

# Account-Based Marketing Certification: Training for Long-Term Success

Kathryn McGinney, Sr. Manager, Account-Based Marketing, Splunk Inc.



Kathryn McGinney, a successful graduate of ITSMA's ABM Certification and Mentoring Program, discusses why she decided to join such a challenging course and the impact it has had on her job.

As the pioneers of Account-Based Marketing in 2003, ITSMA has been providing ABM training, coaching, and certification for over a decade. The ABM Certification and Mentoring Program provides an immersion in the methodology and skills marketers need to succeed, including an initial two-day workshop, dedicated coaching over a 90-day period, and development of a real-world ABM plan and campaign for a specific account or cluster of accounts. Public training sessions are held throughout the year at locations in the UK,

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US, and India, with exact dates and locations provided on our website.

Kathryn McGinney, Sr. Manager, Account-Based Marketing for Splunk, is one of hundreds of certified ABM-ers who has graduated from ITSMA's program. In this interview, she outlines her reasons for taking the course, the difference it has made to her professional life, and why she is passionate about ABM.

**ITSMA:** Tell us about Splunk.

**Kathryn McGinney:** Splunk Inc. was founded to pursue a disruptive new vision: make machine data accessible, usable, and valuable to everyone. As technology evolves there is so much data out there. We enable customers to make sense of that data in real time.

Organizations use our solutions with machine learning to monitor, investigate, and act on all forms of business, IT, security, and Internet of Things (IoT) data. It helps you understand how your systems and processes are running, it throws up any red flags with security issues, and gives you actionable and predictive insights into your customers so you can make decisions accordingly.

**ITSMA:** How long has there been an ABM program at the company?

**McGinney:** There wasn't any ABM when I joined four years ago. I came in as a field marketing manager, supporting the sales force in a number of different regions. Over the years I have covered every region in the US and Canada, except the Northeast, so I have been able to build good relationships with all the sales leaders in those regions. That really set me up for success when we started an ABM function.

**ITSMA:** Had you been hoping to establish ABM at Splunk?

**McGinney:** Absolutely. I have always been passionate about ABM. I started practicing ABM at my previous company with self-training and implementing some of the practices learned. So when I came to Splunk I could see a gold mine for ABM activity. In fact, I had an elevator pitch about ABM that I used for everyone, from the CEO to the security staff that checked me in for office visits!

**ITSMA:** You finally succeeded in getting your message through?

**McGinney:** As I said, I tried to sell the ABM message to anyone that would listen. And then last year, in June, just as I was about to board a flight to Holland for vacation, my manager called to say that the company had decided to set up an ABM function at Splunk and they wanted me to head it up!

The first thing I did when I returned from vacation was sign up for the ITSMA ABM Certification and Mentoring Program, taking place in Boston two weeks later.

**ITSMA:** Why did you choose ITSMA's ABM training program?

**McGinney:** A couple of reasons. First, the content was excellent. For example, when I finished certification one of the first things I did was to create account selection criteria by working with our sales and marketing leadership to work out just what our criteria should be.

I also liked that I was part of a peer group during the two-day initial workshop. I expected to feel a bit behind because these were big name companies with several people from the same organization. But I learned that we were all in the same boat and seeing the same challenges. That made me feel okay about it all and I was able to communicate that back to the organization as well.

**ITSMA:** What were your main goals?

**McGinney:** At the time I had so many ideas about ABM, but what I really needed was a framework. Not just how to put together a plan, but also to how get the right message across to the organization. The certification program was incredibly valuable for that. It really set me up for success.

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**ITSMA:** Can you give an example of something that you found particularly valuable from the course?

**McGinney:** Definitely the case studies. I have used them to sell the program internally. Our sales people's time is incredibly valuable, so I could take the case studies and show them the results and say, 'this is what I want to do for you' as well. I started with the global VP of sales to get buy-in, which helped a lot.

**ITSMA:** What did you find the more challenging parts of the course?

**McGinney:** The initial two-day course was like a rigorous master class and I felt like I was back at college. But the hardest part for me was probably putting together the plan with my mentor. I had never done that before and ITSMA is incredibly firm about what is meant by ABM.

On my first mentoring call, my mentor helped me realize the key items which were missing from the first part of the plan.

So I then spent the next eight hours putting it back together from scratch based on her feedback. It was incredibly refreshing to know this wasn't just a course that awards certification for attendance. With the mentoring and account plan, you are held to a higher standard.

**ITSMA:** Is the plan you developed through the course now your actual ABM plan?

**McGinney:** Definitely. And that was interesting too because from my side there was pressure to show what it would look like. So I was messaging back to my counterparts, my peers, and my managers to show that I was working on it and what it would look like and concurrently doing the certification course. I had pressure from both ends.

**ITSMA:** What does your ABM program currently look like?

**McGinney:** We have five (5) one-to-one and one (1) one-to-few programs. I just brought in a new resource for program management and am working with two others in different roles that are interested in gaining experience around ABM. One has actually attended the ITSMA course as well and I am guiding him as he completes certification.

Everyone is super-excited about ABM at Splunk and wants to be part of it, so I find I am becoming a consultant of sorts for other departments. For instance, I am partnering with the go-to-market team for the one-to-few program and helping them put together a framework for execution.

While it is still early days, we have seen some quick successes, particularly in building executive relationships.

**ITSMA:** Any words of advice for other marketers who are interested in ABM?

**McGinney:** What I really got out of it, and what I love about ABM in general, is that customer success has to be our number one priority no matter what role you are in. I see ABM as an incredible vehicle to help our customers be more successful by giving the right people the right messages at the right time.

And so through this training, and as my program gets built out, I think that the lessons I have learned will become a part of how we function at Splunk, how we put our messages together, and how we speak to our customers. Our customers love the product, but we can always improve our relationships and that's what I am really excited about. 🍷

## About Kathryn McGinney



- Marketing Maven | Sales Enablement Enthusiast | Teacher | Making it Happen
- Experienced b2b integrated marketing professional that develops and drives marketing plans aligning to sales business objectives
- 10+ years working with sales executives, customers, and partners to drive revenue growth in multiple regions and industries
- Passionate about discovering new and innovative ways to drive business through marketing

## About ITSMA

For more than 25 years, ITSMA has led the way in defining, building, and inspiring excellence in B2B marketing. With a dedicated focus on services and solutions for the connected economy, we provide our member community with insight, advice, and hands-on help to strengthen reputation, increase revenue, and deepen customer relationships. Learn more at [www.itsma.com](http://www.itsma.com).



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**Dirk Mullenger** in North America at +1 661 298 0015 or [dmullenger@itsma.com](mailto:dmullenger@itsma.com)

**Bev Burgess** in Europe at +44 (0) 7775 765722 or [bburgess@itsma.com](mailto:bburgess@itsma.com)

**Rohit Lodhi** in India +91 (98) 2021 7372 or [rlodhi@itsma.com](mailto:rlodhi@itsma.com)