

— Acuvate Software Inc, an **SMB**
Achieves Exponential Growth
with integrated **ABM** and **Inbound**
Marketing on a **Constrained Budget** —





Initiative Summary

Acuvate is a medium sized Information Technology company with a diverse portfolio of products, solutions, and services. They provide cross-industry solutions using emerging technologies around Data Analytics, Bots, Idea Management and Workforce enablement. Being a Microsoft Certified Gold Partner gives the company an extra edge over competitors.

The partnership with Microsoft was able to drive the majority of their business and the company obviously needed to move away from this dependency and be able to drive high value, large ticket customers from target industries.

The company wanted to enable strategic and accelerated growth and diversify its marketing and customer acquisition approach. The company brought in The Smarketers as their extended marketing partner to drive strategy and execution of all their marketing and outreach campaigns.

This specific initiative is centered around using an integrated approach aligning ABM and inbound marketing to drive highly qualified targeted leads from the CPG industry for Acuvate's Trade Promotion Optimization (TPO) software.

Working under a stringent budget and being unable to run targeted Ads unlike any traditional ABM campaign was particularly challenging. This required out of the box thinking, deep research and execution of extremely well crafted cross channel campaigns.

Over a period of 6 months, Acuvate was able to drive over 20 Sales Qualified Leads from target CPG accounts with 80% conversion rate.



Situation Overview

Challenge 1:

CXO Connects: Getting in touch with a CXO of any large \$Bil company is a major challenge. Acuvate's sales teams efforts to get in touch with CXOs from the CPG industry in the US and Europe using generic messaging over email and calls were futile. Unless there was a clear strategy and campaign execution plan in place, it was evident for Acuvate that all their efforts to generate business for their TPO solution were not going to generate any results.

The Smarketers had already been working with Acuvate since January, 2017. Acuvate approached Smarketers towards the beginning of April 2018 with this unique challenge to generate leads for the TPO solution from US and Europe.

Overcoming this Challenge: Acuvate worked with The Smarketers and their internal practice heads to identify 20 Top accounts for targeted 1:1 outreach and about 100 other accounts for segmented 1:few outreach. A well designed ABM approach was put in place to target these accounts using a 360 degree approach.

Challenge 2:

GDPR: With GDPR introduced in May 2018, it was going to be extremely challenging to drive any form of outreach campaigns to prospects in Europe, this required a completely different thought process and implementation plan.

Overcoming this Challenge: The Smarketers proposed that an Inbound Marketing approach be used and channels such as LinkedIn and Twitter be leveraged to connect with target prospects, create a microsite, blogs and other relevant content to drive inbound leads and conversions from Europe, US and other countries. Hence making the initiative fully GDPR compliant.

Challenge 3:

Data Availability and Budgets: Acuvate was using DiscoverOrg as their contact database provider for prospect contacts. While the tool was helpful in getting target contacts, their technology stack and other company related information readily, a lot more research was required to understand core technology, marketing and sales challenges to craft the right content, drive the right campaigns and use the appropriate channels for outreach.

Budgets on the other hand were tight, The Smarketers had to operate within a very tight budget and still drive the desired results. Acuvate had a KRA plan in place to measure connects, engagement, marketing qualified and sales qualified leads each quarter and measure the performance of The Smarketers against those KRA's.

Overcoming the Challenge:

The Smarketers team set up primary and secondary research methods to drive additional research of each account to understand annual performance, growth challenges, challenges around marketing, sales, revenue, technology. The company also identified Executives handling Revenue Management, their preferences and created company specific reports.

Since budgets were a constraint, the focus was invested into driving organic outreach campaigns as much as possible targeting events, sending company specific reports, setting up Webinars and using social selling methods.

Understanding of Customer/Market Need

Traditionally CPG companies drive trade promotions across various markets they operate in to promote their products, run various campaigns and discounts to make sure their products are sold. It is the responsibility of revenue managers to ensure that they improve revenues and profits while optimizing campaigns. The available data from their ERPs systems is not enough for them to make accurate decisions and predict the performance of products or campaigns.

[Acuvate's](#) TPO solution helps drive predictive analysis by taking various internal and external data points to help revenue managers to plan budgets better and marketing and sales teams to run promotional campaigns where it matters.

Companies using a TPO solution have reported an increase in annual revenues between 2-7% which is a large number for a \$bil enterprise.

While the need was very evident and the potential to solve this challenge faced by CPG companies was large, getting in touch with the Revenue Managers and CRO's to showcase the value of a TPO solution was particularly difficult.

For Acuvate, TPO was a home grown solution and could easily integrate with any ERP system. A single large account acquisition for TPO could easily be a large multi-year deal. Hence an ABM approach made the most sense to open doors into these accounts.

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Innovation

The Smarketers, after spending much time with Acuvate's subject matter experts and practice heads, understanding customer challenges, value proposition and how the solution can be positioned, proposed a unique strategy

- a. To create an integrated ABM approach that includes Targeted 1:1 and 1:Few ABM campaigns that utilize a cross channel content and campaign approach
- b. Pick a list of 20 named CPG accounts for 1:1 highly targeted campaigns that involved deep account research, understanding prospect challenges, mapping Acuvate's solution offering to the account, identifying the right people and using the right channels for outreach
- c. Pick a list of 200 accounts for 1:few segmented campaigns and follow a segmented research approach while keeping the message highly relevant and consistent.
- d. Perform a deep dive research into every single account and create well designed company specific reports portraying challenges and why it makes sense for that account to adopt a TPO solution
- e. Use organic methods for outreach such as Email, LinkedIn, Twitter, Webinars, Podcasts, CXO round tables and event promotions to drive interest, engagement, awareness and conversions.

In addition to targeted ABM, The Smarketers suggested that the product itself be separated from the main website and positioned through a microsite. Also if 20 1:1 and 200 1:few accounts were targeted, a majority of companies around the World possibly looking for a TPO solution are being ignored, hence it was very important to build a strong web presence and showcase thought leadership. This involved the following

- a. A well built microsite for the TPO solution addressing all possible aspects of Trade Promotion Optimization
- b. Blogs, eBooks, Videos and Infographics on a monthly basis to drive thought leadership content position as a leader. No other competitor was doing this
- c. A site fully optimized for SEO, the goal was to rank higher than competitors in 3 months which we did.



ABM Execution

Generating leads for the TPO solution from named accounts in the CPG industry was the end goal. As mentioned in the previous sections, getting in touch with the right audience and bringing them into a conversation was a major challenge, primarily because there were \$bil accounts and secondly, because we needed to reach out to the C-Suite. To achieve this, The Smarketers worked with Acuvate to take a two pronged approach. ABM on one hand and Inbound Marketing activities in parallel.

Execution

The Smarketers took a phased approach to ABM execution.

Phase - 1 Account-Profiling

The Smarketers worked with Acuvate's sales teams to identify high-value accounts for both 1:1 and 1:Few approaches.

1:1 Approach

With the help of Acuvate's sales teams, key decision-makers, influencers, target job titles (revenue management directors, VP of marketing, IT etc.) were identified in each of the 20 1:1 accounts. The Smarketers conducted an exhaustive research for all the 1:1 accounts to understand the challenges, opportunities, new marketing and technological

initiatives of each company and prospect. This research helped in creating a sharp and super personalized pitch and messaging for each account.

1:Few Approach

The 200 companies identified for the 1:Few approach were segmented based on the company revenue, existing technological stack, marketing spend. This ensured the personalization in campaigns is not reduced even though the number of accounts are higher.

Phase - 2 Asset Creation

ABM campaigns require various types of content assets to attract, engage and convert prospects throughout the campaign. The Smarketers created personalized content for both the 1:1 and 1:Few campaigns.

a) Microsite

Microsite Acuvate has a diverse portfolio of products and services and the company's main website reflects the same. The Smarketers created a personalized microsite for Acuvate's TPO solution that addresses the challenges of revenue management and trade marketing teams of the target accounts.



b) Thought leadership content

Based on the insights gained during the account-profiling phase, high quality and personalized content was created on a monthly basis. Content was generated across different formats like blog posts, infographics, videos, eBooks, webinars and podcasts with Acuvate's leadership teams.

c) Company-specific reports

Using the insights from the account-profiling research, The Smarketers created personalized company-specific reports for the accounts in the 1:1 ABM tier. These reports were aimed to give a comprehensive outlook of the company's existing revenue, growth, technological and marketing challenges and demonstrate how deploying Acuvate's TPO solution can help overcome these challenges and drive business value.

Phase - 3 Cross-Channel Engagement

The Smarketers orchestrated a cross-channel ABM campaign to enable simultaneous engagement of decision-makers in both online and offline channels. The content assets created were leveraged across all the channels to engage prospects.

a) Social Media

Company-specific reports created were promoted through LinkedIn ads targeted to the contacts identified within each 1:1 tier account. Personalized outreach through LinkedIn connects and messages from Acuvate's leadership LinkedIn accounts. Organic outreach posts were published on LinkedIn and Twitter. Prospects were also engaged through direct tweets.

b) Emails

Personalized 1:1 emails were sent manually to nurture and engage contacts in 1:1 tier accounts. Prospects who've downloaded any content asset were followed up via individualized emails. Segmented email campaigns were sent to the prospects of 200 1:Few tier accounts

c) Direct Mailers

Sent company-specific reports as direct mails to contacts of 1:1 tier accounts

d) Events

Conducted and invited contacts in the 1:1 ABM tier to exclusive industry-specific conferences, CXO round tables and workshops.



Inbound Marketing

Even though ABM is a targeted and successful approach to generate interest among decision-makers, its reach is limited to the accounts that were identified. This means that a majority of global companies looking for a TPO solution are being ignored. Hence complementing the on-going ABM campaign with a strong Inbound marketing strategy was very important. The Smarketers executed the following inbound marketing tactics.

a) Search Engine Optimization and Conversion Rate Optimization

Traffic was generated to the microsite by continuously optimizing it for on page and off page SEO best practices. Personalized CTAs, lead gen landing pages, and custom pop-ups were used to maximize conversions.

Highlight -> Increased website traffic by 119% (2017-2018)

b) Content Marketing

1. Creation of personalized blog posts, eBooks, white papers, product brochures, infographics, videos, case studies, podcasts, webinars, pillar posts on a monthly basis.
2. Published thought leadership articles in reputed publications and media outlets
3. Published non-paid articles in 5+ popular tech magazines and actively collaborated with 20 + industry influencers for creating content.

Highlight -> Generated 1418 MQLs through thought leadership content.

c) Email marketing

Creation of personalized newsletters to subscribers and target decision-makers

Drip email campaigns

Highlight -> Email/direct traffic increase by 104.45%

d) Influencer marketing and PR

Actively collaborated and created thought leadership content with influencers

Created influencer roundup posts

Acuvate is recognized as a top influencer brand and ranked 7th in Analytica's Business Intelligence Influencers report for 2018.

The influencer round-up post - 22 experts predict how AI will impact the enterprise workplace garnered 1.4k social engagements, 8000+ page views, 10.7k backlinks.

Analytica report: <http://www.analytica.com/blog/posts/business-intelligence-top-influencers-brands-publications/>

Blog: <https://acuvate.com/blog/22-experts-predict-artificial-intelligence-impact-enterprise-workplace/>

Infographic: <https://botcore.ai/blog/22-experts-predict-artificial-intelligence-will-impact-future-work/>

To summarize the execution strategy: Company-specific reports and roadmap creation based on account specific research. Cross channel outreach using Email, LinkedIn, Twitter, Webinars, and CXO round table. Microsite creation for the TPO solution and fully optimizing the website for SEO using relevant landing pages and optimization techniques. Blogs, eBooks, Infographics, and Videos to support marketing, campaign and lead nurturing activities.

Business Results

Quantifiable Metrics	Non-Quantifiable Metrics
Total Traffic - 208,974 visits (2017-18)	Interest from Influencers, Analysts and Media
Social Media Engagement/Traffic: 26,450 visits	Company Reputation/Goodwill
Search Traffic - 117,195 (organic traffic)	Brand Awareness
Conversion rates from MQLs to SQLs - 80%	
Engagement from target prospects - 75%	

Inbound activities started generating leads from the 3rd month of starting of the campaign - a microsite, blogs, and other content.

Within a span of 3 months i.e. December 2018 to March 2019, Inbound activities generated over 20 Sales Qualified Leads from high-value accounts.

Overall, with an integrated ABM approach; engagement and conversions grew.

Closing Statement

With the shift to customer-centricity, enterprises are increasingly moving towards account-based marketing for the promise of a strong ROI. However, most SMEs harbor a fallacy that ABM implies bleeding money for awhile before expecting any results.

The results that Acuvate has been able to achieve stand as a shining example that ABM isn't an expensive marketing approach - but a mindset of personalization. By creating highly relevant content and enabling multiple touchpoints, Acuvate has boosted its revenue.

Further, this initiative shows how well inbound and ABM can be paired together to create a robust strategy for driving real outcomes. Traditionally, ABM runs on ads and the budget was constrained making it impossible to spend resources on ads, which is the crux of ABM. This opens the doors to ABM for all small and medium enterprises as well.





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