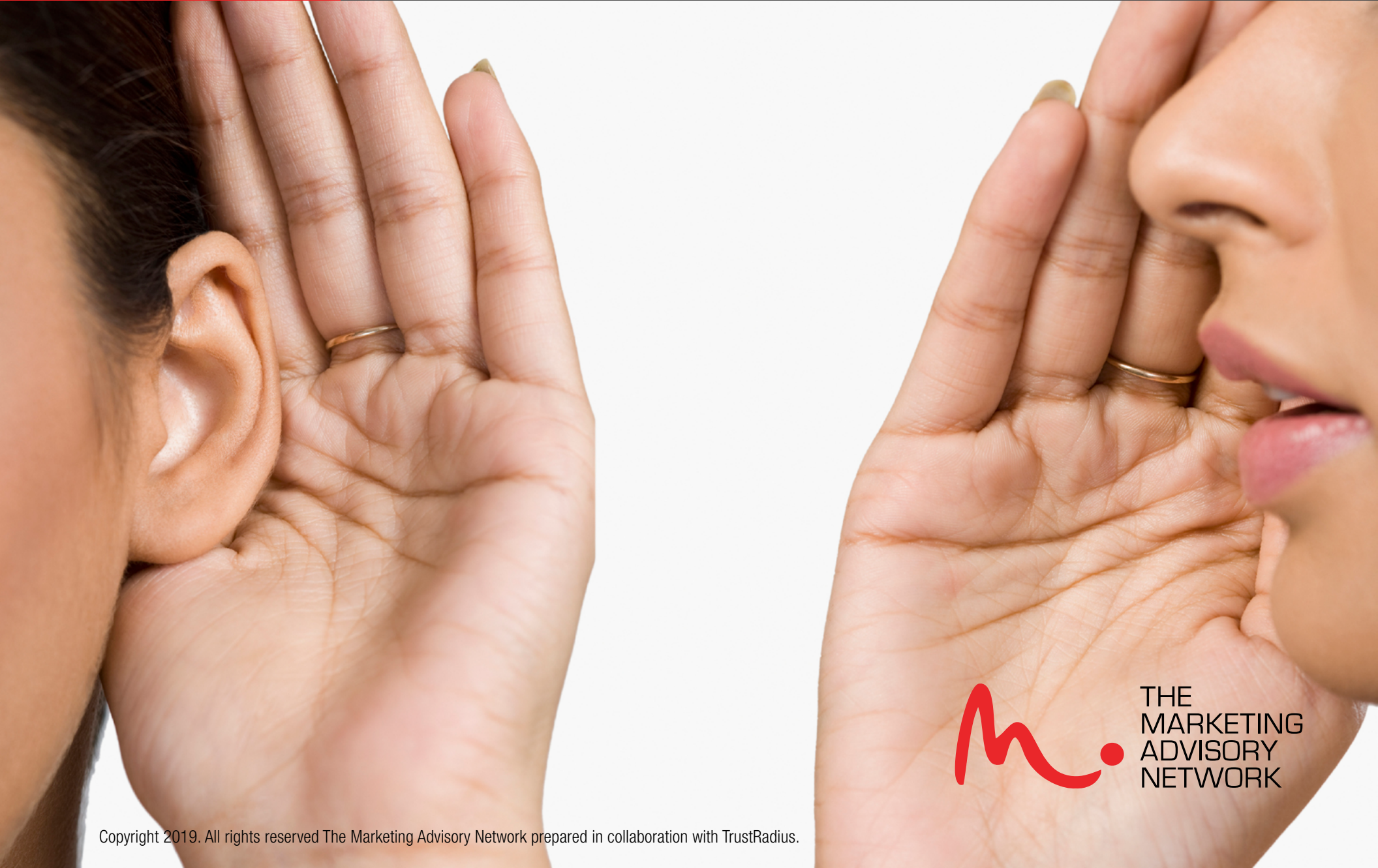


# Reviews: An Underutilized Catalyst for Account Based Strategies



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Whether you call it ABM, ABE, ABx or any other term du jour, account based go to market strategies are here to stay because they work. Now a proven technique, marketers are looking for ways to scale beyond experimentation to a more foundational way of optimizing success.

With the easy wins of being a new approach behind us, marketers looking to scale their account based efforts must address three crucial areas:

- 1. Selecting accounts** – All the programming in the world won't be successful if the right accounts are not selected to focus upon. Part of the selection process is prioritizing accounts in part based on their likelihood of purchase. Using only internal data to make that assessment is error prone because we only see when an account has interacted with us.
- 2. Identifying triggers to automate sales & marketing actions** – Account based strategies may always have an element of manual effort, however, to scale success marketers must find meaningful behavior they can track and use to trigger marketing and sales actions.
- 3. Building trust across the buying committee** – To do this we must recognize that businesses of all types are operating in a trust crisis. According to the 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer, trust in businesses has dropped 10% in just 12 months. It's not enough to have a strong value proposition and direct it at a set of strategically selected accounts. We have to build trust with our buyers who have become increasingly more skeptical of vendor claims.

Reviews can play a vital part in addressing all three of those challenges at scale helping your business:

- Get added to a short list of vendors being considered at your targeted accounts
- Signal when a targeted company spikes interest in your offer category or you as a brand
- Help buyers build confidence in you across the buying journey by using review content to offset objections
- Improve campaign conversion rates by showcasing on-page social proof
- Inform product/service delivery decisions that will best align with target account needs

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**84%**

of buyers said they seek input from peers and existing users during the purchasing process.

Source: 2017 B2B Buyer's Survey from Demand Gen Report

**67%**

of buyers said reviews were a "very important" consideration, up 12% from the year before.

Source: The Definitive Guide to B2B Reviews from TrustRadius

Reviews have grown to be the #2 (tied with vendor websites) most used source of information, while analyst reports saw a **22%** decrease in usage.

Source: The 2019 B2B Buying Disconnect from TrustRadius

**85%**

of buyers seriously considered more than one option when making a purchase.

Source: The 2019 B2B Buying Disconnect from TrustRadius

**45%**

of ABM programs use content personalized for the account.

Source: 2018 ABM Benchmark Survey Report from Demand Gen Report

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## Three essential use cases

### 1. Account prioritization

When selecting accounts to participate in your account based program you need to go beyond surface segmentation factors such as size of company or vertical market, and look for buying signals that indicate an account has a high propensity to purchase your offering. Those who have demonstrated intent should get priority attention and can lead to quick wins for your program.

Reading user reviews on a review site is a good indicator of purchase intent because it signals readers are comparing products. Where possible, you should prioritize contacts and accounts that have been consuming user review content on third party sites.

### 2. Actionable triggers

Mature account based marketing programs use contact actions to trigger marketing communications and sales action. Below are some common triggers that can be leveraged using review insights.

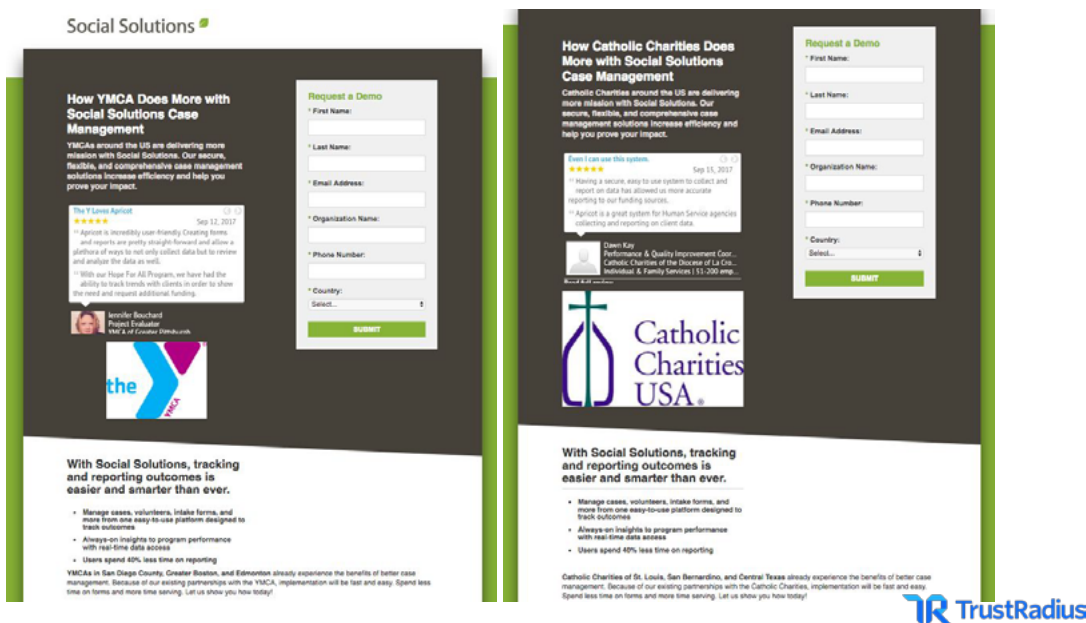
Action	Sales Trigger	Marketing Trigger
Target account contact publishes a review of a competing product	Use review content to inform outreach cadence and positioning.	_____
Target account contact reads a review(s) of your product/company	Send sales a task for phone outreach to qualify where the account is in the buying journey.	Send contact a case study to complement the review they read and promote vendor comparison assets.
Your customer publishes a review relevant to a targeted account	Assign the sales person a task to share the review with key contacts at the targeted account.	Add review to landing pages similar accounts are likely to visit.
A competitor has a spike in the number of reviews for their offering	_____	Leverage review content to update competitive battle cards and positioning statements.

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## 3. Account specific content

One of the hardest things to scale in your account based program is the publication of personalized content. Reviews provide a relatively simple way to get started.

In the example below, Social Solutions is targeting YMCA organizations and Catholic charities as part of their ABM program. Each time a YMCA or Catholic charity prospect visits a campaign landing page, the review box is populated with a YMCA or Catholic charity review.



The image shows two side-by-side screenshots of landing pages for Social Solutions. The left page is for YMCA, titled 'How YMCA Does More with Social Solutions Case Management'. It features a 'Request a Demo' form with fields for First Name, Last Name, Email Address, Organization Name, Phone Number, and Country. Below the form is a review from 'The Y of Greater St. Louis' dated Sep 12, 2017, with a 5-star rating. The right page is for Catholic Charities, titled 'How Catholic Charities Does More with Social Solutions Case Management'. It features a similar 'Request a Demo' form and a review from 'Deen Key Performance & Quality Improvement Cor.' dated Sep 15, 2017, with a 5-star rating. Both pages include a 'TrustRadius' logo at the bottom right.

The 2019 B2B Disconnect study by TrustRadius reports that: 53% of marketers and salespeople who leverage user reviews as a tactic found it low difficulty. Only 9% said user reviews were very challenging to manage.

The same concept can be utilized to feed emails, landing pages, direct mail and more. Reviews can be selected by company name, but also by size, vertical, use case or geography.

## Tip Time

In order to maximize review effectiveness in your account based program, follow these three tips:

- Collecting reviews on your website can be helpful, but third-party hosted reviews are often more trusted. And trust is especially important for complex selling processes.
- Collecting a wide range of reviews that is likely to appeal to all your target accounts is most effective when you have a programmatic approach to collecting them. Integrate reviews into your standard operational workflows to maximize the quantity and quality of content shared, or leverage an expert partner to take the burden off your team.
- Don't be afraid of negative comments. They build trust between buyers and your brand. Buyers want to know what you do well, and where there is room for improvement. TrustRadius research showed that almost 65% of B2B buyers use negative reviews to build confidence the reviews are authentic. What's more, 49% of buyers keep looking for data points when they can't find any negative feedback. You are only delaying the purchase process if you try to hide the cons. Don't be shy about commenting on reviews, both good and bad, because they show prospective customers you are a good listener and you care about the customer experience.

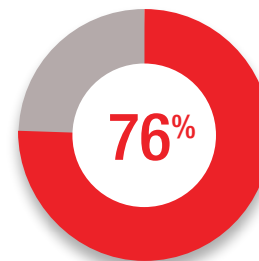
## Collaborating with sales

One of the reasons account based programs are so essential is their ability to drive greater collaboration between sales and marketing. Integrating reviews into your account based program is one way to surface that teamwork.

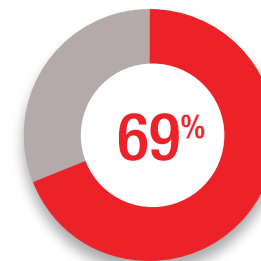
Sales plays a critical role in both using review content & soliciting feedback.

### Accelerate the buyer's journey

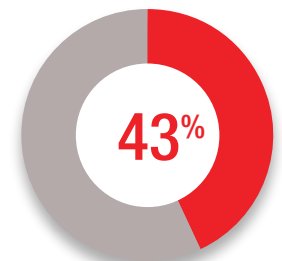
Buyers use reviews throughout the entire purchase journey – from creating a shortlist of vendors to consider, to making a final determination when multiple solutions can provide similar capabilities.



76% use reviews  
for Discovery



69% use reviews  
for Evaluation



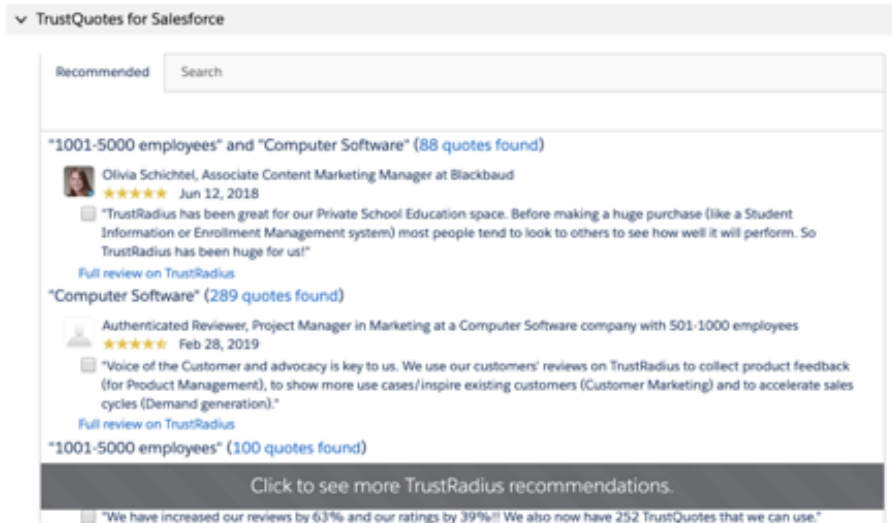
43% use reviews  
for Selection

Source: November 2017 poll of 680 buyers on TrustRadius.com  
<https://vendors.trustradius.com/reviews-used-along-buyers-journey/>

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## Marketing can facilitate using reviews in these helpful ways:

- Make it easy for sales to integrate quotes into their outbound communications with review site feeds that can be filtered based on the profile of the company being targeted
- Create a library of review quotes categorized by reviewer profile, and also topics they mention. Some review sites, like TrustRadius, offer tagging tools to make categorization easy.
- Include review links as part of your late stage pipeline acceleration nurture programs.
- Integrate a link to review sites in your datasheets and presentation content.
- Publish competitive insights garnered from published reviews in battle card formats that are easy to reference when making calls.
- Encourage representatives to invite new customers to submit a review by providing invitations they can personalize and automatically assign a task at key milestones as reminders to do so. For example, within 90 days from client selection is a great time to ask a new customer to share why they selected you in a review.



*For example, TrustQuotes for Sales widget populates each Salesforce contact page with relevant quotes that match the contacts's profile.*

**Important note:** Review content is owned by the review site or author. Marketers must seek permission to licence that content within your own materials prior to using it.

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## Conduct an ABM review workshop

One of the most effective ways to roll out new account based program efforts is to host a workshop with your peers in sales. These workshops provide interactive opportunities for sales & marketing to work together and accelerate adoption. Here we've outlined a review workshop agenda to get you started.

Duration	Topic	Presentation Tip	Exercise																		
10 minutes	The role of reviews in the buyer's journey	During this workshop, kick off by stepping participants through research data about the role of reviews in an ABM strategy. Be sure to emphasize the value of reviews and all the places reviews can be used across the buyer's journey.																			
15 minutes	Define your review needs	Review your list of targeted accounts and together define the profile of reviews that will be most compelling. While you may already have an idea of what this should be, it's best to have the audience build it with you. This will give them a sense of ownership.	<p>Complete this matrix:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Target # of reviews</th> <th>Category</th> <th>List the details</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td>Region</td> <td>What regions do you need to serve?</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Industry</td> <td>Which industries must you capture?</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Use case</td> <td>List 3-5 top use cases</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Size company</td> <td>Which sized organizations are needed?</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Other</td> <td>What unique characteristics are important to your buying community?</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Target # of reviews	Category	List the details		Region	What regions do you need to serve?		Industry	Which industries must you capture?		Use case	List 3-5 top use cases		Size company	Which sized organizations are needed?		Other	What unique characteristics are important to your buying community?
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20 minutes	Audit existing review content	Use the above matrix and overlay how many references exist today for each of those categories. You now have a priority list of reviews you'll want to solicit. And don't worry if you have big gaps – it's normal to start out in a deficit. Over time you'll be able to fill them.																			
20 minutes	Leveraging existing review content	Use this opportunity to brainstorm all the places that reviews could be used today. You'll also want to use this time to review any triggers you will be automating as part of your review program.	Keep a running list of reviews and topical quotes that you can prioritize for adoption. By surfacing not just full reviews, but highly relevant comments your team is best armed to address particular objections that arise during the sales process. The nuggets of social proof will be easy for your team to consume and share.																		
15 minutes	Soliciting new reviews	It's time to jumpstart asking for reviews. Roll out sample request emails and incentives sales can use to ask customers with whom they have a good relationship. While sales won't be the only team to ask customers to give a review, they can jumpstart the effort with individuals they have come to know well.	Ask each person to write down specific review candidates at 2 different companies who they can ask to write a review.																		

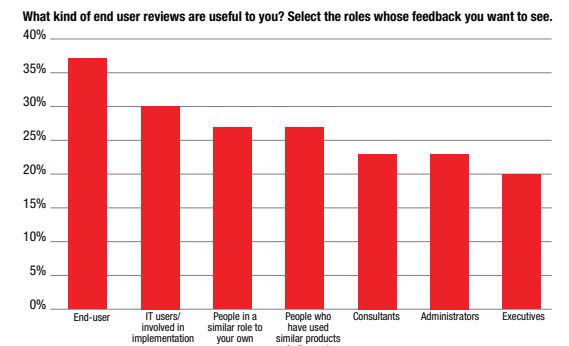


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## Review checklist

Are you maximizing the use of reviews in your account based strategy? Use this handy checklist to find out.

<input type="checkbox"/> Use reviews across a variety of channels	<p>Where are you using review content? Consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Landing pages</li><li>• Website</li><li>• Email nurture communications</li><li>• Introductory emails</li><li>• Email signature</li><li>• Direct mail</li><li>• Datasheets</li><li>• Video stories</li></ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> Leverage 3rd parties to collect reviews	<p>Case studies and testimonials published by your team are incredibly valuable. However, they are rarely seen as objective by buyers. Augmenting these efforts with third-party collected reviews can be highly effective at building confidence with prospects.</p> <p>Ask yourself, do you have reviews on dedicated review sites? Three top sites to consider are: TrustRadius, Gartner Peer Insights and G2Crowd.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Insert review content across the buying process	<p>Are you using reviews to help sales address buyer objections, get on the short list, select your company, justify a purchase? Go beyond marketing campaigns and leverage reviews across the entire purchase journey.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Capture a significant number of reviews	<p>The more reviews you have captured, the more likely any given buyer is going to see themselves in published reviews, and the more credibility readers will place in them.</p> <p>A product listing with less than 5 reviews is going to fall short for 79% of buyers.</p> <p><i>Source: The Definitive Guide to B2B Reviews from TrustRadius</i></p> <p>The majority of buyers seek 10 or more reviews to meet their needs. Some review sites consider this a threshold for verification or to be eligible for special recognition.</p> <p>What % of customer base do I have covered with a review? If you're working with a 3rd party provider, you can expect a 10-20% conversion rate on invitations. On your own, this will be lower so you can't be too selective with who you invite.</p> <p>Further, when building your invite list keep in mind that your target economic buyer will not be the only person reading reviews and influencing the decision - and even they want to hear from roles with specific hands-on product experience, like end-users and administrators.</p>



*Source: <https://vendors.trustradius.com/executives-vs-end-users-who-do-buyers-want-to-hear-from/>*

Be sure to consider a variety of segments when soliciting reviews by role, industry, use case and geography you serve.

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<input type="checkbox"/> Go beyond numeric ratings	Numeric rating systems are useful to capture a buyer's attention, but in an account based model where buyers are making complex purchase decisions, "star ratings" alone aren't that helpful. Track the number of topics covered and word count of your reviews to truly maximize their value to prospects and internal decision making.	Buyers ranked review content as the most important factor when using reviews. <i>Source: <a href="https://vendors.trustradius.com/why-content-not-scores-should-drive-your-review-strategy/">https://vendors.trustradius.com/why-content-not-scores-should-drive-your-review-strategy/</a></i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Keep reviews current	Review recency makes a difference to a buyer. Don't be afraid to ask a reviewer to refresh their reviews, and of course build in a recruitment strategy that has new reviews being added regularly.	Based on a poll of 550 buyers using TrustRadius.com, 76 percent look at the publication date as a measure of review. <i>Source: <a href="https://vendors.trustradius.com/do-you-know-the-shelf-life-of-your-reviews/">https://vendors.trustradius.com/do-you-know-the-shelf-life-of-your-reviews/</a></i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Use reviews to inform product/service decisions	Reviews are incredible for helping buyers make a purchase decision, but they also provide valuable insight into features and capabilities your buyers crave. When detailed reviews are captured, they can be a critical feed into your product/offer management and product marketing teams.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Trigger sales and marketing action	Are you able to identify when a buyer reads a review of your offering, or that of a competitor? What triggers do you have in place when that happens? Does a task get assigned to sales? Do you launch a pipeline acceleration nurture stream? Consuming review content is a great buying intent signal to act upon especially when you see a spike in activity.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Measure the impact of your review program	Run A/B tests to learn how and where review content is most effective. For example, compare response rates using a review on a campaign landing page vs. the same landing page without a review. Measuring the conversion difference will help you maximize success and allocate resources accordingly.	In addition, consider the impact reviews have on pipeline velocity and win rate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Campaign conversion rate</li><li>• Campaign revenue influence</li><li>• Pipeline velocity</li><li>• Win rate</li></ul>

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## Samantha Stone

*Founder, the Marketing Advisory Network*

Samantha is a fast growth, revenue catalyst, marketing junkie, ABM coach, and mother of four high energy children. Throughout her career she has launched go-to-market initiatives and lead marketing strategies for award-winning, high growth companies including Netezza, SAP, Ascential Software and Powersoft.

After many years leading new product launches, uncovering hidden revenue potential and sparking new ideas Samantha founded the Marketing Advisory Network in 2012 to unleash the possible within enterprises.

Her book “Unleash Possible: A Marketing Playbook that Drives Sales” has received 5 star reviews and was named as a must-read book by LinkedIn and FlipMyFunnel.

You can read more about her marketing philosophy and get practical advice by visiting [www.unleashpossible.com](http://www.unleashpossible.com) or following her on twitter [@samanthastone](https://twitter.com/samanthastone).

For help accelerating ABM success email Samantha at [samantha.stone@marketingadvisorynetwork.com](mailto:samantha.stone@marketingadvisorynetwork.com).