



ALIGNING FOR ABM

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INTRODUCTION

If your entire marketing setup has been designed around demand generation, then that is all that your marketers know. It's also what your sales colleagues know, and your executives too.

If you are going to make the transition to account-based marketing (ABM), then don't expect to do it overnight. Be sure to put time and effort into getting internal buy-in and internal alignment. It is time well spent that will support the long-term nature of your ABM strategy.

The scouts have a saying, "Be prepared." That sentiment is as true when you kick off your ABM journey as it is in the wilderness.

In this ebook, we look at how you can work on getting buy-in for an ABM strategy and gradually start moving away from demand-generated activities. We discuss the importance of developing an ABM strategy so all your company stakeholders have a common understanding of what you're aiming to achieve.

We also look at the very important task of aligning the marketing and sales teams, as well as at the different roles and responsibilities that are required for a successful ABM approach.



SECTION 1:

STRATEGIZE FOR SUCCESS

SETTING COURSE: DEFINE YOUR ABM GOALS

To make sure everyone is on the same page and speaking the same language, gather a small group comprised of different departments to set your ABM goals. This initial planning will make internal alignment easier throughout your ABM journey.

ABM Strategy Fundamentals:

- Clearly define what you want your ABM efforts to achieve.
- Outline a plan that reflects those goals.
- Create accountability for your plan by measuring KPIs and assigning roles.
- Create a communication strategy for each internal stakeholder informing them of the plan, their roles, and the company's goals.

THE COMPANIES THAT HAVE HAD SUCCESS HAVE REALLY POSITIONED ABM AS A STRATEGIC BUSINESS INITIATIVE RATHER THAN A MARKETING PROGRAM. SALESPEOPLE, FINANCE, IT AS WELL AS MARKETING NEED TO AGREE THAT THIS IS AN IMPORTANT INVESTMENT TO MAKE FOR THE OUTCOME TO BE MOST BENEFICIAL



Bev Burgess,
Senior VP and ABM Practice Co-Lead,
ITSMA Europe



Rishi Dave,
CMO at Dun & Bradstreet

“ABM IS ALL ABOUT CUSTOMIZING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE, AND THAT’S NOT SOMETHING YOU CAN JUST JUMP INTO WITHOUT CORPORATE ALIGNMENT, SHARED GOALS, AND A LOT OF PERTINENT INSIGHTS.

BECAUSE ABM IS A MORE TAILORED APPROACH, IT REQUIRES MUCH MORE STRUCTURE AND COORDINATION ACROSS DEPARTMENTS IN ORDER TO REALLY SEE RESULTS. IN FACT, I’D SAY IT’S NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO EXECUTE AN ABM PROGRAM WITHOUT FIRST CREATING A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY.”

SECTION 2:

GET INTERNAL BUY-IN

SECTION 1:

GET INTERNAL BUY-IN

Every company needs internal buy-in for an ABM strategy to work. Approach your stakeholders appropriately. Here are three elements to help get buy-in for ABM so you get off on the right foot.



Light a Fire For Your Team

Making a fire is the first thing one needs to do when camping—it's the only way everyone gets warm. The same idea can be applied to getting support from your peers on your ABM adventure. If you can't spark support from your peers, how can you expect executives or other company teams to buy into the idea of ABM?

Essentially, when you position ABM as an approach that helps both salespeople and marketers achieve their goal of producing more revenue, it's a no-brainer for them to hop aboard the ABM train.



Display the Digits

When it comes to company execs who make decisions, they want to see the numbers. So, start the conversation with some statistics, such as 87% of B2B marketers think ABM produces more ROI than other forms of B2B marketing, according to a study conducted by the Information Technology Services Marketing Association (ITSMA).

From there, use your own company's metrics and data to prove that implementing ABM can translate to fiscal benefits, like saving those previously lost accounts or reducing duplicated efforts.



Reverse Relationships

At this point, you know how personalization is important to ABM. But emphasize to your stakeholders that in today's market, 65% of B2B buyers are more likely to switch vendors if communications to their company aren't personalized, according to Salesforce's Fourth Annual State of Marketing Report.

By personalizing communications, you are developing a strong personal relationship with your clients. In fact, 74% of marketers have seen their customer relationships improve since implementing ABM strategies for personalized content (ITSMA, 2017). Its more than merely retaining these customers. If your teams nurture these relationships, they're more likely to be able to identify and be chosen for other cross-selling and upselling opportunities.



Dave Rigotti,
Head of Enterprise Demand
Generation & ABM for Marketo

“ORGANIZATIONS STRUGGLE WITH CREATING AND MAINTAINING INTERNAL ALIGNMENT AS THEY IMPLEMENT THEIR ABM STRATEGY. MISALIGNMENT IS A PROBLEM BECAUSE IT AFFECTS EVERY PHASE OF ABM—PLANNING, EXECUTION, AND MEASUREMENT. ORGANIZATIONAL MISALIGNMENT IS SOLVED BY ALIGNING GOALS AND INCENTIVES.”

MANAGING YOUR THREE MOST IMPORTANT STAKEHOLDERS

To “sell” ABM to different stakeholders in your organization, you need to speak their language and make it relevant for them. Here are some tips to get those stakeholders on board.

Market ABM To Marketing

- Share information — Inform them of how traditional marketing and sales relationships miss out on major revenue opportunities.
- Show them it’s win-win — Teams willing to work side by side are associated with major wins.
- Guide them through ABM — It’s a shift in thinking and practice compared to demand generation.
- Together forever — Express how this is a long-term, long-haul, coordinated approach.
- Assure executives — Emphasize they will no longer be measured by the number of leads.

Sell ABM To Sales

- Illustrate arguments for change — Is revenue slowing? Untapped opportunities? Losing existing clients?
- Personalize advantages — For example, the sales and marketing team’s efforts are enhanced when working in tandem. Together, there are fewer waste-of-time-leads and more quality accounts likely to make a deal.
- Explain the ABM journey — It’s not only targeting major accounts, but an entirely new mindset and set of strategies for success.
- Show success — Demonstrate how you win big when you win together.
- Bring bosses aboard — In addition to explaining the benefits of ABM, teach them how its metrics and timespans differ from other approaches.

Excite Executives

When performance is affected, executives are more open to trying different strategies to strengthen sales and revenues. Therefore, express to them any of the performance deficits you’re witnessing, such as:

- Declining sales for existing major accounts
- Competitors are gaining share
- Teams are being stagnant or not developing new business opportunities

SECTION 3:

ALIGNING YOUR MARKETING AND SALES TEAMS

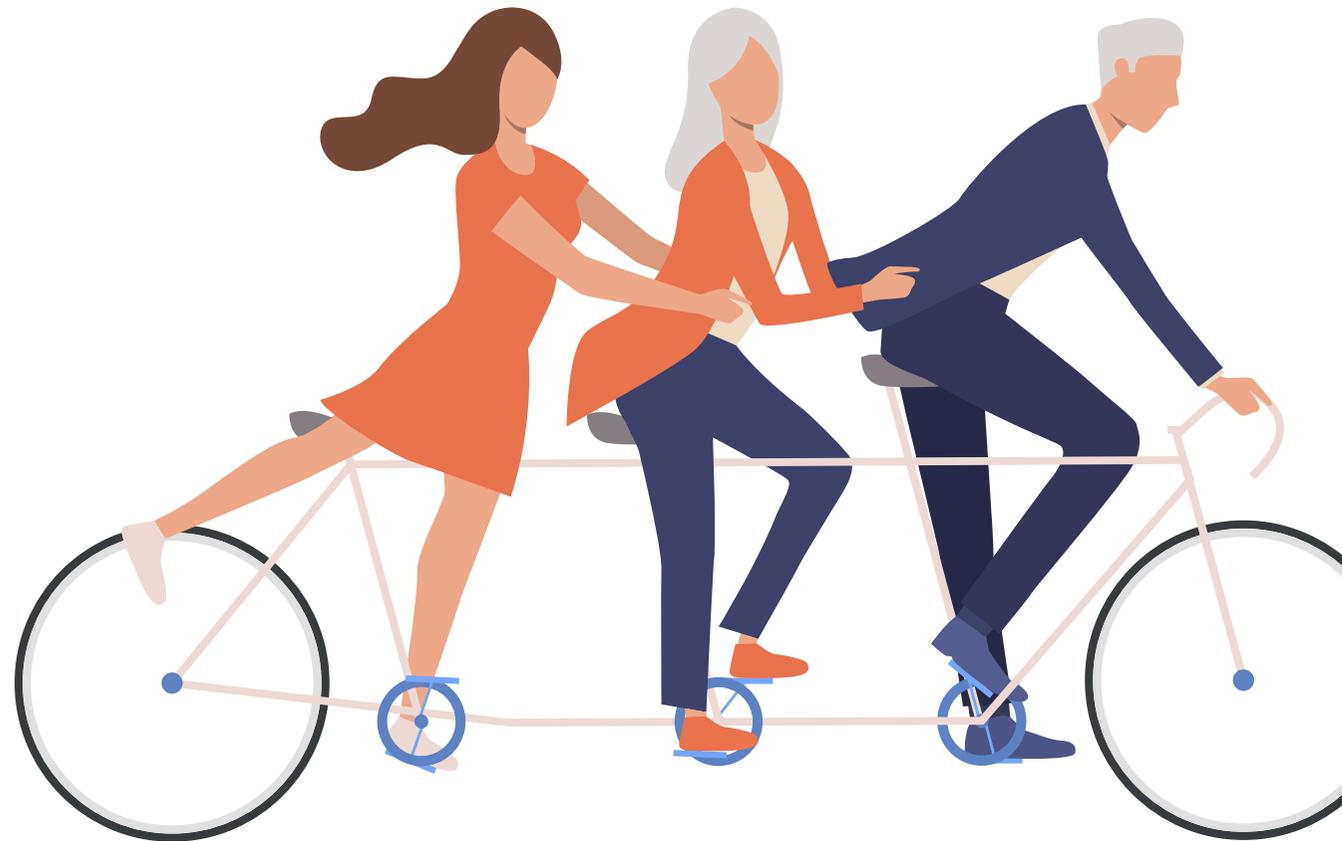
SECTION 3:

ALIGNING YOUR MARKETING AND SALES TEAMS

Though it is considered one of the biggest challenges of incorporating ABM into your marketing mix, aligning sales and marketing is essential for ABM to be successful. In fact, SiriusDecisions found that B2B organizations with strongly aligned marketing and sales teams increased revenues and profits faster than teams working separately over a three-year period.

The reason it's challenging to align these two teams is because for decades they have worked in silos, measured success with different yardsticks, and were motivated differently. However, if you couple the marketing team's long-term thinking and brand value consciousness with the sales team's determination and quota-motivation, you'll have ABM success.

Therefore, to align your teams in a way that emphasizes their greatest assets, it's important to share data and insights, processes, and measurements.





David Hoskin,
Managing Partner of cylindr

“TO ME, ABM STANDS FOR ACCOUNT-BASED MARKETING AND SALES, NOT JUST MARKETING. IT HAS TO BE VIEWED THROUGH THIS LENS TO BE SUCCESSFUL. INSTEAD OF SEPARATE DEPARTMENTS, ABM UNITES TEAMS BY FOSTERING SUPPORT AND STRATEGIZING COLLECTIVELY. ABM EMPLOYS EACH TEAM’S BEST QUALITIES, EXPERIENCES, AND RESOURCES. WITH SUCH AN AMALGAMATION, HOW COULD ABM NOT BE EFFECTIVE?”

THREE LEVELS OF ABM ALIGNMENT

What level of alignment do you currently have between your sales and marketing teams? What are your alignment aspirations? Remember, it's a journey! So, if you are not even at Level 1 yet, don't worry. Make that your first goal, and try to achieve higher levels later.



LEVEL 1: ALLIANCE

As a solid starting point for a long-term alignment journey, sales and marketing teams act independently but are on the same page, communicate with each other regularly, and share common goals.



LEVEL 2: ACTIVATE

The next level of alignment includes everything from Level 1, but the marketing team takes on a stronger leadership role.

At this level, the marketing team helps the sales team navigate business forward by using different techniques and providing target accounts with amiable intimacy. Essentially, the marketing team helps the other teams to align and come up with a game plan.



LEVEL 3: ASSIMILATE

At the highest level of alignment, teams are integrated to form a single team to reach each goal. Processes, roles, and goals are adapted to suit all players on this newly aligned team.

TECHNIQUES TO AID ALIGNMENT

Alignment doesn't merely come from restructuring teams and reporting lines. It's more than that. Below are four elements to help your sales and marketing teams feel like they are one team working toward the same end goal.

Defer To Definitions

When it comes to ABM, a strong foundation involves everyone agreeing on the definitions, roles, and handover processes for accounts and between stages.

Incorporate Engagement

Incorporate the marketing team into sales activities and engage the sales team with marketing activities. The more regularly, the better. The extra information exchanged between groups keeps them informed and feeling accountable for reaching the same goals.

Making Mutual Metrics

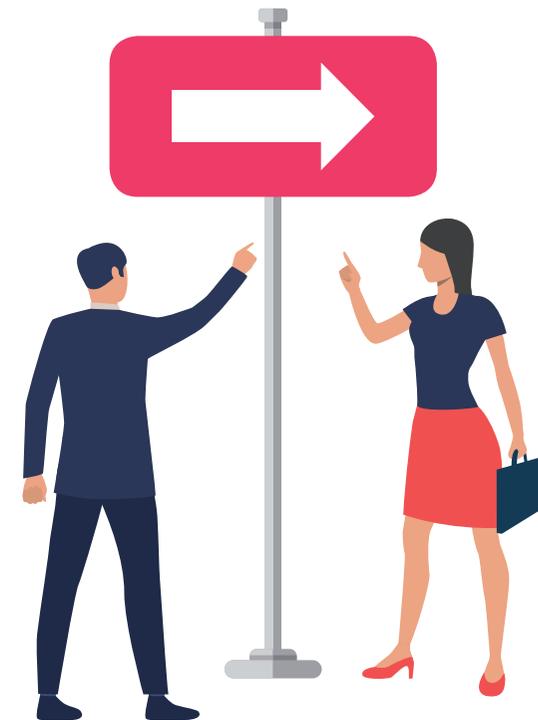
Misalignment is typically resolved when goals, incentives, and measurements

are shared. Compensation structures need to be similar for both the sales and marketing teams.

For example, if a commission structure works for your company, use it for both departments. Marketing's commission can be determined by target account opportunities created and revenue.

Support SLAs

To document your mutual metrics, like KPIs, adopt service-level agreements (SLAs). SLAs in ABM create standards for alignment and procedures across teams. This ensures target accounts in each tier are assigned the same level of attention, research, and personalized communication.



STAY COMMITTED TO ALIGNMENT, EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

To ensure your ABM alignment is on the right path, follow these steps:



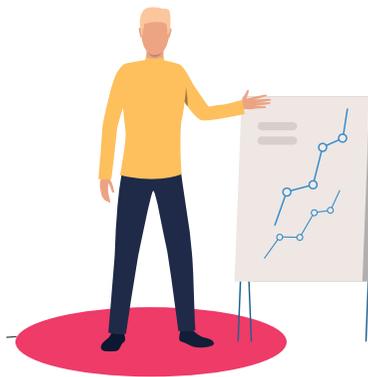
Step 1: Buy-in and Position

- Get buy-in (see Section 1) from executives so they can understand and commit to an ABM strategy, as well as support both the marketing and sales teams. Then, position ABM to them as an ongoing, collaborative approach.



Step 2: Decide and Document

- Agree on and document all accounts to target, the criteria by which to select accounts, and how to prioritize accounts.
- Agree on and document all ABM account resources, including your pilot program.
- Agree on and document all the short-, medium-, and long-term metrics, and rank their priority.



Step 3: Plan and Meet

- Hold meetings regularly to keep teams up to date and inform them how they can help.
- Create account plans for each top-tier account, including the roles and responsibilities of the teams.
- Adjust plans at meetings if necessary.

SECTION 4:

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ESSENTIAL ABM ROLES

There are all sorts of roles and expertise required to form the perfect ABM dream team. However, at this early stage, it isn't so important to have all your bases covered. The roles discussed in this section paint a picture of the skillsets you will need once you've matured your ABM strategy. These roles are worth keeping in mind as your ABM strategy progresses so you can start prioritizing filling in resource gaps.

The roles below are some of the essential ABM roles that don't fit into traditional marketing or sales departments. The roles in the following pages are discussed in more traditional teams, but the roles themselves are updated to reflect the aligned and collaborative nature of ABM.

ABM Lead

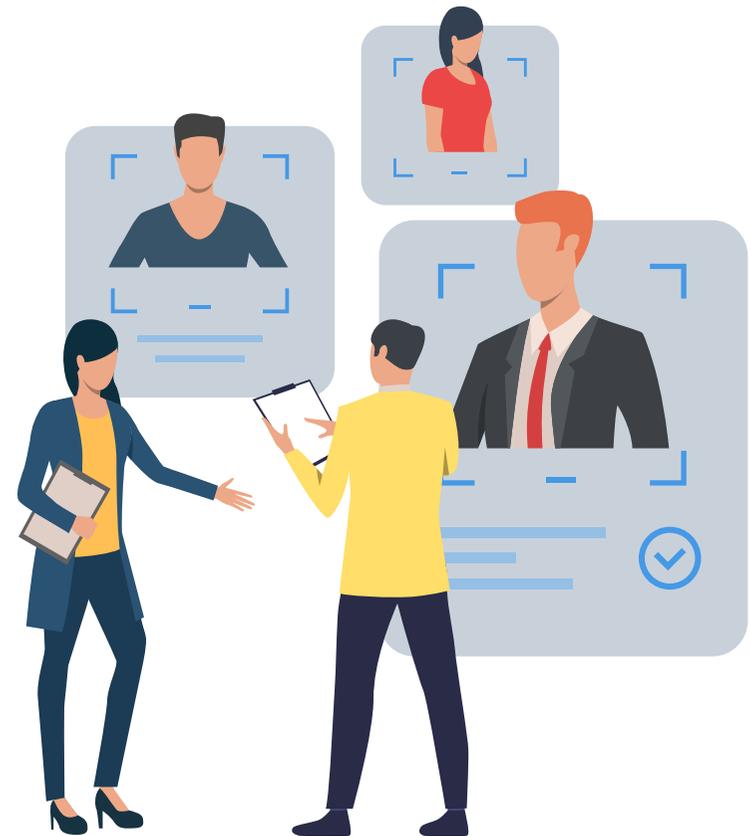
Initiates and guides the alignment processes, recommends ABM-oriented technologies, creates and communicates programs, monitors, and communicates metrics, collects insights, and orchestrates organizational coordination.

Executive Sponsor

Supports both closing deals and maintaining quality engagement for accounts.

Product Manager

Helps create and guide ABM-engaged teams and customers through the product roadmap and provide product insights.



SALES ROLES TO SUPPORT ABM

These are some of the sales roles that should be considered for ABM

Sales Development Representative

Reviews and qualifies sales-ready accounts to present to the account executive. Conducts research and creates target account contacts, develops account relationships over time, and supports account executives. Helps to bridge the gap between the sales and marketing teams via data sharing.

Account Executive

Becomes the account's trusted advisor by navigating all conversations and events around the account's needs. Closes the sale—being a strong closer is key for this role. Additionally, the account executive drives the ABM plan forward by running team meetings to craft an ABM plan for each account.

Sales Operations

Supports all of the sales team's wide range of functionalities: sales administration, territory management, deal support, systems and data management, commission plans, and more.

“MARKETERS DOING ABM ARE 40% MORE LIKELY TO REPORT ALIGNMENT WITH THEIR SALES TEAM COMPARED TO MARKETERS NOT DOING ABM”

Bizible's State of Pipeline Marketing Report



An Ideal Salesperson

Understands ABM as a concept and is willing to try it out in a systematic fashion. Employs excellent communication skills, particularly listening, to obtain and use information effectively. Respectful and engaged with stakeholders across teams. These salespeople have probably been with the company for several years, and brings a solid understanding of the industry, product and internal organization to the table.

MARKETING ROLES TO SUPPORT ABM

Demand Generation Guru

Generates qualified leads to provide the sales team which supports revenue goals. Assists in lead-nurturing, analytics, and implementing marketing programs.

Content Creator

Produces valuable and relevant content that attracts, informs, and engages target audiences throughout the sales cycle.

Product Positioner

Focuses on messaging, positioning, and deal support.

Customer Advocate

Reinforces the sales team via customer advocacy, references, and testimonials.

Marketing Operations

Maintains account and contact data, applies and instigates the use of ABM technology, and collects and organizes ABM metrics. Oversees service-level agreements, measurements, and database organization to ensure the marketing and sales teams have accurate, easy-to-locate data.

Marketing Manager

Determines and operates the ABM program mix, creates account-specific content, and supports the sales team.

Corporate Marketer

Collaborates with ABM-engaged marketers to develop the target account's communication strategy, including customizing programs for customers and documents the programs' effectiveness.

“ABM MARKETERS HAVE TO UNDERSTAND HOW TO TAKE ACCOUNT INFORMATION — BEHAVIORAL, PROFILE, CONTACT AND PREDICTIVE DATA — AND TURN IT INTO INSIGHTS THAT ARE RELEVANT TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE IN THE ORGANIZATION.”

Bizible's State of Pipeline Marketing Report



An Ideal Marketer

Strong relationship development skills to pursue individual target-account executives and buyers. Supports teamwork and alignment across teams. Seasoned with deep business insight and a willingness to share it, the ideal ABM marketer understands communications on multiple levels.



PRACTITIONER VIEWPOINT

Working with a wide variety of companies transitioning to ABM, I've seen how difficult it is to align the sales and marketing teams. It's especially difficult if these departments are accustomed to working in silos.

When ABM is done right, it has the power to totally transform the internal dynamics of a company. With time and effort, the sales and marketing teams suddenly start working as one to close deals.

The companies I've seen successfully align sales and marketing for ABM have experienced more than just an increase in revenue, deal size, and the quality of accounts in their pipeline; they've also seen employee satisfaction increase. As soon as individual people and departments started engaging with others and other teams, the quality of their work improved significantly.

One particular company decided to venture into ABM when transitioning from a completely online format to a mixed online/

offline strategy. The first thing the company did, and the step they still find to be the most valuable, was aligning the sales and marketing teams.

The company's teams decided together to target big enterprise accounts, create personalized demonstrations, and measure the success of the pilot program by the number of meeting requests and the size of the deals closed.

Since launching the pilot program, alignment tactics are ever more present in the company as they scale up ABM efforts. I think one of the reasons this company's sales and marketing teams aligned so well is because they continuously met up to discuss what went wrong and what went right for each ABM play. Now, each team knows who can do what and when to do it. Today, both teams function more as one and are comfortable leveraging their diverse specialties to close targeted accounts.

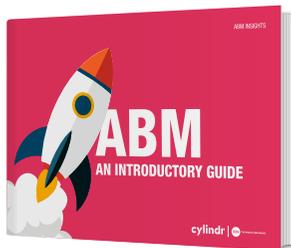


**“THE SYMBIOSIS OF
ALIGNED MARKETING AND
SALES TEAMS IS INVALUABLE
TO ABM SUCCESS”**

Jonathan Winch,
Head of cylinder's ABM transformation
team in the Copenhagen office

FURTHER READING

Looking to learn more about ABM? We have three other ABM ebooks you might be interested in browsing:



AN INTRODUCTORY GUIDE

Interested in ABM but don't really know what it is, how it works, or how to get started? We've got the ebook for you!

In this introduction, we cover the pillars and benefits of ABM. We then break down the steps needed for you to launch your own ABM approach.



THE TECHNOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE

Technology can be super helpful in supporting you reach your goals along multiple phases of your ABM journey.

This ebook is a basic guide to the roles and uses of technology in ABM.



CONTENT CREATION

ABM is powerful, but only as powerful as the content you create. If it's not correct, it could cost you.

This guidebook provides you all the vital elements you need to create or adapt your content strategy to your ABM approach.



ABOUT CYLINDR

B2B storytellers, content marketers & copywriters in Copenhagen with a unique global presence

We love getting geeky, writing and creating content about all the technical details, yet we recognize that making meaningful, trusted connections with people comes first.

The Danish representative of BBN – ranked by B2B Marketing as the no. 1 international B2B marcomms agency – we have 29 countries within easy reach to provide you with everything you need to transition into an ABM strategy. We're experts in developing concepts and delivering captivating, effective content around the globe.

cylindr |  **BBN** THE WORLD'S B2B AGENCY

cylindr
Hammerensgade 1,
1267 Copenhagen K, Denmark
+45 4492 4444
contact@cylindr.com
www.cylindr.com