

AI in Account Based Marketing

The Artificial Intelligence buzz is so great that it's hard to know where to start.

In my case, and that of many of my contacts, it's how AI might support Account-Based-Marketing(ABM).

That's a process that places the sales rep in the center of the action. Also focussed on making large sales on a longer sales cycle, say 6 to 18 months.

It treats individual accounts as "markets of one." Instead of casting a wide net to attract leads, ABM focuses on a curated list of high-value companies that are most likely to convert and deliver long-term value.

It's a collaborative strategy between marketing and sales, ensuring both teams align on goals, messaging, and outreach tactics.

Because I was a senior sales manager for years before getting into recruiting, I am convinced that good sales people are innately conservative about adopting new ideas (like artificial intelligence) and using them in the pursuit of major accounts.

This sentiment is echoed by Frank Cespedes, a Harvard Business School professor, consultant and author of a great book on sale management: *Sales Management That Works (How to sell in a world that never stops changing)*.

He points to the problems of implementing AI into larger organizations.

One example of these problems.

<https://technologymagazine.com/articles/deloitte-davos-survey-gen-ai-projects-face-scale-hurdles>

He offers a nuanced and pragmatic view of AI tools in sales:

His perspective on AI in Sales

- **AI as a productivity enhancer:** Cespedes emphasizes that the true value of AI lies in its ability to perform tasks as well as—or better than—humans, thereby freeing up time for salespeople to focus on high-value activities like customer engagement and strategic selling frankcespedes.com [Harvard Business School](https://hbs.edu).
- **AI is not a cure-all:** He cautions against viewing AI as a magic bullet. Instead, its effectiveness depends on how well it's integrated into existing sales processes and whether it's embraced by users salespop.net.

Where AI Adds Value

- **Customer contact time:** Most salespeople spend less than half their time interacting with customers. AI can automate administrative tasks, allowing reps to spend more time selling frankcespedes.com.
- **Sales coaching and hiring:** In interviews and podcasts, Cespedes discusses how AI can support better hiring decisions and coaching by analyzing performance data and buyer behavior themodernbanker.com [Membrain](#).
- **Omnichannel selling:** AI helps navigate the increasingly complex sales landscape, where buyers interact across multiple channels. It can provide insights that guide reps through this maze [Membrain](#).

Strategic Considerations

- **Performance management matters:** AI tools must be paired with strong performance management practices to deliver ROI. Without clear goals and accountability, even the best tech won't improve outcomes [Harvard Business School](#).
- **Return on talent:** Cespedes introduces the idea of “return on talent” alongside ROI, arguing that AI should be used to amplify human capabilities, not replace them [Membrain](#).

In general, he says: “Instead of starting with an AI strategy, first you must clarify what problems you want to solve or what opportunities you want to capture.”

You can read about this on his website:

[How One Company Used AI to Broaden Its Customer Base – Frank Cespedes](#)

The upshot of this approach to AI is that it’s hard to implement well in a sales organization unless you make it a servant of the sales strategy.

My additional comment is that it is especially important in an account-based-marketing approach where the AI software has to be understood and used in concert with sales rep actions.

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