



## **Working Together: Sales and Marketing as a Powerful Team**

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We hear it all the time. Sales and marketing groups are each headed in different directions. Marketing comes up with strategies and campaigns that can't be implemented by the sales organization. Sales people don't understand the products and won't deliver the company message to prospects.

Does any of this sound familiar?

*Customers are asking about the bundled offer in our latest advertisement. What bundled offer?*

*Why are we running breakfast seminars in Chicago? We don't have any sales people to follow up in Chicago! What about Dallas...we've got loads of prospects in Dallas and a crack sales team there!*

*These data sheets don't make any sense to us. Where's the white paper the customers have been asking about?*

*Why don't our sales people call on our existing customers? We're not generating any incremental business from our existing customers!*

*My sales guys are spending a lot of time creating marketing collateral that our customers can understand. What's marketing doing?*

*We send out hundreds of fulfillment kits each month. Is anyone following up?*

*We had several hundred people visit our booth at the trade show last month. Did we close any of them? Are we talking to any of them? Do we even know who visited the booth?*

If you're a sales or marketing professional, you've heard all this and more. In many, perhaps most companies, sales and marketing organizations compete for resources and don't work well together.

In fact, at the recent ITSMA Marketing Services conference held in Atlanta, aligning the efforts of sales and marketing was listed as one of the five key marketing objectives.

It hasn't always been this way...and it certainly doesn't *have* to be. In most early stage companies, sales and marketing get along just fine...in fact as the company first gets started, it's the two people representing sales and marketing who make most of the joint sales calls.

In early stage companies, this team works well together as they have a single common goal – to land business. As the company grows and the sales and marketing teams increase in size, this goal becomes less of a driver. Instead, the organizations take on a life of their own...looking to acquire resources, to gain additional employees, to be recognized for the value they bring to the company without taking blame for any of the customer failures.

### **Technology Companies Compound the Problem**

In the technology market, we have a complicating factor. Marketing tends to focus on the “speeds and feeds” of the product or service, while sales people tend to sell on the basis of relationships or discovering customer pain.

As a result, we see a critical lack of alignment...engineering driven companies *want* to highlight product features in marketing and sales activities, and many, if not most marketing organizations tend to follow the lead of their competitors in this.

While many sales people also focus on product features rather than customer pain and customer benefits, we see an interesting trend. Rookie sales people, unencumbered by the details of the company's offerings, focus on customer issues and do well. As they learn more about their products, they get mired down in the details, and their sales performance actually declines.

Great salespeople then replicate this “dummy effect”...as they become more familiar with their products, they move back to focusing on customer issues and use product or service details as supporting material rather than as the main focus of their sales activities.

Unfortunately most tech sales people never make it to the "great phase," instead they remain stuck on pitching the features and benefits of their products and services. The prospects are then left to figure out the business value of these products and services on their own, and when they don't, which is most of the time, no sale happens.

### **What's a Savvy CEO to Do?**

A savvy CEO can achieve an alignment of sales and marketing organizations through the following:

1. **Give full accountability for both sales and marketing to a single manager** in the business, typically a senior VP of sales and marketing. This person will

- straddle both sets of activities, ensuring that the two organizations play well together.
2. **Instill a focus on the customer.** As companies lose their focus on solving customer problems, the various groups within the company pay more attention to potentially divisive internal issues. With a continued focus on the customer, from the top down, and supported by customer advisory boards and cross-functional teams, groups within the company will find reasons to work together to solve customer problems...and to focus on the “right” new prospects.
  3. **Maintain a focus on the bottom line** and enroll all the senior team in frequent goals-oriented discussions. We were surprised to find that the weekly management team meeting at one client focused on staff utilization and other operational issues. While these topics are appropriate for a staff meeting, it certainly wasn’t the best use of the time of the senior management.
  4. **Use compensation to drive appropriate behavior.** Why not pay marketing people a bonus on sales increases...make specific customer wins part of their MBOs. Similarly, pay sales people a bonus on overall customer retention, or on the success of marketing activities in which they play a part, such as conferences or tradeshows.
  5. **Mix it up!** If sales and marketing people only see each other in the heat of battle, they aren’t likely to develop relationships that go beyond the basic tasks of work. Throw a pizza party on Friday for the sales *and* marketing teams...get them to mix it up in a social setting.

The key here is to get the two groups thinking like a single group. Get them working together toward a common goal and make sure that they share a common vision.

The rest is easy.

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