

A black and white photograph of a paved road winding through a dense forest of tall, thin trees. The road has a double white line down the center and white lines on the edges. The trees are tall and thin, creating a canopy overhead. The lighting is soft, suggesting a slightly overcast day.

Marketing the importance of marketing to sales staff

By Naras Eechambadi

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THE SITUATION FOR "THE ANALYZER"

- Marketing in a sales-driven environment requires extra focus
- Adding that focus builds strong rapport between marketing and sales
- Sales can benefit from marketing's insights

A senior marketing executive at a major financial services company recently moved from the retail side of his company to become the chief marketing officer for the commercial side of the business. Another client of ours moved from being head of marketing for a retail financial services firm to head global marketing for a high technology company where the business-to-business side dwarfs the consumer business.

Both experienced a dramatic change in the corporate environment, from running departments that were primary drivers of the business to being in sales-driven organizations where marketing is seen as more of a sales support function. In coaching them through their situations, we focused on ways to build a partnership with their sales counterparts.

Let's clarify our terms: Marketing prepares a prospect's mind for a sale; sales secures the deal.

In this column recently, "The Organizer," Carson Tate, said staff positions must focus on the revenue line. My advice to these two marketing executives was "Make sure sales views you as an indispensable partner." Sales should be convinced that its success can be accelerated by leveraging marketing smartly -- for its insights and analysis, customer intelligence and creating fertile ground for sales activity.

For marketing executives in consumer markets, who commonly drive revenue directly, this can be an uncomfortable position but it can be highly rewarding.



Some key insights?

Figure out sales' top priorities: Identify where marketing can have an impact and partner with sales on those areas. The high tech CMO I mentioned above sat down with the chief sales officer of the company and figured that one area where they could partner was in closing the really large deals, where sales needed more intelligence.

Build credibility by helping the sales organization and key sales leaders achieve their numbers, particularly with customer segments that are challenging to cover. For example, small business segments can be expensive calls. Marketing can help by qualifying and prepping leads.

SOME SPECIFIC AREAS WHERE MARKETERS CAN HELP SALES ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES ARE:

- ▶ Cultivate early stage prospects: Segment prospects appropriately and communicate through targeted, customized, interactive messages. Keep interest alive until they become active prospects that a sales person can truly engage.
- ▶ Provide sales with distinctive insight: Give your sales folks that competitive edge during the sales process by equipping them with better intelligence.
- ▶ Analyze pipeline dynamics: At what stage do you lose most deals? Help sales managers focus resources on the right places to keep deals moving.

Selling to sales, rather than just supporting sales, is a way for marketing to become more valuable and be seen as a revenue driver, rather than a support function.

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