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MARKETO'S SECRETS TO SALES PARTNERSHIP

Sales and marketing misalignment remains an all-too-common problem. Many companies still struggle to get these two departments in sync, hurting marketing ROI, sales productivity, and most importantly, top-line growth. Ultimately, everyone wants to see a more profitable revenue team, so the tighter you are aligned, the better. On the other side of the equation, nobody wants to feel like a lead. This can happen when processes aren't well aligned, the content doesn't match the promise at the top of the funnel, or when sales is talking about things that have nothing to do with what interested somebody in the first place. So how can you tackle this challenge? It comes down to having the right strategy, content, and communication.

Strategy

To start, you need a strategy that best helps you reach the right customers. At Marketo, we use account-based marketing, as it helps us isolate the accounts that have the best fit with our product. Next, go through your existing data to figure out who your perfect customer is. The goal is to create an ideal customer profile, finding people with the highest win rates and the lowest churn. From there, you can turn all the factors into an account score, which allows you to prioritize every account in your known ecosystem. Doing this helps avoid wasted time, ensuring everyone sales and marketing talk to is a great fit with high potential to purchase the product.

From there, map out your ideal customer accounts to different actions owned by different teams. The best accounts are assigned to the highest tier salespeople, who are trying to create meaningful relationships with customers through outbound. In the next tier are target accounts that marketing will focus on to drive a pipeline through inbound demand generation. Lastly, prospects that do not fit the ideal customer profile are not actively targeted. These actions narrow the scope of the universe, allowing sales and marketing to have a more focused strategy that they pursue together. You want a laser focus on making a connection, which starts with content.

Content

There are several questions that we ask at Marketo before we ever create a piece of sales content. The intended audience is an important starting place. Sales leadership often asks for assets, but you must first establish who the content is meant to reach so that it both advances the buyer's journey and delivers your brand experience. From there, you need to think about the expected user. Whether it's marketing, sales development, or account executives (AEs) using a given asset, you want to ensure that they can get maximum usage out of it. Now you can think about how and where in the customer lifecycle a given piece of content will be used, as this will impact both who you are writing to and who will be leveraging it.

Once the basics are established, you need to determine if your teams know how to use the content created. It's not a given that they understand all your types of content, which jeopardizes effective deployment. As a corollary to this, start thinking about complementary assets. For instance, competitive assets need customer stories to support them. It's important to understand the web of intricacies that sales content can create, from campaign usage to longevity considerations. Lastly, you need to have a plan in place for measuring content performance. Tying KPIs to what you create helps prove your impact and secure the necessary resources to create more.

At Marketo, we like to create assets that perform well over time with our sales team and our audiences. Three types consistently do best.

Case Studies: These are helpful for speaking to prospects across industries because they provide third party validation to prove the value of our platform to specific companies. Having a variety of different case studies makes it a lot easier for sales development representatives to break into new accounts and find common ground with whoever they speak to.

Research Reports: These are especially useful for AEs, providing great talking points to add value to an account. Thought leadership can also be used to kickstart conversation with target accounts casually. As with case studies, the external validation provided by reports is invaluable.

Battlecards: At Marketo, we provide our sales reps with key talking points and answers for frequent questions in competitive situations. These are valuable for creating a consistent value pitch and addressing any concerns customers may have as they onboard a new marketing automation solution. When you are talking to someone who has had multiple touches with marketing, you want to make sure that what you are saying aligns with the problem they are trying to solve. This allows for a seamless transition, in which sales doesn't have to start from scratch with an interested prospect.

Communication

Communication holds the sales and marketing partnership together. We put it all together with what we call a sales play, which combines everything that influences the buyer's journey, from nurturing to deep in the sales cycle. It's important that this framework is easy to replicate, so you can establish familiarity for sales and marketing, and use it for different verticals. It also must be accessible—marketing puts out great content, but if it's not easy to find, it won't be used.

Another key component of the partnership is reinforcement and continuing to come to the table, which means a lot of facetime between sales and marketing. At Marketo, this starts with our annual Revenue Kick-off Meeting where we communicate our strategy and craft a cohesive story for what the two teams are going to accomplish together over the next year.

Establishing a cadence for communication is essential as well. This starts with weekly emails from product marketing and demand generation to sales to help them sell. Weekly one-on-one meetings between marketing and sales leadership provide tremendous value as well, and we've instituted a biweekly call through our sales enablement team to share information with the field.

Lastly, remember that you can't just throw support over the fence and walk away; you need to close the loop. Do this through frequent follow-up, before and after launching a campaign or content asset. Check in with questions and surveys at all levels, not just at the top. Audit use and effectiveness of what you are creating, both in terms of sales usage, as well as prospect engagement.

Helpful Resources

Eager to learn more about how to improve sales and marketing alignment? Check out the resources below.

Jumpstart Revenue Growth with Sales and Marketing Alignment

Webinar: Marketo's Secrets to Sales Partnership

Enterprise Marketing Playbook Series: Sales and Marketing Alignment

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