5 Proven Techniques To Align Sales And Marketing And Drive Revenue

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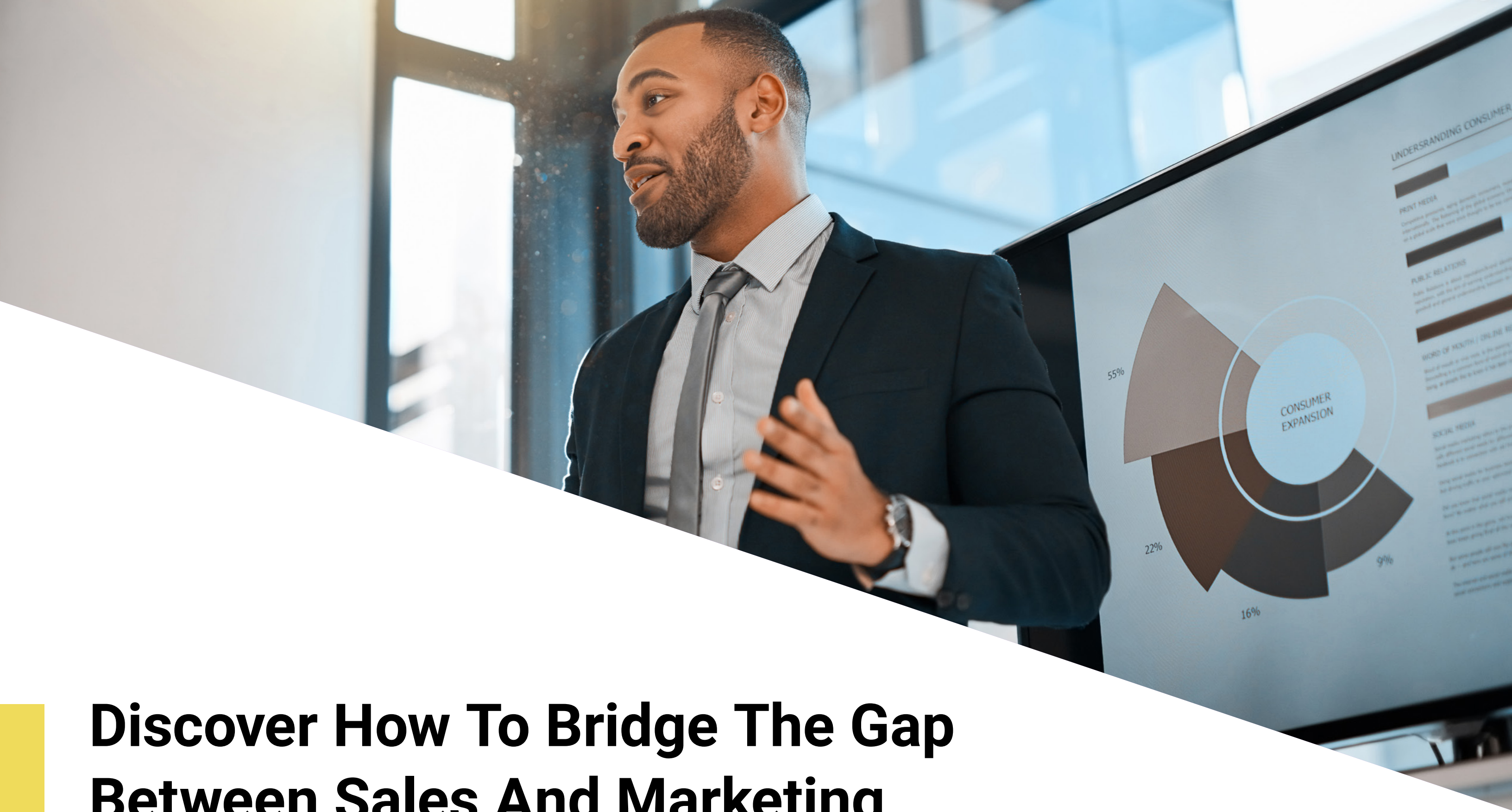

Discover How To Bridge The Gap Between Sales And Marketing

Marketing and sales alignment has been a hot topic for the past decade. You know it's important, and it may even be a top business priority for your organization. When sales and marketing are aligned, companies are up to 67% better at closing deals. And alignment starts with open, honest communication.

The challenge with open, honest communication is that it can bring issues between marketing and sales to the forefront. It's likely you don't see eye-to-eye in some areas. However, true alignment requires working together and communicating constructively, which means the finger-pointing and bickering needs to stop.

Mending your strained relationship should be priority one in your quest for alignment. But before you schedule a therapy session for your teams, consider these five techniques for improving the marketing and sales relationship.

1.

Spend Good Old-Fashioned Quality Time Together

Leave your computer screen, put down your mobile device and enter each other's worlds. Many sales and marketing executives think they can fix their problems purely by investing in software. This is a mistake. Sure, software can help support marketing and sales alignment, but it doesn't create alignment. Understanding each other's environments, challenges and processes is critical to creating a shared vision for success, which is important for a successful relationship.

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Marketing: Spend time in the field with sales speaking to buyers, listening to sales presentations and watching sales demos. This allows you to gain a deeper understanding of the sales process, see first-hand what content is working and what isn't, and experience the challenges and obstacles sales faces on a daily basis.

Sales: Work with marketing on sales enablement content. Be part of the content creation process. If you're uncomfortable with the messaging, voice or layout of the material, speak up, rather than creating your own material. If you and marketing can work together on creating and improving content, not only will your relationship improve but also so will your chances of winning opportunities.

2.

Implement Service-Level Agreements (SLAs) In Your Lead Management Process

An effective lead management process is the backbone of a healthy sales and marketing relationship. If you mess it up, everything else is going to be out of alignment (and it does get messed up a lot). That's why many smart organizations implement service-level agreements (SLAs) between sales and marketing. SLAs make for smoother handoffs between teams and set clear expectations for who does what, when and how often.

Marketing: While developing the SLA should be a collaborative process, you should appoint the appropriate person on your team to create, own and be responsible for it. Keep it brief (1-2 pages) and review it often. As a starting point, the SLA should outline the following:

1. Definition of a marketing-qualified lead (MQL)
2. Definitions of a sales-accepted lead (SAL) and a sales-qualified lead (SQL)
3. How many MQLs sales should expect to receive from marketing
4. Specifics of the handoff process (who will be alerted, how and when)
5. Sales follow-up process, including time frame and contact attempts
6. What happens to expired MQLs, SALs and SQLs
7. Next steps for unresponsive leads

Sales: This is your chance to ensure the lead management process works for your team and that marketing is sending the quantity and quality of leads you need to be successful. Be proactive about tweaking lead criteria as verticals, market segments and sales goals change.

3.

Revisit MQL, SAL And SQL Thresholds Regularly

Not agreeing on these definitions can definitely cause some friction. For your lead management process to run smoothly and reporting to be accurate, everyone needs to agree on the characteristics of an MQL, an SAL and an SQL. As your company evolves, so will these thresholds, **so revisit them at least every six months.**

Marketing: Revisit your MQL definition when your company targets new buyer segments and industries or changes its pricing structure. Be sure to edit your lead scoring to reflect the changes and create a feedback loop with sales so you can continue to tweak it until the handoff becomes smooth.

Sales: Don't overlook the importance of the SAL phase. MQLs should be reviewed and accepted by sales, becoming SALs, prior to making contact. If MQLs are routinely rejected, it could be an indicator to revisit MQL thresholds or lead routing. The criteria for an SQL, or an opportunity, should be agreed upon, documented and revisited regularly. This will keep the sales team focused on true opportunities and allow you to grow revenue in a predictable, sustainable way.

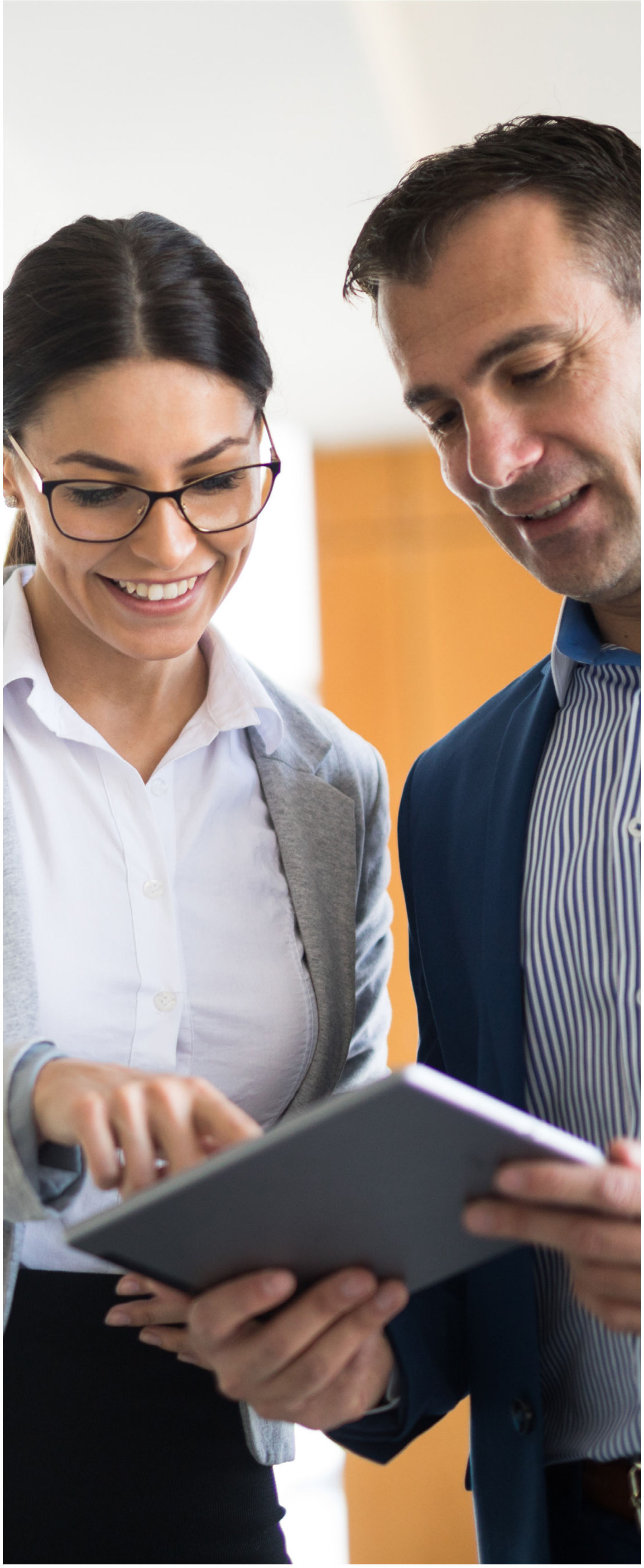
4.

Take A More Customer-Centric Approach To Sales Enablement

An important part of any healthy relationship is sharing a common interest. In this case, it should be your customers, even before they become customers. Your goal should be to help buyers make the best decision to achieve their goals. This means you need to understand their specific buyer's journey and desired outcomes, help them visualize how your product and services will help them achieve their goals, provide them with valuable perspective and keep the sales process customer-centric.

Marketing: Taking a customer-centric approach to sales enablement means understanding the buyer's journey after the lead becomes an SQL. This goes back to our first recommendation of spending time in the field with sales. Having a deeper understanding of the customer at this stage should drive development of sales enablement content that focuses on the buyer, not your product or service.

Sales: Buyers' situations are never the same. It's not possible for marketing to create content unique to every buyer's situation. But if you can add commentary specific to their situation when presenting it, you'll show your commitment to their personal journey, which will build trust and help them visualize a future with you.



5.

Review Sales Enablement Content On A Monthly Or Quarterly Basis

Nearly **70% of content created by marketing never gets used by sales,** despite marketing's investment in content being at an all-time high. Why? The sales team either doesn't find it relevant, or doesn't know (or remember) that it exists. For sales enablement content to be useful, sales and marketing need to agree on its relevance, when to use it in the buying journey and the best way to access it.

Marketing: If you're simply providing sales with content that's already been made available to buyers in some other capacity, you're not doing them or your buyers any favors. Sales enablement content should address each stage of the buyer journey post-SQL and help sales enable the buyer to visualize their future as your customer. Set a standing monthly or quarterly meeting with sales to review content and discuss updates, improvements and new content needs.

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Sales: "If I want it done right, I have to do it myself" is not a good approach to take in any relationship. If your organization values marketing and sales alignment, it's marketing's job to support you in the sales process. Enable this support by providing feedback about what content is working with buyers, what content is not and where gaps exist.

True alignment relies on a good relationship between marketing and sales. Don't let finger-pointing, messy lead handoffs and miscommunication hold you back from reaching your full potential. **You know you are stronger when you work together. Start now.**

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Square 2 is a full-service revenue growth agency designed to produce results for clients. The agency helps businesses understand the changing buyer journey and how revenue is directly related to marketing, sales and customer service execution.

More specifically, Square 2 works with clients on the strategy, tactics, analytics and technology required to build revenue generation machines that produce month-over-month revenue growth in a scalable, predictable and repeatable way, so their business grows.

Square 2 uses its proprietary Cyclonic Buyer Journey™ model to help clients map their prospects' buyer journeys to the right sales, marketing and customer service tactics. The agency also applies its own AI-powered recommendation and insight engine software called MAXG to drive a smarter set of campaign and action-oriented tactics for clients.

In addition, Square 2's Accelerated Engagement provides clients a dedicated team of cross-functional people who work with only one client at any time. This allows the agency to deliver six months of work in just 30 days and a month's worth of work in just one week, while accelerating results for clients from months to weeks or even days. Square 2 wants you to #LOVEYOURAGENCY!

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