

GETTING SALES & MARKETING COLLABORATING FOR SUCCESS

Your How-To Guide for Aligning
a Revenue-Generating Team





The days of marketing simply building awareness are long gone. Modern marketing aims at a much higher goal: driving a measurable return on investment. For B2B companies with aggressive growth goals and a commitment to achieving them, modern marketing is the key to generating leads that turn into buyers.

But successful modern marketing is built on something many B2B companies find elusive: alignment between the sales and marketing functions. That alignment can turn lukewarm results into off-the-chart revenue growth.

This guide can help you gain the alignment that's vital to outstanding business results. It walks you through why sales and marketing alignment is vital to B2B marketing and offers best practices for getting these essential functions working together to achieve a common goal.

Whether you're a sales/business development professional or a marketer, this guide will help you begin to break down silos and build up a collaborative team that can propel your B2B company to new levels of growth!

NO MORE US VS. THEM

Modern marketing requires a shift away from the traditional view of sales vs. marketing and toward a culture where the two become part of a company's revenue team.

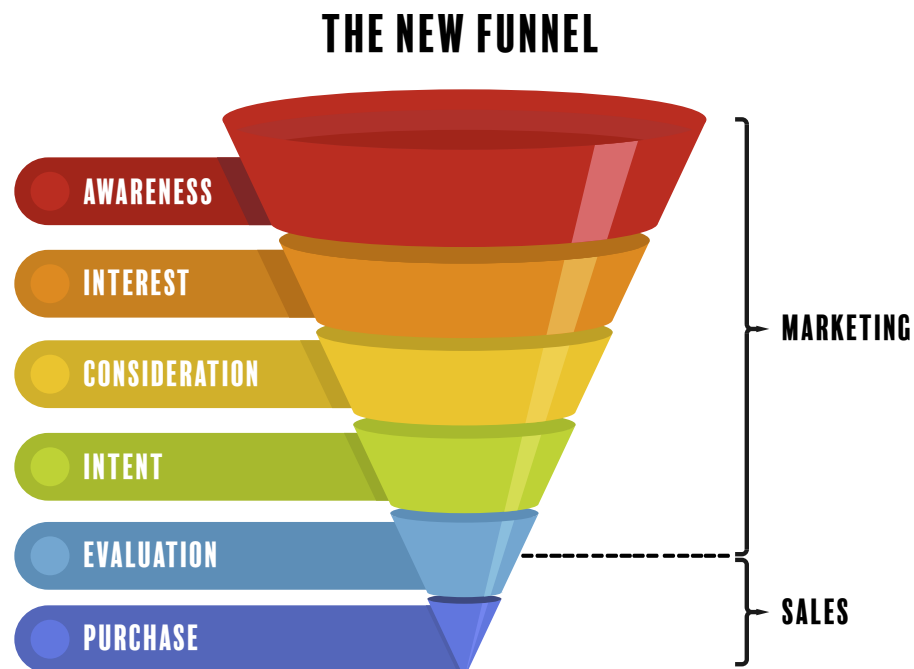
Driving revenue growth and profitability requires pulling many levers—some sales related, some marketing related, all interdependent. But traditionally, the sales/business development and marketing functions operated in silos. Marketing was seen as the creator of the website, sales collateral, and other sales support materials to get in front of buyers. Sales was viewed as the driver of revenue, which it achieved by building a contact list, conducting sales meetings, and closing deals.

Why doesn't that work anymore?

Because the B2B buying process has changed significantly. To develop and close leads, sales and marketing need to function in a way that reflects how today's B2B buyers make a purchase. The B2B buying journey is more fluid than it once was and much of it happens digitally, often starting with a Google search. Buyers want to learn as much about a company and its offerings on their own before they're willing to engage with sales. By the time they speak with a sales professional, they're typically far down the revenue funnel.

The revenue funnel is a visual depiction of the cycle a lead progresses through as part of the natural buying journey—from the time they become aware of a product/service to the time they make a purchase. Where marketing was once confined to the top of the funnel, building awareness and generating interest, now marketing is involved much deeper into the funnel:

- During the middle stages of the journey, marketing can provide content that helps buyers through the consideration process.
- At the bottom of the funnel, marketing can offer demos, free trials, and detailed content to help buyers evaluate an offering and make a purchase. It's only at the last stage of the journey—evaluation and purchase—that sales takes the reins.



BEST PRACTICES FOR ALIGNING SALES AND MARKETING

The idea of aligning two different business functions may seem daunting. While it does require a commitment of time and energy, it's an achievable task. These six best practices are great first steps for gaining alignment, building collaboration, and keeping the pipeline active.

1. CREATE A SHARED VISION.

Though their roles and responsibilities differ greatly, sales and marketing professionals should share a common vision for what they can achieve together. When the two work in silos, it can be easy to assume everyone is working toward the same objective. But that may not be the case. Sales and marketing should apply their strengths and energies toward the shared goal of driving revenue to support the company's growth. What each function does in support of that goal and how it goes about its work will differ greatly. But the common denominator of a shared vision will keep everyone pulling in the same direction.

For instance, marketing may use data to track what turns a web site visitor into a subscriber into a qualified lead...but may not know what happens once the lead goes to sales. Sales may feel that some of the leads it's receiving don't meet the standards for a sales qualified lead...but may not be informing marketing. Sharing information and working in a more integrated fashion can bridge information gaps like these.

2. COLLABORATE ON CONTENT.

Content is king in B2B marketing. And the best content is directly relevant to buyers' needs and helps educate them about a solution to their problem. Sales professionals typically have a treasure trove of insights on what the company's potential buyers want and need, what they perceive their problems to be, and how the company's product or service can address them. By collaborating, sales and marketing can ensure every piece of content helps move the buyer further along the revenue funnel, ultimately resulting in scale.



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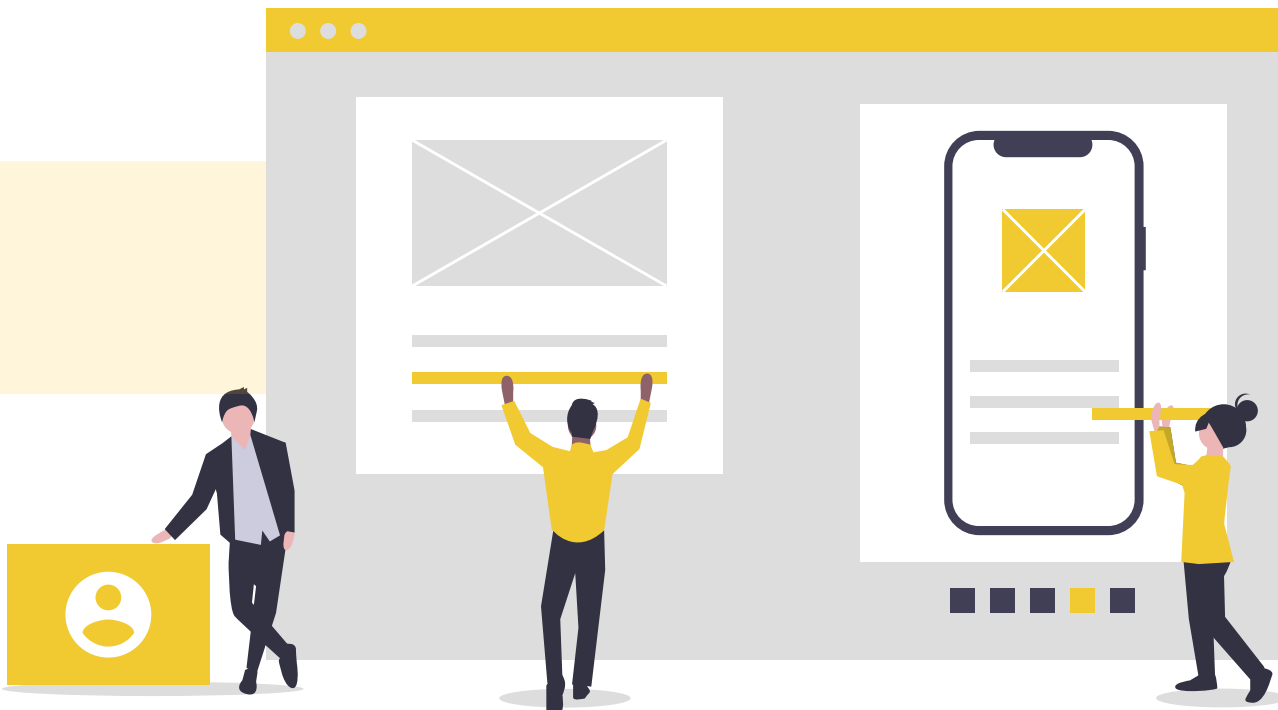
3. TEAM UP ON LEAD GENERATION.

Generating qualified leads lies at the heart of revenue growth. The more qualified leads brought in, the greater the revenue potential. But determining what qualifies as a viable lead is not only the job of sales. Together, marketing and sales should identify what constitutes not only a lead, but the various types of leads that are part of the pipeline.

A Marketing Qualified Lead (MQL) is a prospect who shows some degree of interest by taking an action (e.g., clicking on an ad). In the B2B world, MQLs usually need more information or nurturing before they'll buy.

A Sales Accepted Lead (SAL) is a lead that's received by marketing and reviewed by sales, and both groups have deemed it to be a viable prospect that's worth pursuing. Marketing and sales may apply different criteria when determining whether the lead should be accepted but should work together to be sure their approaches align. And as sales reviews incoming leads, it should provide feedback that helps the marketing team continually fine-tune its lead scoring model, ensuring only the most qualified leads make it to the sales team.

A Sales Qualified Lead (SQL) is a lead that's ready to be contacted by a sales rep and in good position to buy. The criteria used in qualifying a lead at this point can vary, but often they include the person's decision-making authority or budget authority, along with factors like company size and industry.



4. BUILD INTEGRATED CAMPAIGNS.

The most effective campaigns—the ones that generate the strongest results—alternate sales and marketing touchpoints along the way. Successful B2B companies build fully integrated campaigns, strategically combining sales and marketing activities that together lead buyers down the revenue funnel and toward a purchase. With this approach, follow-up calls are no longer an after-thought; they're timed and planned as part of a strategic campaign.

5. LEVERAGE DATA FOR BETTER RESULTS.

Today's marketing analytics tools can yield powerful insights that inform B2B marketing programs and drive stronger results. Putting these tools to best use requires not only the right systems, but collaboration to answer critical questions like these:

- Which leads are turning into sales?
- Where are those leads originating?
- How did they get to this point?
- What caused them to make an inquiry?

Creating a system around the data makes the answers to these other vital questions transparent and actionable. When you know how your sales and marketing efforts are performing—based on measurable data as opposed to guesswork—you can prioritize, systematize, and scale what's working well.

6. MAKE ACCOUNT-BASED MARKETING EFFECTIVE.

Some B2B companies take an account-based marketing approach, targeting specific prospects that fit a certain profile and using personalized campaigns to reach them. An effective account-based marketing program requires first defining what the ideal buyer looks and acts like, then identifying specific accounts that fit this profile, categorizing them into tiers, and creating customized content and marketing programs for each tier.

Account-based marketing can be a great way to reel in big accounts—but it's highly dependent on sales and marketing alignment. Tasks like defining account personas, identifying the criteria for tiers, and determining what buyers in each tier need or want to know are best accomplished when sales and marketing contribute their respective insights. It's especially critical for creating content that's rich in the keywords and phrases buyers are searching on and that connects the company's offerings to buyers' needs.

7. CREATE REVENUE PLANS, NOT SALES AND MARKETING.

Traditionally, sales and marketing have created their own separate, mutually exclusive plans. What's needed instead is a single revenue plan that integrates the sales and marketing functions. Once the two teams develop an integrated revenue plan, they should meet regularly to review how well they're executing it. Of course, no plan should ever be considered static. As market conditions change, B2B companies would do well to leverage the modern marketer's ability to be agile, proactive, and strategic. Sales and marketing can huddle up and brainstorm how to target new markets or reposition current offerings to better suit a current market's evolving needs.

8. OPTIMIZE MARKETING TECHNOLOGY.

The right marketing technology is crucial to B2B success. In particular, sales and marketing should collaborate on the setup and use of two types of systems that are central to supporting B2B marketing:

- A marketing automation platform, which the marketing team uses to set up workflows that guide what happens each time a lead takes an action in response to a marketing tactic
- A Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, which sales uses to track every touch point with a lead or current customer and identify which touchpoints are working best

These two essential marketing technologies work best when they're integrated in a continuous loop, which can only happen when sales and marketing are aligned. Leads generated by marketing should automatically pass from the marketing automation platform to the CRM system. And leads entered in the CRM system should be channeled back to the marketing automation platform for ongoing nurturing.

WITH ALIGNMENT, THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

A 25-year-old environmental engineering firm's experience shows how sales and marketing alignment can be a true game-changer.

Six years ago, the firm had a strong sales culture, with 15 sales reps and only one junior-level marketer. Marketing was viewed as overhead, mostly taking requests for sales enablement materials.

With some consultation and guidance, over the following year the company built a three-member marketing team that proved essential in guiding a company rebrand and website relaunch. Though sales and marketing still operated separately, sales began to look to marketing for help with lead generation through inbound marketing programs, and marketing took on a larger role at the biannual sales meeting.

Only a year later, marketing had become the go-to resource for the sales team, developing campaigns that aligned with strategic goals and generated highly qualified leads (including some million-dollar leads). A marketing technology infrastructure was built out with the addition of marketing automation and CRM tools, and a strategy was developed to align relevant content to each phase of the buying journey. Marketing even kicked off the sales meeting that year!

Eventually sales and marketing collaborated to develop an account-based marketing program and one master revenue plan that drives the two functions in an integrated fashion. The proof of this effort is in the numbers: Through a continued evolution toward alignment, marketing became a scalable machine that was able to generate \$5 million in revenue opportunity.



A BETTER WAY FORWARD

The most successful B2B companies recognize that the sales and marketing roles have changed dramatically, and that each is critical to driving revenue growth. The revenue funnel dictates new ways for sales and marketing to work, collaborating in ways they never have before. When the two operate as part of a combined revenue team, instead of in silos or in competition, that's when the magic happens.

Consider what's possible when the sales/business development and marketing functions are fully aligned and working in tight collaboration. For example:

- It's possible to track leads all that way from an individual marketing tactic to a purchase. That information allows the business to continually adjust and fine-tune its sales and marketing budgets and tactics to ensure the greatest impact.
- Debriefing about leads that have closed vs. leads that were lost can help the two functions understand what improvements are needed—whether that's new or better content, a solution to a process issue, or a need for better marketing automation to move leads through the journey effectively.
- Eventually, every action the B2B company takes guides the buyer through the process—identifying their problems, educating them about solutions, and positioning the company's offering as the right choice. Understanding what a lead needs at each stage of the buying process gives B2B companies the power to prioritize leads and spend more time nurturing leads with the greatest potential to become buyers.

BOTTOM LINE: When sales and marketing are aligned, higher revenue, higher growth, and higher profitability are all achievable.





Aligning the sales and marketing functions can make the difference between so-so results and off-the-chart growth. But you don't have to be an expert in how to get these vital functions working together effectively. Marketri has the expertise and experience to help your B2B company get the sales and marketing functions working optimally to drive greater revenue growth.

**CONTACT MARKETRI FOR HELP GETTING
YOUR GROWTH JOURNEY STARTED.**

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