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TOGETHER - Sales and Marketing

by Mary Sullivan

Too often a company's Sales and Marketing groups are out of sync. At worst, they're rivals, literally undermining each other. Exaggeration? Sadly, we've seen it more than once.

Why should Sales and Marketing work together? KickStart believes that good marketing enables the sale. Using a military analogy, Marketing provides the weapons, and Sales fights the war. Ask any soldier – If you have unsuitable weapons, you're going to lose the battle.

Marketing draws customers' attention, describes your offer and tells how it benefits customers. But let's face it – Marketing needs Sales to nurture the relationship, build a business case and close the deal. Without Sales, there probably won't be a sale.

Can Sales get along without Marketing? Well, if sales people develop the positioning, create sales tools and track down qualified prospects, where do they find time to work directly with prospects and customers? And if each sales rep does this, you end up with conflicting messages about who you are, and you've wasted time and money on duplicate efforts.

Get Better, Faster Results with Integrated Sales and Marketing

Here are some steps to get Sales and Marketing working together. They require conversations between the two groups, but it's well worth the time.

* **Think of Sales as Marketing's customer.** Using the military analogy again, the defense contractor's customer is the army. They need to know what their customer needs if they're going to get their customer to buy. The Marketing team that builds the best weapons helps their Sales force win more revenue! And they don't waste money on sales tools that Sales can't/won't use.

* **Develop goals, objectives and metrics jointly.** Set expectations together – not just once, but every quarter. When Marketing launches a product, Sales needs to be ready. If Sales needs to increase revenue, Marketing needs to adjust pricing and campaigns. Agreed-upon measurements and review criteria let you know what's working and what is wasting your time and money. Aim together and maximize revenue for your company.

* **Synchronize product and sales cycles.** Like it or not, sales happen cyclically. In tech, it's the end of the quarter and, big-time, at the end of the fiscal year. Keep the sales cycle in mind when introducing new products so Sales can make best use of

prime selling time. If you're a toy manufacturer, you get new toys out in time for holiday shopping or waste a huge revenue opportunity.

* **Get commitment to consistent messages and brand usage.** After Marketing defines your positioning, be sure they communicate it in an easy-to-digest format so Sales can establish your uniqueness in the minds of customers. If everyone is singing the same song, it will be heard loud and clear in the marketplace.

It's really about communicating. Both ways! Continuously!

Programs That Make the Most of Sales and Marketing TOGETHER

* **Craft winning messages** – Be able to say succinctly how your product or service makes a difference to customers. Marketing needs to verify with Sales that their messages will really work. Then they must train the entire Sales organization on using them. Sales people love to be able to make a good sales pitch.

* **Prepare for the competition** – Top sales people address the competition before they hear an objection. They know the market landscape, where the selling pitfalls may lie, and are prepared to deal with them. When Marketing uncovers market intelligence and shares it with Sales, the entire team is prepared to meet the competition head on. When Sales uncovers competitive information and feeds it back to Marketing, they can alter programs, products or pricing to stay competitive.

* **Synchronize sales and marketing plans** – If someone doesn't know where they're going, when they reach a fork in the road, how do they decide direction to choose? Sales and Marketing need to have the same roadmap to meet a common goal - maximizing revenue. They must refine their plans in consultation with each other, and then make sure everyone involved knows what the plans are.

* **Launch products effectively** – When you launch a product, it's easy to get wrapped up in what it is and what it does. But what does it do for your customers? How will they benefit? Marketing must tell a compelling story to the media and analysts, and train Sales on how to communicate the product's value to customers.

* **Develop qualified leads** – Finding leads takes a lot of time and is rightly the job of Marketing. A lead is only useful to Sales if it is a prospect with a genuine reason to be interested in what you offer, and with the budget and the authority to buy. Any other "lead" is unqualified and wastes valuable selling time.

* **Use centralized customer information** – Both Marketing and Sales need accurate and up-to-date prospect and customer information. A central database enables Marketing to quickly communicate with customers and generate leads. And it allows Sales to follow up on leads while they're hot!

* **Establish field readiness** – You'll need to provide your sales team – direct or indirect, new or veterans – with everything they need for successful sales calls: understanding the corporate pitch, knowing the competitive landscape, dealing with objections. When you train Sales with the "right stuff" the troops have what it takes to face customers confidently and effectively.

Integrate your Sales and Marketing efforts and watch how quickly your business reaches its revenue, market share and bottom line goals! KickStart Alliance can help. We provide best-in-class marketing and sales leadership to help organizations, large and small, increase revenue and shorten the sales cycle.

About the Author:

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