metadata

CHASING GHOSTS:

Why ABM is Haunted—and Agentic GTM is the Future

"If you're still chasing third-party intent signals in 2025, **you're optimizing for ghosts** in an outdated system."

—Lisa Sharapata

"I Wanted Intent Data to Work. I Really Did...

Written by **Lisa Sharapata**
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It was 2016. Nashville. SiriusDecisions Summit. That's when I first heard the phrase: "intent data."

And I was hooked.

The idea that you could detect digital body language, a surge in keyword research, a visit to a competitor's site, and reach buyers before they ever came to your website – felt like magic.

I went all in.

Even when the cracks showed up: bad account matches, unreliable enrichment, increasing bot traffic, noisy signals that lead to dead-ends, or my sales team being 'ghosted', I kept trying to make it work. Because at the time, there wasn't a better option.

**But then the world changed.
The AI revolution began.**

Buyers changed how they research. The web changed what signals it gives. And third-party intent data was no longer worth chasing.

ABM Has Been Broken for Years
Even before AI, the promise wasn't delivering:

❌ Sales teams ignored signals.

❌ Marketers couldn't accurately match accounts to intent.

❌ Buyers never liked being hunted.

AI didn't destroy intent—AI exposed that the foundation was cracked.

Start with the Wrong Data, End with the Wrong Results

"'Crap in, crap out" isn't just a cliché; in ABM terms, that means garbage data in, leads to wasted money.

"Intent data is the biggest closed-loop scam in B2B marketing."

BurnItDown.Marketing

Yesterday's ABM begins with intent data—but the signals are often outdated, inaccurate, or misaligned:

- A VP searched for "sales enablement" three weeks ago… and fixed their problem already.

- An intern downloaded a white paper… and triggered a full-blown sequence. Crazy!

- A marketer looked at your competitor's pricing page to get design ideas… and got scored as "hot." Wild.

**This isn't intelligence.
It's noise disguised as signal.**

The result? Your campaigns are optimized on fiction. Your targeting is off. Your message misses. Your sales team doesn't trust you. And your AI tools are now just automating the wrong things… faster, and without the desired results.

Account Matching is a Minefield

If your system thinks IBM is hot, but you don't even know what department it is. Or the signals say a VP of Marketing in Albany, NY is searching for "digital marketing," but you can't figure out who that person actually is... **you're done before you start.**

In traditional ABM:

- Lead-to-account mapping is challenging and inconsistent.

- People change roles, and the signals don't follow fast enough.

- Enrichment vendors provide conflicting firmographics. This isn't intelligence. It's noise disguised as signal.

This erodes credibility at the worst possible moment: right before a sales rep takes action.

Sales and Marketing Are Already Fragile

ABM was supposed to align sales and marketing. Instead, it created more friction:

• Handoffs are sloppy

• Sequences hit the wrong persona.

• SDRs get ghosted.

• Reps chase ghosts instead of real signals. (If they follow up at all)

This erodes credibility at the worst possible moment: right before a sales rep takes action.

Every time a rep says, "This lead stinks," the trust breaks a little more. When that happens enough times, sales stop listening and start going rogue.

"I'll just build my own account list."

"I don't trust the leads anymore."

"This data is garbage."

I've been on the receiving end of the frustration more times than I can count, and it's not just inefficient, it's demoralizing. Marketers feel defeated, fingers are pointed, trust breaks down, walls go up, and teams fall apart.

The Consequences Compound

This is what happens when your GTM motion is built on shaky ground:

Wasted Spend: You optimize ad budgets based on faulty prioritization.

Missed Moments: You target too late or the wrong person.

Lost Revenue: Sales ignores leads, marketing blames sales, numbers are missed, and someone gets held accountable.

Yet, we held out hope that things would get better.

The technology would get smarter, the signals would become clearer… because we went all in.

We made big investments in complex platforms, we invested in teams of people to support it, we spent political capital to defend it, and we put our heart and soul into making it work.

But the advancement in technology didn't solve the problem; it made matters worse… And you've dug in so deep, you're worried you're stuck and can't get out.

3rd Party Intent Signals were Built for a Human Web

Today, **over 30% of web traffic is bots.** OpenAI's GPTBot alone makes up 13%, outpacing Googlebot. Meta's crawlers are catching up. And it's only increasing every year!

*Source: Cloudflare

Stop Chasing Ghost Signals

Meanwhile, actual humans are:

- Researching in ChatGPT and other LLMs

- Asking peers in Slack, Reddit, and WhatsApp groups

- Listening to podcasts

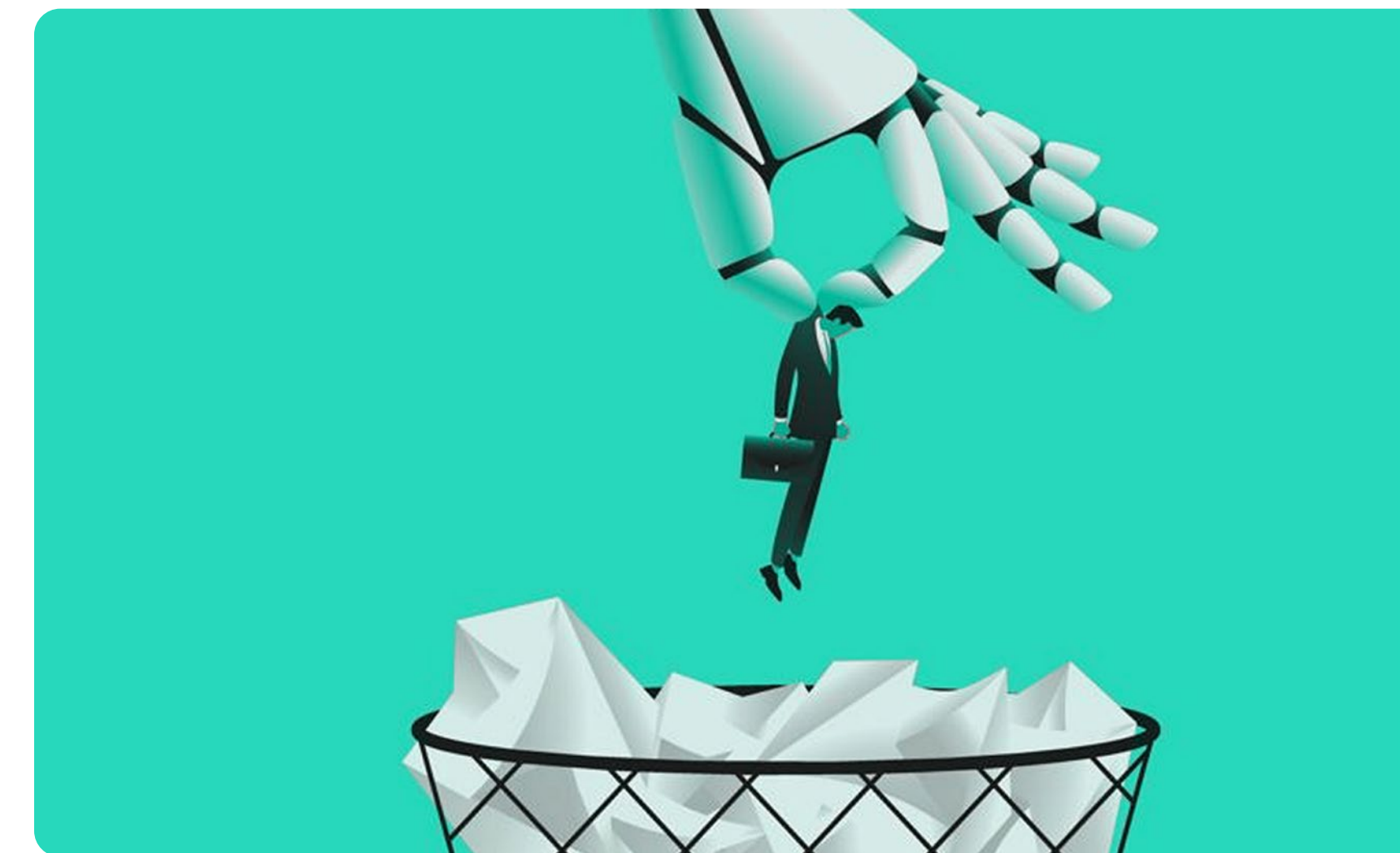And these places aren't traceable, which throws off the intent data and "black-box" algorithm.

So when your dashboard says someone "showed intent" by visiting an industry website...

Was it a buyer?

A bot?

Or worse—neither.

And if it were a human, are they in an early stage or a late stage? Can you match them to the right account?

Buyers Never Wanted
To Be Tracked Down

Even when intent data was accurate, it always felt a little... creepy.

Buyers never wanted to be hunted. They wanted help. Relevance. Respect.

The moment someone downloaded a white paper, the chase began—retargeting ads, "warm" calls, and the infamous "just checking in" email (because you couldn't say, "I know you've been searching for XYZ.")

But buyers never wanted to be hunted. They wanted help. Relevance. Respect.

B2C figured this out years ago—shifting toward brand building, owned experiences, subscriptions, communities, and loyalty.

B2B? We went the other way.

We doubled down on intent—bigger budgets, bigger platforms, and a strategy built on chasing instead of attracting.

It worked for a while. But it created friction, short-term wins, and long-term distrust. Now that buyers can research invisibly, the entire model is falling apart.
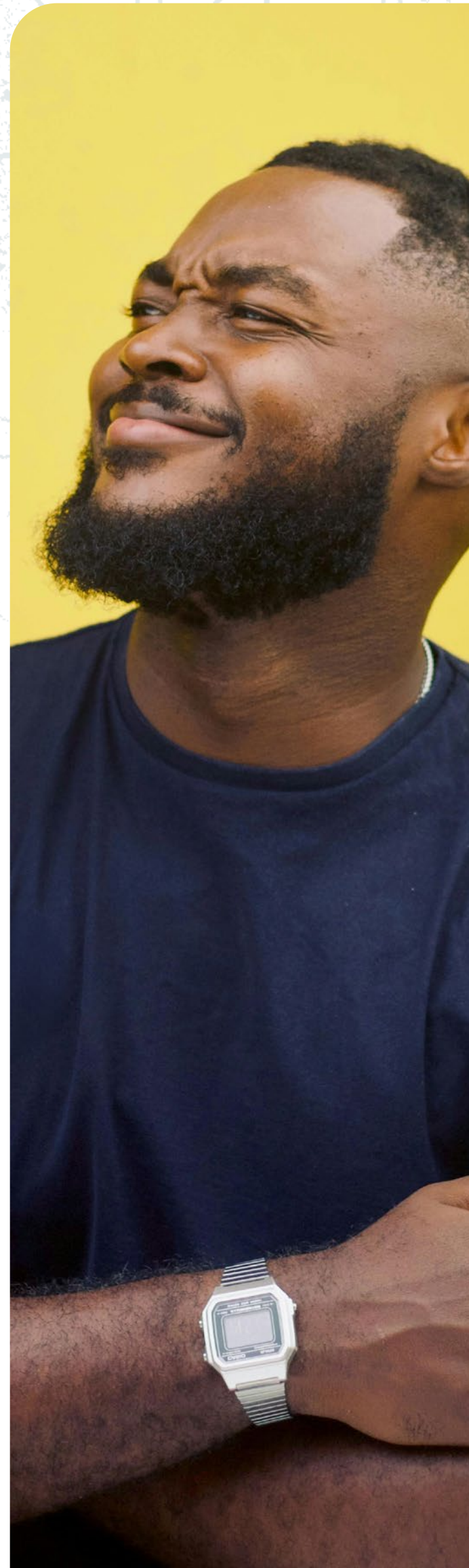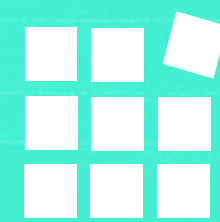
The Funnel
Has Collapsed

We used to think:

- 3rd-party intent = top of funnel - early stage, showing "signs of life"

- 2nd-party = mid-funnel - in discovery mode, considering options

- 1st-party = bottom-funnel - in the decision-making process and interested in your brand

But that funnel only works if the signals are real and people follow a certain order. In today's web, **they're not.**

It's time for a new go-to-market model.

Understanding Intent Data

1st-Party Intent: Your site, your emails, your CRM. Highest quality, but limited to later in the hunt.

2nd-Party Intent: Trusted partners like G2 and Trustradius.

3rd-Party Intent: Open web. Keyword spikes, cookies, IPs. Broadest reach— and most polluted.

Most ABM platforms were built on third-party intent as a leading indicator.

Enter Agentic GTM

Agentic GTM isn't ABM 2.0. It's a brand-new GTM model built for the AI era, where marketing is proactive, not reactive Your GTM team never sleeps, never slows—and never needs supervision.

Instead of waiting for signals, **Agentic GTM deploys autonomous AI agents that proactively discover, engage, and qualify real humans** in real-time, and drives pipeline automatically.

The Core Principles

Think of it as your always-on marketing muscle. While you're in meetings, sleeping, or planning Q4, your agents are testing variations, scaling what works, and pushing performance forward.

1

Autonomous Decision-Making and Collaborative

Agentic GTM agents work independently and collaboratively, without requiring step-by-step instructions after they are set up.

They handle the tedious, time-consuming work like campaign execution, analysis, optimization, creative testing, and audience segmentation in unison. Allowing you to focus on what humans do best: storytelling, strategy, and big-picture thinking.

2

Adaptable

Agentic GTM adapts in real-time. Agents adjust spend, audiences, personalize messaging, and sequencing based on what's happening right now, not what happened last week.

No more static playbooks. Just systems that flex with your market.

The Core Principles

3

Proactive: Continuous Learning and Optimization

Most platforms wait for you to tell them what to do.

Agentic GTM is different — it initiates based on continuous learning and optimization.

An agent can kick off a new campaign Monday morning, based on weekend traffic trends. Or launch a retargeting sequence when someone visits a pricing page three times.

This is marketing that acts, not just reacts.

4

Goal Oriented

Agentic GTM agents don't chase metrics for the sake of it.

They're trained on outcomes — pipeline, win rate, expansion. Every decision they make is in service of the goals you define.

It's like having a dream team that wakes up every day asking, "How do we hit our number?", and then takes action.

5

Hyper-Personalization at scale

These aren't black-box bots. Agentic GTM agents are collaborative; they can pull data from your CRM, listen to call recordings, scrape web pages, and generate bespoke, multi-channel outreach at scale.

Marketers stay in control. You guide the vision. The agents handle execution, and they learn from your input.

It's the best of both worlds: human creativity meets machine tirelessness and precision.
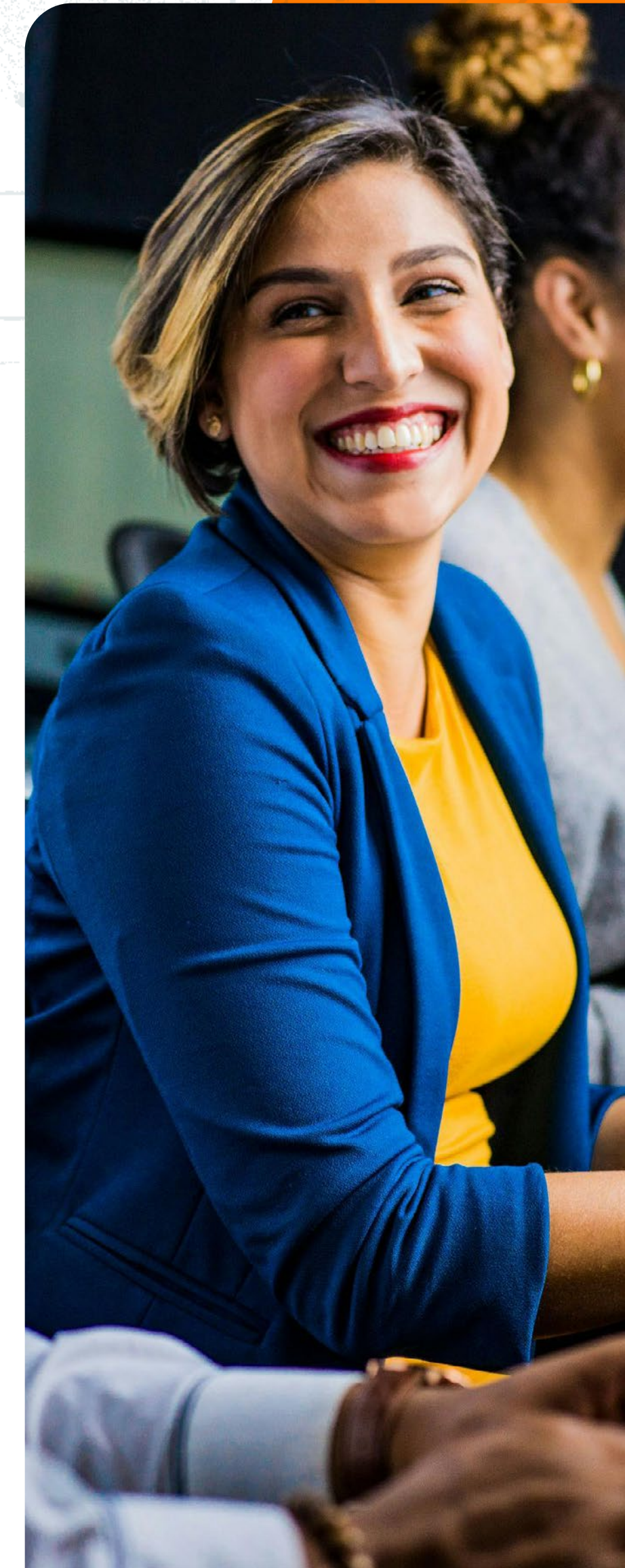
ENTER

Metadata**ONE**

1

Autonomous AI Agents

Run always-on campaigns that:

- Identify best-fit accounts

- Launch and optimize ads

- Adjust targeting and spend automatically

- Generate and test creative and copy

2

Real Account Intelligence

Agentic GTM starts with real-time data — not lagging indicators. MetadataONE connects and enriches signals across:

- ✓ CRM, web traffic, ad engagement, meeting intelligence, and more

- ✓ Deanonymized web visits and buying group behavior

- ✓ Advanced intent and firmographic data

You get dynamic segments that evolve in real-time, not static lists.

3

Multi-Channel Orchestration at Scale

Agentic GTM isn't about blasting cold ads. **It's about orchestrating meaningful, in-the-moment experiences:**

- Launch personalized campaigns to individuals in real time

- Adapt creative audiences and copy, offers, and landing pages by persona or buying stage

- Engage across web, social, and email — automatically

It's proactive, full-funnel marketing — without the manual grind.

4

Built for Buyer Trust and Sales Alignment

Old-school ABM created friction. Agentic GTM creates flow:

• Target accounts that are actually in-market

• Prioritize quality over volume

• Align sales and marketing on what matters: pipeline and revenue

No more ghost leads. Just clear, credible signals that convert.

5

New Metrics for a New Era

Forget MQLs. Start tracking:

• Marketing Qualified Accounts (MQAs)

• Agent-Qualified Interactions (QAIs)

• Pipeline and revenue influenced by AI agents

Every dollar is tied to velocity, win rate, and ACV with full-funnel visibility. Not vanity metrics.

ANALYZE
INSIGHTS ACROSS CRM, AUTOMATION, ADS

BUILD
AUDIENCES AND CAMPAIGNS

CREATE
ASSETS, CREATIVE, COPY WITH AI

DEPLOY
MULTI CHANNEL EXECUTION IN ONE PLACE

OPTIMIZE
AI-DRIVEN BUDGET + PERFORMANCE TUNING

MetadataONE

Final Word

This isn't an upgrade. This is a rebuild for a world where:

Attention is scarce — **Signals are synthetic** — **AI agents are the new gatekeepers to your buyers**

LEARN MORE

Agentic GTM initiates. Prepares. Executes. Optimizes.

Welcome to the future of growth at scale.