

Improve Sales and Marketing Alignment to Generate Better Business Results



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Tech Brief

Historically sales and marketing have struggled to work well together. The disconnect between the two groups is so deeply ingrained that their arguments sound nearly cliché at this point. Sales organizations constantly complain about not getting enough leads from marketing and the ones they do get aren't ready to buy. And vice versa, marketing organizations argue that passing their leads to sales is the equivalent of putting them to a black hole with no visibility, feedback or measurable return on investment.

In the past businesses were able to cope with the lack of alignment with varying degrees of success. Whether this meant passing around spreadsheets instead of using a central repository or generating reports at the end of each month or quarter instead of real-time information. But these methods no longer work in today's real-time, multi-channel, buyer-driven world. The hyper kinetic pace of the buyers' lives, coupled with significant shifts in the buying process make imperative greater alignment of sales and marketing with both each other and with their buyers goals, needs and wants.

Why the Disconnect Between Sales and Marketing?

Poor communication is at the heart of the disconnect. It is tough to stay aligned when the sales and marketing leaders have different and potentially competing agendas. While the overarching goal of the business may be clear and straightforward – increase revenue through the sale of goods and services



– the underlying strategy and execution plans developed by the supporting teams can take on different shapes and directions. This is especially true when sales and marketing leaders base their decisions on information from their individual departmental applications. In the case of these siloed systems, there is literally a wall between sales and marketing and it hampers both communication and strategic alignment.

Different marketing and sales systems means there is limited visibility across the whole business process and decisions end up being made based on incomplete information. Instead of optimizing the end-to-end pipeline and maximizing potential revenue, sales and marketing hone in on what they can see and what they can measure, working toward different goals and unaware of what the other side is doing. Business

that still throw leads over the wall from marketing to sales only to hear weeks or months later about the results are at a severe disadvantage in today's business environment.

Marketing and sales need incentives to align their organizations around common goals. It's one thing to tell marketing and sales to align their businesses and they will benefit when sales of products or services increase, and it's another to create and promote an environment where it's easier to align their business goals by providing the tools that give them visibility into the complete business process.

Why Alignment is Important

Today businesses exist in a global, dynamic marketplace, and this holds true whether a business is in retail, insurance,

pharmaceuticals, financial services or any other industry. More than 15 years ago buyers simply did not have access to detailed product specifications, vendor and product reviews and pricing and feature comparisons like they do today. This proliferation of information in the marketplace has changed the way people buy products. Businesses need to first understand the needs and wants of their prospects and then align their sales and marketing organizations to support those requirements.

With the change in the buying process, businesses are required to change how they market and sell their products. In the past, marketing's primary role was to manage the brand and develop interest in the product. Sales served as the main educator, conduit of information and first point of contact for potential customers. Today, customers do their homework upfront. They rely more heavily on the marketing produced content, including the company's website, collateral, customer testimonials and online advertising, as well as third-party product reviews, discussions and forums. By the time they enter the sales funnel, they are more educated than ever before. This fundamentally changes the way that sales and marketing do their jobs, and it makes the need for communication between the two organizations more important than ever.

Today's successful businesses exist in a multi-channel world. Customers

decide how they want to interact with a business, self-selecting the channel based on their unique preference and what they want to achieve, such as researching a product on the Web, asking a question via online chat, calling to make a purchase and going to the physical store to pick up their purchase. Based on an online study conducted by an independent service where 1,098 U.S. consumers over the age of 18 were polled, 30 percent of consumers actually used three or more channels for a single transaction. This means that organizations need to collect and share customer information in real-time in order for sales, marketing and service to provide a seamless cross-channel experience and maximize their business results.

Integrating Sales and Marketing Systems

Marketing and sales professionals alike continue to plead for a holistic view of their customer to achieve better alignment with each other and to become more effective in their roles. This desired view includes full visibility into who their customers are, what they are doing across the various channels, what they are likely to need or want next and where they are in the pipeline.

The main obstacle preventing a real-time single view of the customer is disparate sales and marketing systems. Sales professionals rely on customer relationship management (CRM)

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applications that have strong sales force automation (SFA) features like customer, pipeline and forecast management. Marketing professionals utilize marketing automation applications that support their key marketing functions, including integrated, end-to-end market targeting, demand generation and response management across their channels.

Historically, many businesses made an effort to integrate their different departmental applications themselves, but with different product roadmaps it often was difficult, time consuming and costly. And with the rise in cloud computing and introduction of new niche vendor applications, the disconnect between sales and marketing systems has actually increased over time.

However, tightly coupled sales and marketing systems represent some exciting opportunities to create a competitive advantage and produce better business results. For example, integrated sales and marketing systems can support lead return functionality, which allows the sales organization to return a lead to marketing for further nurturing. A lead that is returned to the marketing system in a timely manner and is properly nurtured can convert to a sale in the future at a far lower cost than creating a new lead.

Integrated systems also make it possible

to create a “record of truth” — a single place where both sales and marketing can go to view a complete record of all the online and offline interactions between a lead and the business. This increased visibility allows sales and marketing organizations to more effectively manage and optimize their pipeline, by making better and smarter decisions based on complete, timely and



accurate information.

The Business Benefits of Sales and Marketing Alignment

With marketing and sales alignment, businesses can work off an integrated revenue pipeline to systematically identify, nurture and convert leads. Businesses typically view the sales funnel as moving in one direction — from left to right — where marketing generates leads and passes them to sales to convert into an opportunity and ultimately a sale. Integrated sales and marketing systems allow for information to flow in both directions. This means that sales can return leads

that aren't quite ready to buy or that need nurturing back to marketing. This bi-directional information flow ensures active management of all customers in the pipeline, plus the delivery of highly qualified leads a reduced cost.

Having an integrated revenue pipeline of potential buyers and a “record of truth” of their interactions drives both

increased sales effectiveness and better marketing results. With the shift in the buying process customers tend to educate themselves before reaching out to a sales representative. By knowing the history of the customer's interactions like product of interest and activities across the various channels, sales representatives can be better prepared to have a meaningful conversation with

the customer and close the deal. But this information is only of value when it's complete, up to date and accurate.

Integrated sales and marketing systems also allows businesses to measure how their revenue process performs from end to end and maximize pipeline performance. Processes can always be optimized, but in order to get a complete picture of the process, find the best tactic for optimization and see the results, businesses need visibility into the entire process not just subsets of data they get from systems that are not integrated.

Finding an Integrated Sales and

Marketing Solution

Oracle CRM On Demand is the first and only single provider of integrated sales and marketing that run in the cloud, delivering more sales-ready leads for less cost. Oracle CRM On Demand is a unique combination of best-in-class sales force automation (SFA) with best-in-class marketing, driving more high-quality leads to sales.

As a single-provider solution, Oracle CRM On Demand reduces the cost of sales and marketing enablement. Instead of separate lead pipelines, sales and marketing organizations can review a unified revenue pipeline that increases close rates and shortens the sales cycle.

Businesses gain complete opportunity and pipeline management with the most comprehensive real-time and historical trends insight, and improve team performance with the industry's only Sales Process Coach.

Oracle CRM On Demand is the only SaaS CRM that helps sales and marketing teams deliver the right messages to the right targets for the greatest response. It also automatically qualifies and nurtures leads until they are ready for sales team interaction. As a result, companies maximize marketing and sales effectiveness and achieve better business results.

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