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Product Marketing Impact Primer for 2019



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Marketing programs must encompass the entire customer life cycle to meet aggressive growth goals. Technology product marketers should use this research to propel the impact of their sales enablement, account-based marketing, customer advocacy and solution, field and partner marketing programs.

Scope

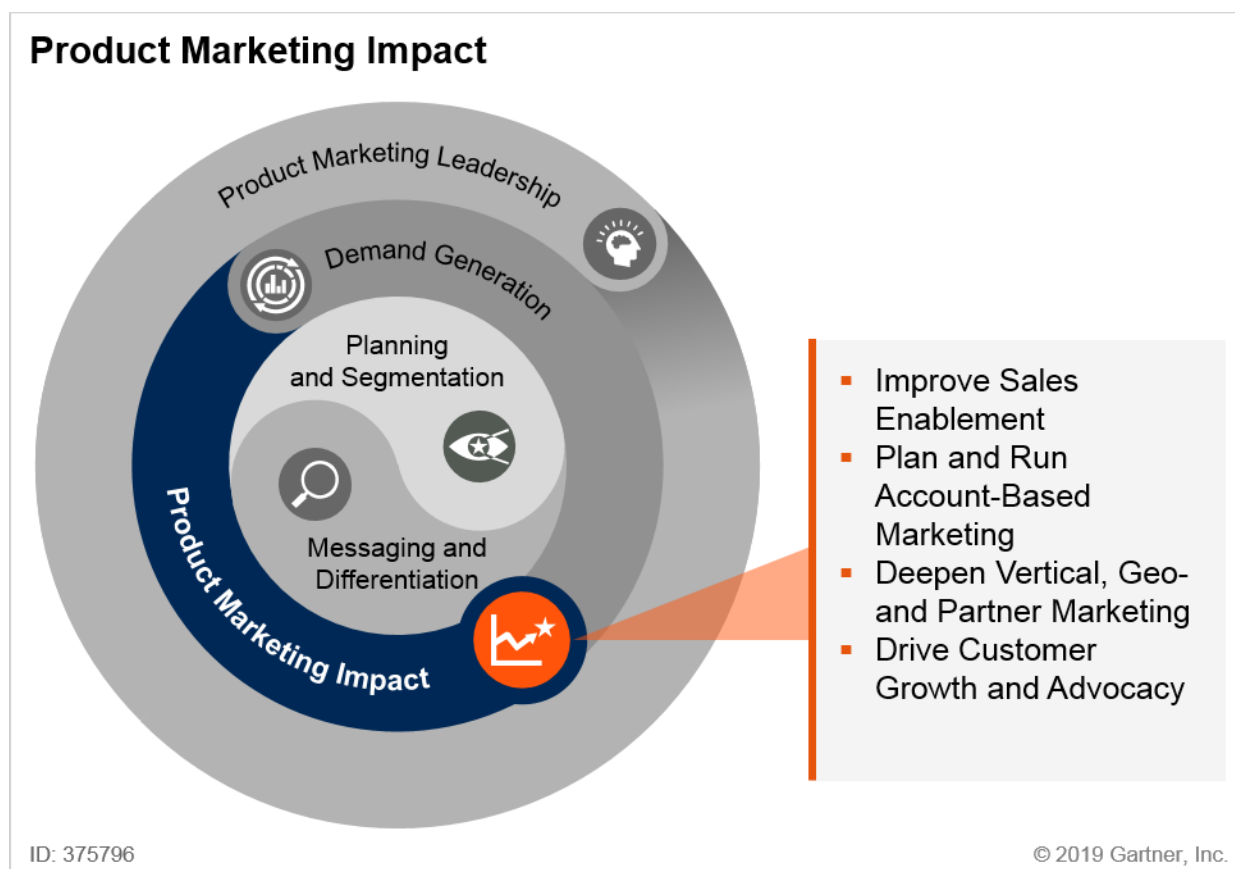
This initiative covers product marketing contribution into critical functions and programs that drive customer interest and engagement throughout both the buying and owning cycles.

The topics covered within this initiative include the following:

- Improve sales enablement
- Plan and run account-based marketing
- Deepen vertical, geo- and partner marketing
- Drive customer growth and advocacy

Analysis

Figure 1. Product Marketing Impact Overview



Source: Gartner (February 2019)

Finding potential technology buyers and effectively communicating value has long been the primary focus for product marketing. However, changing buying dynamics have made this goal increasingly challenging. Buyers are in control, harder to reach and more discerning in their selection process. Further, subscription models have made it easy for customers to switch to alternatives after they've purchased. Failure to create sustained engagement throughout the entire customer life cycle can hamper growth.

Technology product marketers are asking where to best focus their attention and efforts to meet this challenge. How do you adapt messaging to meet the needs of buyers in different geographies and sectors? How can you best help and collaborate with sales and partners to increase success in obtaining new buyers? And how do you deepen and build on existing customer relationships?

To gain market share and increase deal velocity, technology product marketers must use holistic approaches that produce tangible impact on the business. They must support field and solution marketing initiatives to make messaging relevant based on market location and industry differences. They must arm their sales teams and channel partners with valuable information, content, tools and

training through ongoing enablement programs. They must use account-based marketing (ABM) to deliver tailored experiences to move target accounts with the propensity to buy through the funnel. And they must deepen customer relationships through product adoption, customer marketing and advocacy programs.

Top Challenges and How Gartner Can Help

To meet aggressive growth and retention goals, technology and service providers (TSPs) need a deliberate and consistent approach to sales enablement; ABM; field, solution and partner marketing; and customer success and advocacy. Implementing, managing and optimizing these marketing programs requires market insight, plus ongoing collaboration with sales, field teams, channel partners and customer success management teams. Gartner assists technology product marketers in increasing the impact of these sophisticated marketing programs to fuel growth by addressing the most pressing questions facing the role:

- How do I best enable my sales team to adapt to dynamic buyer behavior and increase conversions?
- How do I implement, manage and optimize a successful account-based marketing program?
- How do I scale product marketing reach and results through field, vertical and partner marketing programs?
- How do I apply customer marketing and advocacy to attract buyers and retain customers?

The topics covered within this initiative include:

- **Improve sales enablement:** Developing and executing a holistic program that provides ongoing training, market and competitive intelligence, content, and tools to improve sales effectiveness
- **Plan and run account-based marketing:** Driving and orchestrating targeted marketing and sales efforts that drive awareness and engagement in selected accounts through coordinated campaigns, channels and interactions
- **Deepen vertical, geo- and partner marketing:** Scaling revenue growth through content and programs tailored to resonate with buyers within different regions and sectors and through partners
- **Drive customer growth and advocacy:** Fostering meaningful relationships with customers to drive value, engagement and advocacy promoting shared success

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Our research addresses the following common client questions:

How do I best enable my sales team to adapt to dynamic buyer behavior and increase conversions?

Technology buying processes can be complex and differ within each individual customer. Projects can face internal competition for resources and budget, and they can have multiple decision makers and influencers on the buying committee. To win in these challenging environments, sales teams need to adapt to a variety of buyer situations and expectations. Today, comprehensive sales enablement programs have never been more crucial to illustrate value to customers, retain competitive advantage and gain market share. A key contributor to sales success and business growth is to treat sales enablement as an ongoing and live program that continues to adapt within a dynamic environment. These programs must start with robust sales onboarding programs that go beyond product training. They must help sales develop an understanding of the characteristics of the ideal customer, their needs, industry trends and competitive positioning. In addition, sales needs to develop the capability to dynamically react and thrive in a wide variety of opportunities. Based on the customer's particular situation, sales must be able to convey the business value of your products and services in a highly tailored way.

Planned Research

- The Silent Sales Curse — Why Buyers Go Quiet and What You Can Do About It
- Why Tech Sales Take So Long and What to Do About It
- Situational Awareness Is Critical for Customer-Driven B2B Sales Success
- Sales Enablement Leadership Best Practices

How do I implement, manage and optimize a successful account-based marketing program?

As the complexity of the buying process expands, technology product marketers should lead and optimize ABM efforts to transform go-to-market strategies. For ABM programs to be a success, they require planning, buy-in across the leadership team, and role clarity and alignment between sales and marketing. Marketing and sales must work as partners, starting with account selection and continuing through sales engagement (examples: email, phone and LinkedIn outreach) in conjunction with marketing outreach (examples: advertising, direct mail and events). When managed effectively, these programs are highly effective in driving revenue growth. Technology product marketers who aren't running ABM programs today should implement pilot programs targeted to select accounts to gather understanding of what types of efforts will be effective for capturing and converting their buyers. Those who are currently running ABM programs should optimize and scale their efforts following Gartner's recommended approaches.

Planned Research

- Utilize a Comprehensive Engagement Strategy for Account-Based Marketing
- ABM Account Planning Insights
- Choose the Right Metrics to Measure Lift from Account-Based Marketing

- Account-Based Marketing Through Indirect Channels

How do I scale product marketing reach and results through field, vertical and partner marketing programs?

Driving revenue growth may require reaching new or distinct audiences, in different markets or sectors, via indirect channels. Penetrating into these segments requires that field, vertical industry solutions and partner marketing programs speak more directly to these buyers, taking into account their specific needs or focus. To that end, field marketing programs require a keen understanding of the geographic market, buyers, language, culture and compliance requirements in that region. Similarly, solution marketing programs apply your product and service offerings to the specific needs of vertical industry customers, creating contextually-relevant messaging, and building outreach programs that capture and keep the attention of those buyers. When channels are used, partner marketing programs connect buyers with partners and help to develop opportunities to ensure both parties are successful and grow.

Planned Research

- Building Synergy Between Field Marketing and Demand Generation
- Crafting Messages to Meet the Needs of a Regional Audience
- Grow Product and Service Revenue Through Solution Marketing
- Ignore Partner Marketing at Your Peril

How do I apply customer marketing and advocacy to attract buyers and retain customers?

As the technology industry continues to shift its focus to renewable, subscription models, technology providers must retain and grow share of wallet with customers to scale and grow their business. Technology product marketers must develop customer marketing programs in concert with customer success management (CSM) teams to ensure customers see ongoing value and deepen relationships with customer advocates. These programs need to foster upsell and cross-sell opportunities and identify engagement opportunities outside traditional demand generation campaigns and programs. Customer-only events and programs can engage customers through many forms, such as customer advisory boards, user conferences, communities and advocacy programs. Gathering continuous customer feedback and delivering value beyond the initial sale will increase retention and revenue from existing customers.

Planned Research

- Drive Strategic Customer Relationships Using Quarterly Business Reviews (QBRs)
- Improve Customer Retention by Embracing Adoption and Advocacy Programs
- Customer Success Strategies for Balancing Touch With Tech-Touch
- Customer Success With an Indirect Channel

Related Priorities

Table 1. Related Priorities

Priority	Focus
Product Promotion and Awareness	This initiative covers approaches to creating awareness, generating demand and accelerating high-quality leads through the funnel that marketing should apply to improve promotion efforts.
Product Marketing Leadership	This initiative provides best practices for optimizing the budget, resources, technology, intra- and intercompany collaboration, and KPIs to drive an agile and impactful product marketing function.
Planning and Segmentation	This initiative covers insights about the markets, competitive environments, targeting approaches and customer profiles that you should incorporate to improve planning and segmentation efforts.
Product Messaging and Differentiation	This initiative provides guidance and best practices for creating differentiated positioning, messaging and storylines for both individual products and entire portfolios.

Source: Gartner

Suggested First Steps

- Read “Adopt Seven Elements of Sales Enablement to Increase Impact and Support Growth,” and apply the sales enablement framework to maximize program impact on sales effectiveness and revenue growth.
- Read “Plan, Build and Manage a Successful Account-Based Marketing Program,” and embrace account-based marketing programs, with buy-in from executives, marketing and sales, to better target ideal prospects and customers to improve deal velocity.
- Read “Improve Partner Marketing Effectiveness to Scale and Improve ROI,” and leverage Gartner’s partner marketing framework to help the channel excel, scale and improve ROI.
- Read “Drive Customer Retention and Growth by Using Advocacy Marketing and Customer Communities,” and invest in customer community and advocacy programs to help clients learn from each other, leading to increased lifetime value.
- Attend [Gartner Tech Growth & Innovation Conference 2019](#) to gain firsthand insight and pragmatic advice to help you develop and execute your go-to-market strategies.

Essential Reading

- “3 Ways to Reimagine Sales Enablement Strategies to Win More Deals and Shorten Sales Cycles.” Incorporate situational awareness, account-based strategies and artificial intelligence into enablement programs to improve sales effectiveness

- “3 Provider/Enterprise Customer Disconnects That Negatively Impact the Technology Buying Cycle.” Adapt product marketing strategies to give customers the ability to experience products and build confidence before they buy.
- “Implement Role-Specific, Data-Driven and Tools-Based Strategies for Successful Sales.” Treat sales enablement as an ongoing process, tailored by specific customer-facing roles with content management tools to help sales throughout the buying cycle.
- “Market Guide for Account-Based Marketing Platforms.” Use this Market Guide to determine how vendors can support your specific ABM needs.
- “Partner Marketing Strategies for Platform Vendors to Increase Compatible Endpoints in the Commercial IoT Market.” Increase the number of compatible endpoint devices for Internet of Things (IoT) platforms by nurturing strong channels to massive niche OEMs through exclusive partnerships.
- “Plan and Execute User Conferences to Engage Customers.” Follow Gartner’s five-point plan to design and execute effective customer events.
- “How to Use Evangelism to Drive User Community Content.” Drive authentic, customer community-based content creation via evangelism.

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Gartner helps technology providers make the right product, marketing and sales decisions by providing insight into markets, customers, competitors and technologies.

Product and Service Innovation

- Drive innovation through your business model, products and services
- Inform your decision life cycle, prioritize investments and identify new opportunities (product, geography or market)
- Anticipate and manage economic boom/bust cycles, and identify and leverage disruptive technology trends

Go-to-Market Strategy

- Identify how to meet your business goals
- Position marketing operations and campaigns by properly positioning solutions competitively for the right target segment
- Drive increased sales effectiveness by better positioning your solutions

Positioning and Messaging

- Differentiate your messaging and enhance your unique story for your customers
- Get visibility into what your customers care about and where they are struggling
- Get visibility into where your competitors are succeeding and where they are falling behind through Gartner Magic Quadrants®
- Access Vendor Ratings for profiles of key competitors

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