

Why Sales and Marketing BELONG TO DIFFERENT PLANETS

Practical approach to
marketing-sales alignment


Treating various marketing-sales face-offs with real-life solutions




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Persistent widening in differences between sales and marketing strategies is undeniable in any business cycle. But for decision makers, it becomes obvious that attempting harder to minimize the differences is going to help.

Illustrated here are some differences between the perspectives and opinions of marketing and sales forces across organizations. This paper discusses certain prevalent issues that make both organizational forces digress from their main goal, which is - "to stick with each other to meet company sales targets"

A yellow and orange cartoon character with large eyes and a small mouth, representing the marketing perspective.

Stop delivering us leads that aren't worth the effort to **close a deal!**

A yellow and orange cartoon character with large eyes and a small mouth, representing the sales perspective.

You're just lazy! Stop blaming me. You don't have the zeal to work on good leads. You're interested only in **quick deals!**

This is a common scenario

Though most marketing and sales professionals realize the importance of the two departments, they mostly fail to fulfill top-brass expectations. This is due to differences in the way they think, as well as the goals set for the two teams

The difference can be broadly observed like this:

Sales looks at the numbers with respect to leads, cold calls, hot prospect conversions, sales totals or commission check numbers. They want quick and hot results.

“Numbers is what matters to us!” - *Sales*

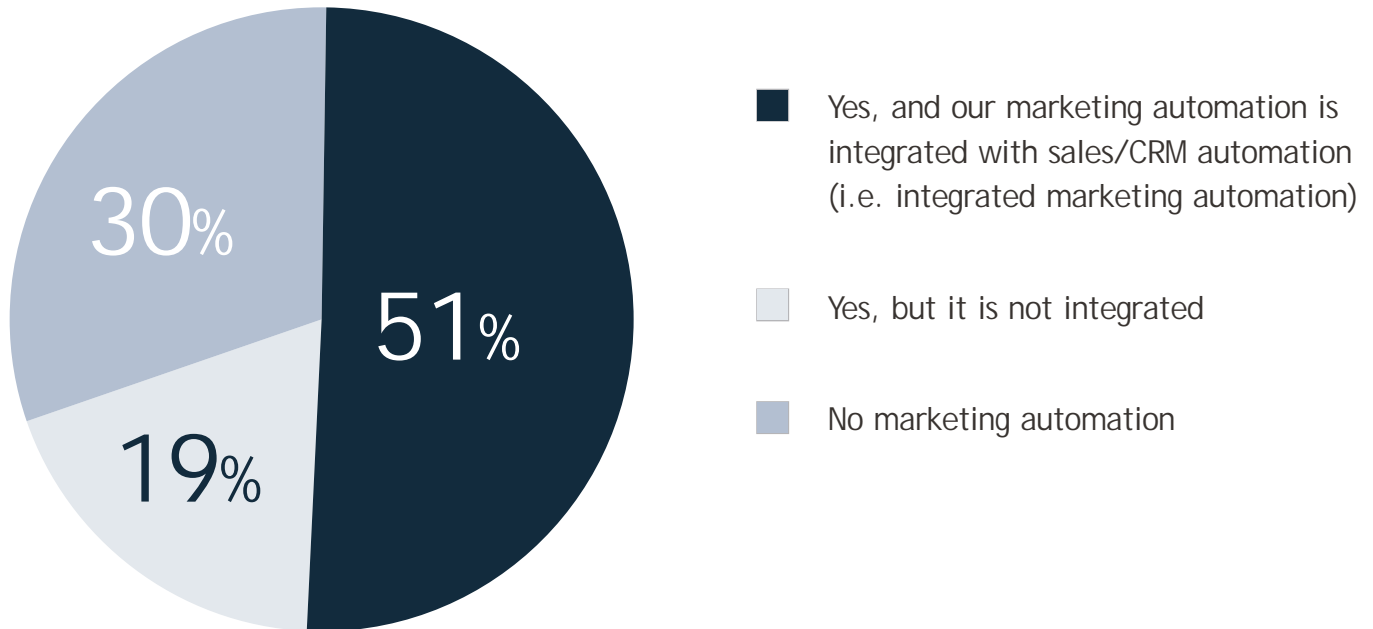
On the other hand, marketing is pushed by the broader picture. Placing emphasis on longterm goals, any marketing team seems to base its decisions on market needs, industry and market positioning of the company.

“We want to implant the organization deeply into the market for long-term success” - *Marketing*

Are marketing-sales domains process driven?

Roughly, only 49 % of marketing and sales professionals say that they are facilitated with an integrated process that enables them with a 360- degree view of any customer by automation. Through this, they have a complete view of customer interactions and their behavior.





Hence, a majority of sales and -marketing teams continue to work in the dark, not knowing the realities on the other side of the fence. Though they share very few common short-term goals, they ultimately have a common long term goal 'to benefit the company'. Here it gets possible to bring them down to an amicable level.

Let's explore the seven reasons why sales teams receive bad leads from the marketing teams. Also following each reason is best-fit solution.

1. Marketing team hands over weaker leads every time

For sales representatives, it is natural to define a quality lead as the one they can close into a deal. They're frustrated at the very idea of spending time on cold leads rather than working on stronger leads which can close quickly. They would never invest their efforts on leads that don't serve the purpose.

Much of this problem comes from the fact that both hold different definitions for the word 'lead'.

For marketers, any person taking an interest in the brand's knowledge base or downloads, is a lead. But, for the sales team, such a profile is merely contact information. Sales people teams are only interested when the prospect is at a hotter stage - that of hot enough to making a buying decision. They hardly believe in the term, 'hot lead' only for namesake for any other kind of profile.

Marketing operations keep pushing the sales pipeline with a great number of leads. These further burden the sales side and often inflate their target numbers. Believing that sales can sort this huge heap of leads, the marketing side feels they've fulfilled their responsibility. Sadly, marketers do not realize that this unworthy number of leads could create nuisance.

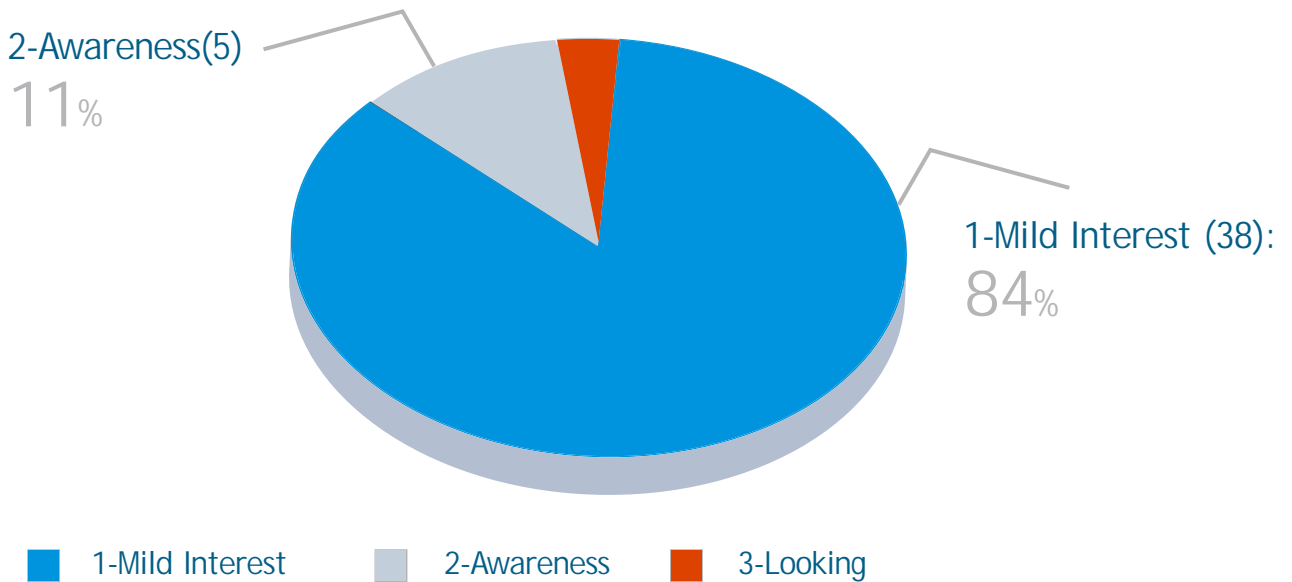
How to counter this -

Incorporating a lead scoring process into the lead management program is the best solution for this. This would help nullify the gap between sales and marketing to a useful extent. They would only get the sales side convertible leads and not the less useful ones.

On the flip side, both the teams should join hands to differentiate between terms like, "lead", "contact", "qualified opportunity", etc. to avoid overlapping in conceptualizing these words. This will help in focusing on the right leads. Marketing teams should also understand the definitions of "warm leads", "cold leads" and "hot leads" from a sales perspective.

"According to a benchmark report from Marketing Sherpa, only 21% of B2B marketers have actually established a lead scoring program."

Let us also get a clearer picture on how lead scoring is considered valuable by some companies.



To effectively utilize the outcome of lead scoring, ask yourselves the following questions

- Is my sales team getting fed with enough leads?
- Do I have enough data to implement lead scoring?
- Does our sales team even call the leads that I send them?

2. Marketing operations never yield what we need for succeeding

Sales teams know that there is direct relation between the marketing materials' quality and closure of deals. Thus, when the marketing team doesn't get aid from tools such as whitepapers, competitive intelligence or other product materials when expected most, they are left annoyed.

The disconnection between the sales and marketing teams deteriorates the image of the company. They start depicting themselves as different companies to the public and the company loses its identity. This surely is the worst-case scenario. It happens as a result of the sales team not recognizing what marketing has accomplished, and both start viewing product growth differently.

How to counter this -

To overcome this, the sales team should find out -

- What is the info or data they need, or
- What are the materials they need to succeed
- They also must come up with a discussion plan on what marketing team has noticed in the market
- Who's buying what? Why? What works with the prospects and what doesn't

3. Marketing never involves sales in its planning

When marketing team members don't involve their sales counterparts in the planning process, they feel out of place and find their goals unplugged from the marketing side. The two can easily move towards misalignment when communication between these two teams. Lack of input from the sales side in the marketing plan can also handicap the two teams leading them to drift apart. This is coupled with missing out on the benefits that could be availed from sales inputs.

How to counter this -

- By involving sales in marketing planning and strategy sessions
- By outlining themes, messages and advertising plans for the quarter ahead with the sales team
- Recognize that marketing has something valuable to add to the leverage of the sales team from brainstorming sessions
- The sales team can help the marketing team design a plan based on the concerns shown from the leads' end
- Take the best inputs from the sales side through their managers who may provide great insights when a sales person is not available or is busy
- Sales can be segmented region wise so that they can be made a part of the strategic sessions, adding diversity

4. The marketing side doesn't know how to push the leads down the pipeline

When leads take noticeable interest in your product, retain them by engaging until they make purchase decisions through regular nurturing. Nothing can be as frustrating as losing your hard earned leads to a competitor. Therefore, leads must be selectively nurtured in a careful manner.

Sales professionals get frustrated when they realize that marketing is allowing leads to slip out or go off the track, just due to the lack of adequate nurturing. A good lead nurturing program is essential for successful deal creation.

Some of the other concerns from the sales sides are:

- Marketing taking too much time trying to push leads into the CRM
- Marketing personnel sending lead-warming messages, without changing the sales signatures, as though it were coming from a sales personnel
- Marketing is usually not prompt enough at informing sales personnel when there's a hot lead

How to counter this -

- Marketing can conduct a meeting on lead scoring and discuss with sales the minute details on lead nurturing
- Discuss and finalize who should go for the nurturing campaign
- Find out how can a contact can be converted into a lead
- Gauge the repercussions in advance if a prospect has to be removed from a campaign list

Apart from sticking to the pointers, the marketing team can take inputs from sales operations while interacting with the prospects as the nurturing process progresses. A marketing team must try to align its communications to the prospects and how the sales professionals intend to interact with them. Marketing should convey the opportunity of a lead when it advances to 'hot' from

'cold' with the sales team without miss. This can be in the form of sales alerts, sales notification to the CRM or directly pushing the lead to the sales pipeline.

Careful and sustained communication between marketing and sales makes the lead management process smooth sailing. Sales personnel can then take appropriate action on a lead when it comes to them. Hence it becomes assertive for both teams to work on the campaign together. If the campaign is designed as per sales inputs, the sales team should push the prospects into the campaign and utilize it accordingly. This way both the teams can work mutually on the leads and own them equally - making the sales process quicker and easier.

5. The marketing team doesn't know the customer profile well

It's not always easy for marketing and sales teams to have the same definition of an ideal customer. This difference comes with a problem as to who the marketing team should be targeting. Sales professionals feel that their marketing partners do not understand the difficulty of their role, which involves cold-calling as well as making pitches for churning up a customer.

How to counter this -

Sales personnel can get to know customers better through the following actions:

- Marketing personnel (especially marketing managers) can consider going on sales-calls and pay heed to the opinions of customers
- Marketers can go on field to attend customer interviews and know about customer likes and dislikes once/twice a week
- They can also know who the happiest customers are and what they feel about the products
- Look for customer trends through the customer database within larger organizations
- Find out what among the approaches followed by the sales team resonates with the prospects
- On a quarterly basis, take sales inputs on what they hear through field analysis

6. Marketers don't measure the data potential correctly

There's no hiding for the sales teams when they fail to perform to the par. Either they make the numbers or they don't. This creates a great sense of urgency for them.

For marketing, the level of accountability isn't as black and white. The metrics that marketing puts forth is not seen by sales as relevant. Metrics like, "We've had 50,000 visitors on our site today", "We've had a 1000 hits in the press release", don't qualify as relevant business data for sales. For sales, it's how far these efforts transform into leads. Sales professionals do realize that sometimes their brand itself is a puller of visitors. However, this is again not a fully quantifiable metric because they can't find the impact of that on revenue!

How to counter this -

Since sellers are bothered about concrete factual data, let us find how both teams achieve the shortcomings in their data's effectiveness:

- If a marketing report reflects clearly with data like, "We've had 50,000 visitors, 20,000 leads and 1,000 buyers", both sellers (sales dept.), as well as the C-level executives will realize the value of such data
- Convey to the sales as to what sources of advertising are creating waves, and which aren't, based on the revenue fact file
- Organizations can evaluate marketing metrics based on sales-qualified leads

When these are kept in mind, there's a mutual ownership for selling among the teams. Above all, these actions help build solid trust between them.

7. Marketing doesn't provide transparency

It isn't uncommon to notice that sales people either go blind or converse with prospects with all the essential information. With this, prospects are either pulled apart from them or are tied with them with good future opportunities. The latter isn't as easy to achieve as it sounds. Sales personnel need to get answers to the following questions to uncover this obscurity -

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- What was the information given to the prospects?
 - From which source was the lead brought to our site?
 - How often are these leads communicated with?
 - What were the leads' responses like?
 - What is it that's most viewed by a particular lead on our site?

Though almost 40% of the marketers claim they have a good number of reports on lead details such as conversion rates, visibility of pipeline, prospects and deal flow, the sales side rarely acknowledge marketers.

How to counter this -

- Adopting a CRM system that integrates marketing automation eliminates all obscurity between sales and marketing
- Enhancing visibility of the lead scores that let sales people know when the leads are active or engaged or "ready to buy"
- Enabling marketers to give specific info about the lead, communication provided to the lead and the website visited by that lead

Such visibility of marketing strategies certainly reminds sales about the efforts being put in. And, most importantly this helps the sales team equip itself with relevant information about the lead, helping connect with the lead in a profound manner during conversations.

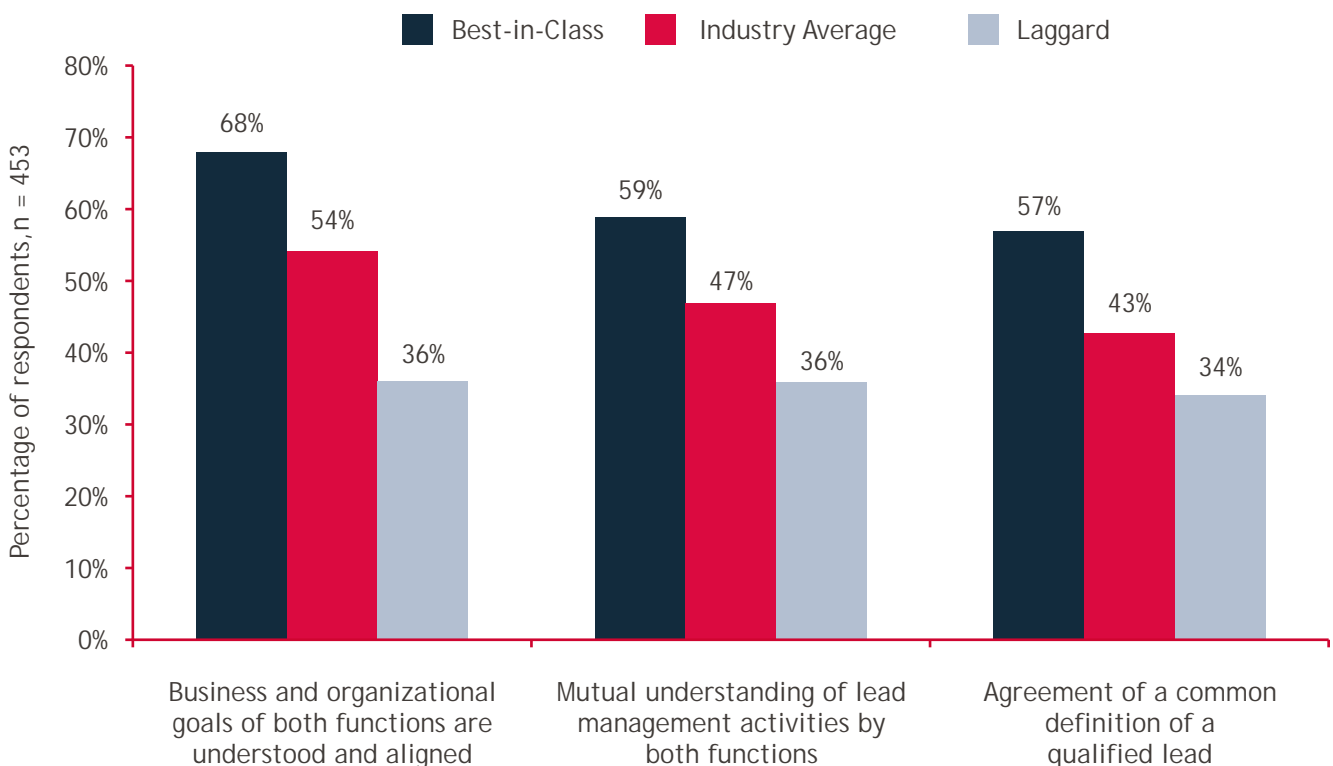
Conclusion

We can easily say that marketing and sales have striking differences in the way they view a business. Yet, we can say that it is not impossible to bring them to lines of agreement. Companies can now direct these two teams to work towards common goals, not as two different teams but as a unified one with a clear mission.

Here's a list of benefits that companies can savor from the synergy of two organizational forces - marketing and sales:

- Increase in the number of leads that the sales side acts on
- Decrease in the follow-up time for sales leads
- Increase in the close-rates for marketing generated leads
- Marketing automation driven by strong marketing-sales alignment, lead handoff and strong lead definition certainly make revenues 4-5 times more than automation that lacks these essential features

A Quick glimpse on marketing-sales interaction in the market





About Leadsberry:

Leadsberry offers high-quality lead management solutions customized for large and small businesses. Leadsberry's world-class lead management tool has helped businesses generate sky-high ROI by completely automating their lead nurturing process. Their marketing automation tool is one-of-a-kind wherein clients are able to generate, follow-up, score, nurture, analyze and convert leads into deals. Since inception Leadsberry's innovative lead nurturing tool has helped its clients automate their lead generation and follow-up completely and bolster their sales double.



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