

How To Solve The Disconnect Between Sales And Marketing



I had the honor of conducting a workshop at Content Marketing World in Cleveland this past week. Joe Pulizzi and his team at Content Marketing Institute put on a wonderful event. Joe trusted my good friend and content marketing guru, Marcus Sheridan, enough to allow Marcus to invite me to co-present with him. Marcus and I have been working closely together on an approach to break through the barriers between sales and marketing. Our goal is to help organizations solve the disconnect between Sales and Marketing.

Though I typically speak to groups of senior executives or sales professionals, the entire room in this workshop identified themselves as marketing professionals representing a wide range of companies from small companies to the largest organizations on the planet. Each attendee confirmed that they would see even more dramatic results if their sales counterparts were also in the room.

Why Sales and Marketing Must Work Together

Marketing has the job of crafting messages that are most likely to resonate with your ideal customers. In essence, you want to craft a message that will get the customer to think “Yep – that’s me. We face that same challenge.” But, who has the most interaction with potential customers? Who is most-likely in tune with the types of questions customers are asking? That’s right, it’s the customer-facing sales and project professionals. See the problem? Marketing works to create a message that would resonate for customers. But, the sales organization spends the most time with customers. Without tight integration between sales and marketing, your marketing organization may as well be battling with one hand tied behind their back. If properly engaged, salespeople have the most to contribute to creating valuable marketing content.

In most cases, however, companies miss the opportunity to engage their sales and customer-facing teams in the marketing effort. In fact, the metrics that many companies use to measure

their sales and marketing people is misguided, outdated, or both. As managers, we know that our teams tend to perform the tasks that we measure. So, when we track meaningless data points, then we get less than stellar results. Keep in mind that in most cases, the problem is that managers do not know which data points to collect, or how to make sense of the information. So, they collect simple stuff that might not translate to results.

When Quality Is Tough to Measure, Quantity Is Not Misleading

One of the workshop participants shared that their sales organization measures and holds the sales force accountable for the number of outbound calls they make. I responded by saying, “1984 is calling and wants their useless metrics back.” When executives and sales team leaders don’t know what to measure for quality, they defer to quantity – such as number of calls, number of website page views, clicks, in-person meetings, or proposals. Similarly, sales organizations often complain that marketing is not generating enough leads for the sales team. The answer is not more leads, more calls, or more meetings. The goal is for marketing to create content to attract more of the *right* opportunities, and for sales to have the right types of conversations that might uncover whether or not that opportunity is a good fit for your company.

Recognize that determining a potential customer is not a good fit is as valuable as determining that they are a good fit . The only way to determine if marketing is producing results is if you are growing your business. When sales and marketing are aligned, then you can start to determine if marketing is attracting the right people to your business.

The Only Time Pure Numbers Matter

If you sell consumer products, then casting a wide net might make sense. Otherwise, marketing and sales within an organization need to focus on quality over quantity. The first step is for marketing and sales to develop a clear strategy that identifies the problems your organization is best at solving for your potential customers. Create a list of the reasons your potential customer could use to justify an investment in what you are selling. Then, task your team with uncovering which of those reasons your ideal customer is likely to be facing.

If you struggle to define that message, then you have probably not engaged your sales and customer-facing people in developing your content and messaging. B2B customers make changes when they see a problem or opportunity that is worth the pain of changing .

Why It’s So Important

If you want to grow your business with incredible velocity, then make it everyone’s goal to attract those customers you are likely to deliver the greatest value. If sales and marketing work together to attract ideal customers to your business, then you’ll waste less time chasing rainbows, and spend more time counting revenue. Companies that truly commit to solving the disconnect between sales and marketing will stand out from the competition, better meet the needs of their customers, and significantly grow their business. This the fundamental reason why in January 2014 we launched the first Remarkable Growth Experience built for company “teams” and not individual departments. Not surprisingly, the event quickly sold out and

produced great results for the participants.

It's Your Turn

How aligned are your sales and marketing teams? How do you track progress? What have you done to focus on quality over quantity?

By Ian Altman