that have evolved over the last few years, in addition to new trends that we highlighted in our State of B2B Advertising Report (2023). But let's keep this simple and discuss what you should consider in 2024.



Your sales funnel is either simple (volume velocity business), complicated (larger enterprise), or something in between. Whatever the case may be, there exists three basic strategies; journey stage based segmentation, awareness campaigns, and supporting growth opportunities.



Journey-Based Segmentation

Creating dynamic advertising campaigns based on the current stage of the account is the simplest way to be incredibly successful with your digital advertising efforts. If this was your only strategy, it would ensure every account and the buying group within, will always see the most relevant messaging with little to no logistical work. To review specific messaging strategies for each of your stages, ask your Demandbase representative for more information.

Awareness Campaigns

Awareness campaigns are one-off or always-on campaigns that can be defined in a variety of ways; brand awareness for accounts and buying groups that are unengaged with your brand; re-engaging buying groups that previously interacted with your brand; or to support growth initiatives within an existing customer base. Typically, a very specific group of accounts are involved, which may very well be in different journey stages.

Growth Campaigns

Now more than ever, it's important to not only protect your customer base, but to also grow it. To support these initiatives, it's important to setup specific advertising campaigns to support customer happiness and to accelerate growth. For example, using display advertising to share best practices for existing products owned or to explain why product B (not owned by them) will be beneficial to their business and current partnership.

Within any of these strategies (and more), display, native, video, and connected TV advertising are the most valuable mediums to reach the right individuals.





Measuring what matters: The right B2B advertising metrics

We have recently put together a guide on [Modern B2B Advertising Measurement](#) that can help you understand the right metrics to capture for your B2B campaigns. Before you go read about these key metrics in detail, here's what you need to know.

The ability to prove and improve the value of your marketing investment is a foundational pillar for B2B advertising success, not just for performance optimization but also for protecting and growing your budgets. B2B advertisers must resist the temptation of lead-based, consumer advertising KPIs because it doesn't enable you to prove and improve your ROI for account level marketing.

B2B isn't B2C, accounts are not individual leads (we may have mentioned this before). Squeezing oranges and expecting to produce apple juice is foolish. Measuring lead-based metrics such as individual clicks and website visits, simply don't matter for your ultimate B2B objective of pipeline and revenue. B2B advertisers need an account context and technology tools, such as [Demandbase Advertising](#), specifically designed to deliver it.

You can't prove and improve what you don't measure. Here are some proven measurement best practices B2B advertisers should consider adopting:

1. B2B marketing is about constant iteration: Build optimization cycles into all your campaigns to improve results. Tie campaign success to real business outcomes (like opportunity pipeline and sales revenue) to answer one question: how do all revenue teams contribute to the business bottom line?

Never forget that marketing, sales, and other teams that have a shared account focus and shared data can seamlessly coordinate and orchestrate targeted engagement with their accounts.

2. Demonstrate short-term and long-term impact: As described above, the B2B sales cycle is significantly longer than a monthly or quarterly ad campaign. While Demandbase often preaches the virtues of always-on campaigns, you'll want to develop both long-term KPIs that measure the impact on the business, as well as short-term KPIs that serve as a proxy for the long-term goals, as a way to demonstrate short-term progress.

3. Isolate the campaign's impact: Measuring influence is an art, not an exact science. Tracking what happens within an account during the campaign timeframe isn't sufficient, and it's rare that ads are the only marketing touch point for an account.

In order to properly evaluate a campaign's performance, and determine how each touch point moves the needle during the buying journey, zero in on measurement that shows incrementality: you can show whether the buying journey has been advanced by way of a comparative analysis against a baseline period or by comparison to a control group of accounts.

Conclusion

B2B advertisers seeking to optimize their spend and ad performance should strongly consider an end-to-end solution for account-based marketing. What won't work? A cobbled-together point solution that layers third-party segments, often with unreliable and untargeted B2C data that brings more confusion than insight. Demandbase isn't a media agency, nor do we compete with your agency. Instead, we partner with you to optimize your ABM outcomes.

We enable you to track all user activity to the account level, so you can better tailor and target your engagement to drive ROI. With **Demandbase Advertising**, all signals and optimizations from the platform to the bidder are focused on ABM outcomes, not on B2C leads. We help you drive awareness, opportunities, and revenue with adtech built specifically for B2B, so you don't waste your precious resources. **Demandbase Advertising** is a seamless extension of our platform, built from the ground up to deliver ABM effectiveness.





Demandbase is Smarter GTM™ for B2B brands. We help marketing and sales teams identify the best opportunities earlier and progress them faster to closing by injecting Account Intelligence into every step of the buying journey and orchestrating every action. For more information about Demandbase, visit www.demandbase.com.

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