GUIDE

3 Secrets to Better Sales Partnership
And how manufacturing marketers can help

Sales and marketing misalignment remains an all-too-common problem in the manufacturing industry. But according to SiriusDecisions, tightly aligned sales and marketing organizations achieve 24 percent faster revenue growth and 27 percent faster profit growth over a three-year period. Your business could be leaving money on the table. Efficiency and effectiveness in a sales and marketing organization could give your business the competitive edge.

Thanks to evolving consumer demands, competition is only getting tougher. Today's buyers are looking to a manufacturer's digital platforms to research a product before purchase. And the marketing team plays an important role in navigating your business' digital world. To keep up with consumer demands, sales and marketing benefit from modernizing their approach. Still, many manufacturing companies struggle to get these two departments in sync, leading to low marketing ROI, thwarted sales productivity, and stagnant growth.

Ultimately, everyone wants to see a more profitable revenue team. The tighter your teams are aligned, the better. Buyers also want their business needs understood. When processes aren't well aligned, marketing and sales content can fall short. Making promises to buyers at the top of the funnel and not following through during the sales conversation, can quickly turn a buyer off.

So how can you tackle this challenge? It comes down to having great communication, excellent content, and the right strategy. Here are three secrets to better sales partnership.

Secret #1: Communication

Communication holds the sales and marketing partnership together. An important alignment hurdle for many companies is the creation of a center of excellence. It's wise to combine everything that influences the buyer's journey, from nurturing to deep in the sales cycle, in one place with easy accessibility. Marketing may put 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 increased facetime between sales and marketing. Establish a cadence for communication. This may include weekly or monthly meetings, or weekly emails from the marketing team to sales to help them sell to a particular audience or industry.

Marketers can also build confidence in their campaigns by providing insights on their progress to the sales team. Prove and improve marketing impact on the business. With the right technology tool, marketers can start aligning with sales goals, ensuring all campaign activity is measurable, and focusing on improving ROI, rather than just proving its existence.

Lastly, remember providing support across teams is imperative to success. You can do this through frequent follow-ups, both 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 prospective buyer engagement. And share the metrics of success so everyone can track the progress and further align the sales and marketing partnership.

Secret #2: Content

Today's buyers are starting their journey online. Almost 80 percent of consumers look at websites when evaluating a product, relying on digital content like videos, buyer reviews, blogs, guides, and social media. And B2B buyers are not any different. A 2018 study of B2B companies by Forrester Research showed almost half of the businesses expected 50 percent or more of their customers to buy from them online within three years. Marketing can help drive sales by providing captivating content on your digital platform and across its various channels.

But first, there are several questions to ask before creating a piece of content. The intended audience is an important starting place. Sales leadership often asks for assets, but establishing first what the customer's needs are will both help to guide them through the buyer's journey and deliver a great experience.

From there, think about the expected user. Whether it's marketing, sales development, or account executives (AEs) using a given asset, ensuring that they can get maximum usage out of the content is key. Consider 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, empower your teams to use the content created. Advocate for the content and help drive it's use across the organization. It's not a given that teams will understand all the types of content or how to use it. Think about complementary assets. For instance, a competitive asset works well with customer stories or customer testimonials to support them. Consider both the campaign usage and longevity of the content's use. This will help to ensure you get the most out of your content.

Lastly, it's good to have a plan in place for measuring content performance. Tying KPIs to what you create helps prove marketing's impact and secure the necessary resources to further enable sales with additional content.

A marketing automation tool that shows you how content is performing across channels ––such as email, mobile, social, digital ads, and web –– will be a significant, and easy, win.

Create Winning Content

As you build out campaigns, analyzing how content performs over time will help you better develop your longterm content roadmap. The following are three examples commonly used in the B2B industry.

Case Studies/Customer Testimonials: These are helpful for speaking to prospective buyers across industries because they provide third-party validation to prove the value of your product to specific companies. Having a variety of different case studies makes it a lot easier for sales development representatives to reach into new accounts and find common ground with the buyer.

Guides/Research Reports: These are especially useful for account executives, providing great talking points to add value to an account. Thought leadership can also be used to kickstart conversation with target accounts. And they are informative pieces of content for prospective buyers who are early in the buying journey. As with case studies, the external validation provided by reports is invaluable. This can include reports about the shifts in the market, growth trajectories in different industry segments, and so-on.

Battlecards: Provide 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 buyers may have. When you are talking to someone, 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.

Secret #3: Strategy

Lastly, you need a strategy that helps you reach the right customers. And a simple strategy can go a long way. If you have a small marketing team, a marketing automation tool can help create, automate, and measure campaigns across channels without a huge marketing lift. Once you have a baseline of campaign measurements, you can connect the buyer data you've collected from your marketing automation tool to the sales team's CRM. This will break down a major silo. Having integration between these tools can provide a full view on where the buyer is beginning their journey, the content they are engaging with, and what's driving them into the sales cycle.

The sales team's view of the prospective buyer is limited with a CRM tool. But with the integration of marketing automation data, sales gains access to the buyer's information from their first digital touchpoint and beyond. The sales team can view which emails and content the buyer is viewing. And they can start to better profile accounts that have a high propensity to purchase your product.

Account-based marketing can help by isolating the accounts that have the best fit with your product. Leveraging marketing tools that help you to identify the right target accounts ––with the help of AI –– will make this process much easier. The goal is to find buyers with the highest win rates and the lowest churn. Once you have your target accounts, 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.

With the right technology tools, it is possible to score buyers based on how they engage with your marketing programs and then nurture them based on their interests, behaviors and preferences.

Marketing Champions Move the Business Forward

When it comes to digital innovation, marketers are some of the first movers and champions for change. As a marketer, you can drive the business forward by helping to progress the conversation about better partnership and strategic improvements. You already have the skillset: expertise in planning and execution, championing of your product, improved communication, an innovative outlook on transformation, and the ability to adapt quickly.

Start with building communication and organizational alignment. Then, provide proof that campaigns and content works, and can drive buyers into the sales funnel. Lastly, collaborate with sales on a longterm strategy that integrates the teams to break down silos.

It's important to remember that you need modern marketing tools to support these changes. Marketing automation technology that measures and automates marketing campaigns and content, integrates with the business' CRM, and helps you build out your target accounts will help your business excel beyond the competition. Lastly, it will bring your business into the modern age of manufacturing marketing.

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