

Achieve Smarter Selling through Sales and Marketing Alignment

Did you know, the average consumer makes their way 60% through the sales cycle before your Sales team gets involved? Let me take a minute to explain. In the past, Sales would have complete control over the information shared with their prospects. From product functionality to testimonials, if a potential customer had a question, they'd call Sales. The problem is - that's not how it works anymore. As consumers of the digital age, we research on our own. We research your company and the competition. We read (and submit) reviews on our own merit. We perform all the due diligence of your product before we commit to making any decision. This is the process that a typical consumer goes through, before even deciding to make contact with a salesperson.

So how do you compete? How do you get the consumer's attention earlier in the cycle? By adjusting your Sales strategy to align with Marketing. Although this may seem like the obvious answer, I'd like you to reflect on your current cross-functional processes. Is every Marketing activity tied to a Sales objective? Do Sales and Marketing meet regularly to discuss new collateral and lead quality? Are you keeping each other accountable with data-driven results? Aligned organizations have established a "sales-ready" lead definition - do you know yours? These are critical questions for getting Sales and Marketing in effective alignment, and doing so can lead to a significant increase in annual revenue growth.

Establishing a strong, productive connection between Sales and Marketing is something many dealers struggle with. And let's face it, Sales and Marketing don't always click. Sales complains that Marketing isn't generating enough quality leads, and Marketing blames Sales for not working their leads hard enough. But in the end, both parties want the same goal: to close more business. And not every dealer has the luxury of a 20-person Marketing team - most are lucky to have a Marketing person at all! In many cases, your Sales team will have to put on their Marketing hats and think strategically through an inbound methodology in order to achieve cross-functional alignment.

We all can agree that initiating a conversation with a lead is the hardest part. Cold calling is rarely effective and it's difficult to measure ROI on advertising. With inbound marketing, your team is creating content which allows consumers to find you first, rather than you finding them. This includes blogging, SEO strategies, website optimization, and email nurturing. All of which work towards your goal of ranking number one on search engines and attracting people to your company first. These marketing tactics enable Sales and Marketing to capture leads while they are still in research mode. Once they do their initial research, then you utilize that data to entice consumers with more information such as downloadable eBooks, brochures, and infographics. Now Sales can easily follow up with a focused and well-informed initial conversation. By having prospects interact with your content first, Marketing has done their job of bringing the leads in, and Sales can follow up with the right questions to further push that lead through the cycle.

The inbound methodology is just a piece of the alignment puzzle, and yes, it does require additional time and resources. However, it's not the only solution. Sales and Marketing alignment drives real results

through open communication. Trust me, Marketing wants to know how to make it easier for Sales to close their deals. Sales teams should give constructive feedback on lead quality each month to help marketers better understand which types of leads are closing, and which are not, so they can generate more and make adjustments. End the blame game by sharing monthly lead numbers and percentages worked. Then discuss any misalignment or frustrations in order to keep Sales and Marketing fighting the same battle. The final result in streamlined Sales and Marketing alignment is celebrating the wins! Whether a win over the competition or closing a big named customer, Sales and Marketing must recognize their success as joint accomplishments to nurture the relationship for future wins.

It should come as no surprise that harmony across departments can lead to more revenue. Once you get the communication process going between Sales and Marketing, keep it moving in the right direction... and who know, you may have some fun doing it.



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