Guide

# 8 Challenges of Sales and Marketing Alignment

*Overcome These Challenges to Delight Your Buyer from First Touch to Close*



SEISMIC

# Introduction

As blatantly obvious as it sounds, Sales and Marketing alignment is beyond critical for any organization. According to the Aberdeen Group, 74% of best-in-class organizations have a strong relationship between Sales and Marketing. So why is such common knowledge often hard to act on – let alone perfect?

There are many roadblocks that inhibit Sales and Marketing from achieving true alignment. These two teams that have the same stated goals – generating revenue and staying true to the buyer – often find themselves misaligned as they work towards the same end.

Marketing may feel like Sales is not correctly utilizing the content they are creating, and Sales may feel like Marketing isn't creating the right kind of materials. Often times the technologies each department utilize – CRMs for Sales and MAPs for Marketing – don't offer enough vital insights into every interaction. The means by which each department attempts to reach their goal differ, but in reality their efforts can be aligned to improve results and boost productivity.

Marketing works to create, distribute, and deliver content that will engage buyers at every stage of their journey. Sales must be equipped and prepared for every buyer interaction, send the right content, and successfully move buyers from the beginning stages of their journey to a closed deal. Viewed through the right lens, these objectives are flip sides of the same coin.

An imperative function of both Marketing and Sales needs to be the recognition and acknowledgement that they are working towards the same goal. The problems each department faces may seem unique, but in reality they are more similar than dissimilar. The solutions that exist for a problem in one team often solve a problem on the other side of the aisle. To illustrate that let's take a look at four challenges facing Marketing and four challenges facing Sales.



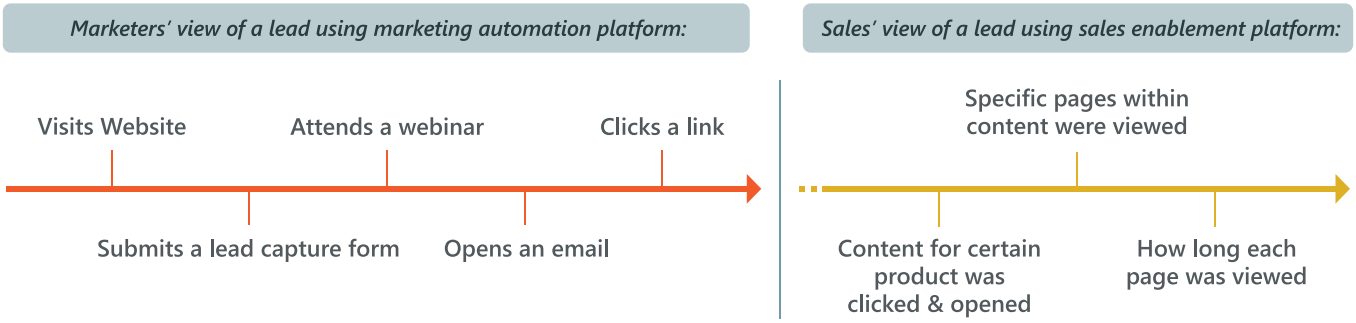
# Marketing Challenges

Many of Marketing's challenges have to do with helping sales function flawlessly. However, Marketing often doesn't have vital insights into how they affect the entire sales cycle and can't make important decisions with concrete evidence as support. In fact, DemandGen discovered 95% of B2B purchase decisions are directly influenced by content. Yet, according to Forrester Research, only 6% of B2B marketers claim they can effectively measure the performance of their content using metrics that reveal business impact.

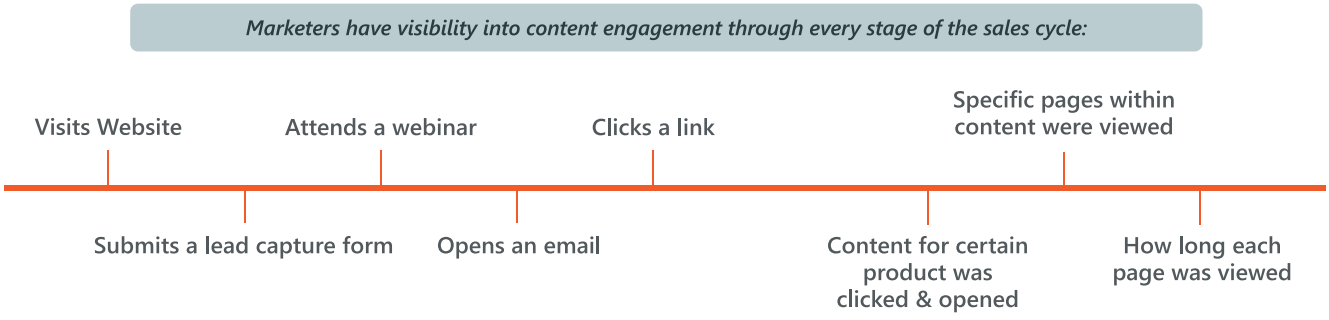
*Four major pain points often reported by marketing are below.*

## **Challenge #1:** There is no visibility into the ROI of marketing content.

Marketing spends time and money creating gorgeous content that they are sure will wow buyers. The copy is relevant, the design is enticing, and the message is perfectly tailored to the audience thanks to in-depth research into the buyer's journey. But does the content actually positively impact the bottom line? Marketing lacks insight into how buyers are engaging with content throughout their entire journey and whether that influences their decision to buy.




**Solution:** To unlock this insight, Marketing needs to put tools in place that will provide them with engagement analytics to prove the effectiveness of content. A better understanding of the way buyers interact with content, and the way Sales uses content to move them through their journey, gives Marketing concrete evidence about how they drive revenue. By pointing to real-life examples of how a piece of content affected a buyer – the way they interacted with it, how the analytics shaped Sales' outreach – Marketing's worth is unimpeachable.



## **Challenge #2:** When and where is content being utilized by Sales?

Content should be created with a specific purpose in mind – a question a buyer will have that is being solved by a particular piece of content. But Marketing can't always ensure that Sales is using the content at the appropriate time. Stage of the buyer's journey, delivery method, and messaging are all important considerations, but Sales often doesn't have the time to track and report back their own usage.

**Solution:** Content usage analytics provide Marketing with important insights about how their content is being used. By studying how many times a piece has been used, where in the buyer's journey it's deployed, and even which sales reps gravitate to using it most frequently, Marketing gains a clearer understanding of Sales' relationship with content.



*Which sales rep is using what content*



*Where sales reps are accessing content*



*How sales reps are sending content*



*Which stage of the buyer's journey content is being sent*

Armed with this knowledge Marketing can easily begin creating content that perfectly aligns with the way Sales uses it. Content usage analytics, illuminated by sales enablement technology, take away the guess work of creating and distributing content. Without this information, Marketing is practically operating in the dark but having the analytics at their disposal gives Marketing specific, actionable ways to improve their content strategy.

## **Challenge #3:** The stress of constantly fulfilling one-off requests.

Sales has a specific need for a piece of content, but the only thing they can find is out-of-date and off-brand, or doesn't meet their needs. The only way to quickly resolve their need is to create a whole new piece (depleting Marketing's resources for a project with no long-term value), or send out old material – potentially damaging the sellers' chances of closing the deal and hurting the brand.

**Solution:** Marketing's main concern with providing Sales a solution for creating their own content comes down to striking the right balance between freedom and protecting the integrity of the content. Sales needs the freedom of a self-serving resource that provides them with the ability to create custom, personalized content whenever the need arises. Marketing needs to ensure that Sales can only edit what they need so no formatting, copy, or design mistakes happen.

A platform, like Seismic's LiveDocs® technology, that allows Sales to configure only areas of content that Marketing has marked as editable makes both sides happy. This solution should provide a controlled

environment where content can be stored and accessed by both departments. With a mutual platform to access what they need, everyone gets what they want. Sales doesn't want the pressure or worry of having to edit full documents, they want to plug and play right away. And Marketing retains control of the content they worked hard to perfect, while remaining flexible enough to relieve the burden of one-off requests.

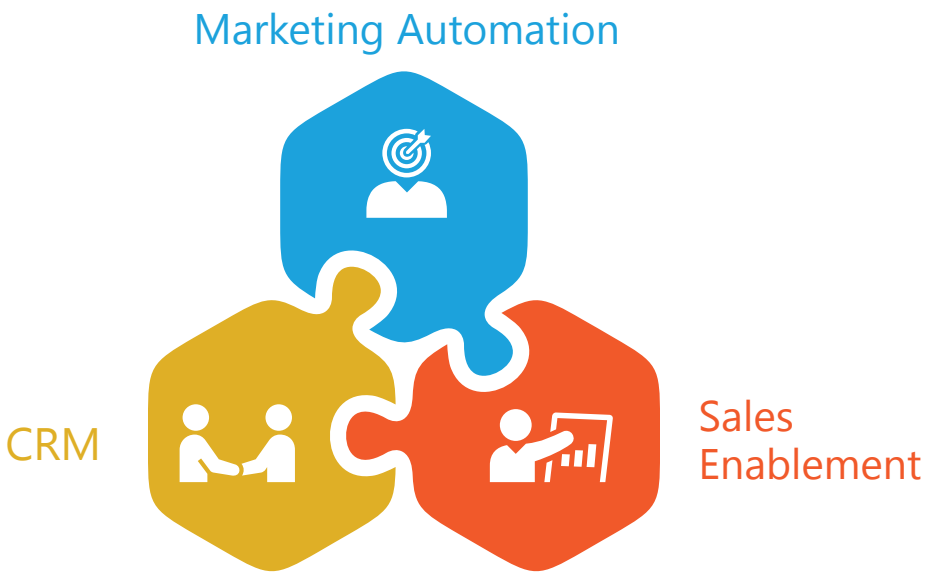
## **Challenge #4:** Marketing lacks the streamlined technology to facilitate alignment.

When a lead is generated by Marketing, the results and particulars of that conversion are recorded within the marketing automation platform. Marketing has insights into the success of landing pages, CTAs, and campaigns. Using analytics they are able to hone their efforts by reshaping content strategies, reconfiguring email efforts, and improving lead scoring.

However, when the lead is handed off to Sales, Marketing loses all visibility into the remainder of the buyer's journey, as previously mentioned. Without that knowledge, true sales and marketing alignment cannot exist.

**Solution:** A sales enablement platform serves as a bridge for the chasm between two technological solutions. Both CRMs and MAPs contain a wealth of knowledge about buyers: their habits, interests, demographics, activities, and much more. But if these two systems are not communicating with one another then, to continue the metaphor, important information is falling off a cliff.

The sales enablement platform links those two tools together. Now, Marketing is able to continue assisting Sales in converting buyers, and gains insight into how their efforts are helping. Marketing can now supply Sales with contextually relevant (and personalized) content for leads within the CRM where sales members spend their time. Usage analytics then reveal to Marketing how effective their content is, when it's being used, and who uses it the most. Finally, Marketing is able to have a complete picture of a buyer's journey.



# Sales Challenges

A lot of Sales' pain points revolve around content. Whether it's finding the content, discovering how effective it is, not having the perfect piece to send to a buyer, or lacking insights into a buyer's previous interactions with Marketing materials, Sales faces many problems when it comes to content.

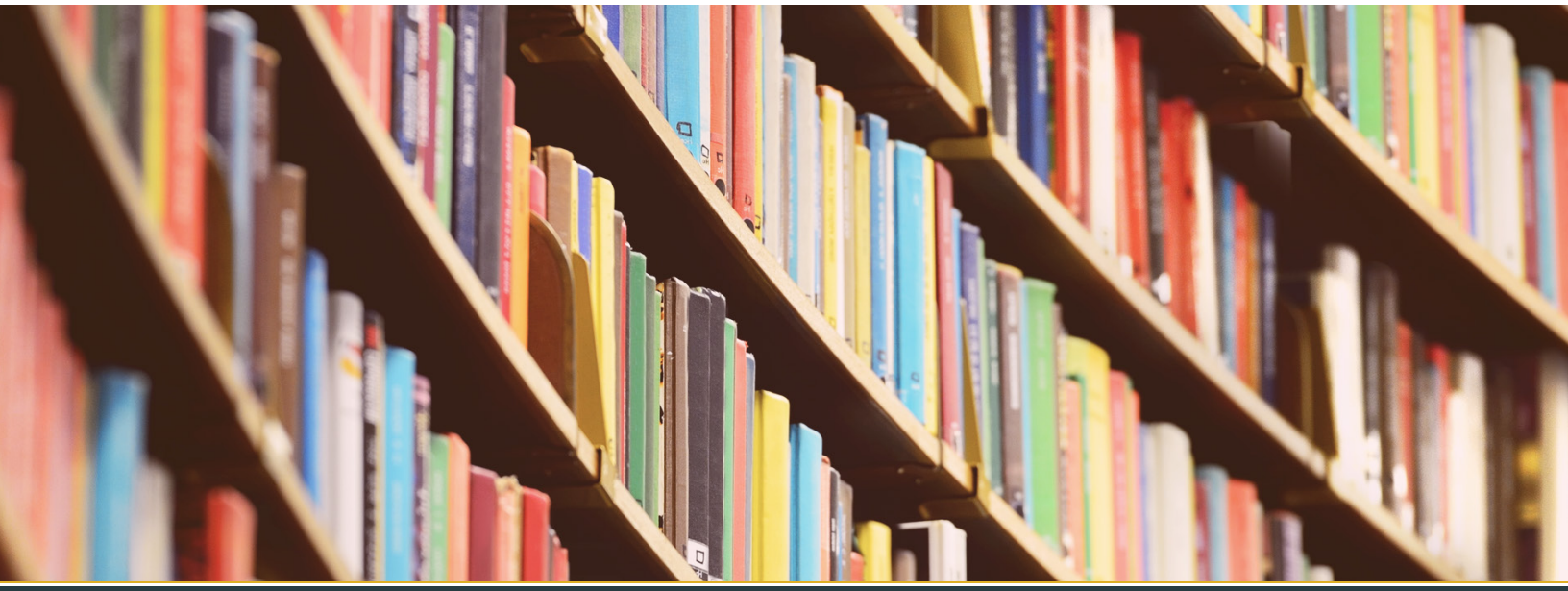
*The major challenges shared by sales teams, and solutions to those problems are below.*

## **Challenge #1:** It's difficult and time-consuming to find the perfect piece of content.

Sales wants to stay true to their buyer with hyper-relevant content. As the buyer moves along their journey, different pieces of content will be a perfect fit for their needs at that particular stage. But without a well-organized content library this is a daunting task for sales reps. RingDNA found that "salespeople spend around 30 hours each month searching for and creating their own selling materials."

**Solution:** To allow Sales to easily navigate large quantities of content there needs to be a central repository to house everything. This central location also needs to be searchable and organized in a logical manner. When libraries were created they didn't just throw books into a building with no rhyme or reason.

For a large organization it is imperative to properly categorize, tag, and sort every piece of content. Sales should be able to find their way to the perfect piece without any hassle. Many content libraries are labyrinthine, but with the correct solutions and procedures in place this is no longer a problem. Instituting content profiles – distinct groups that are restricted to certain types of content – is another great way to make sellers' lives easier when it comes to finding content.

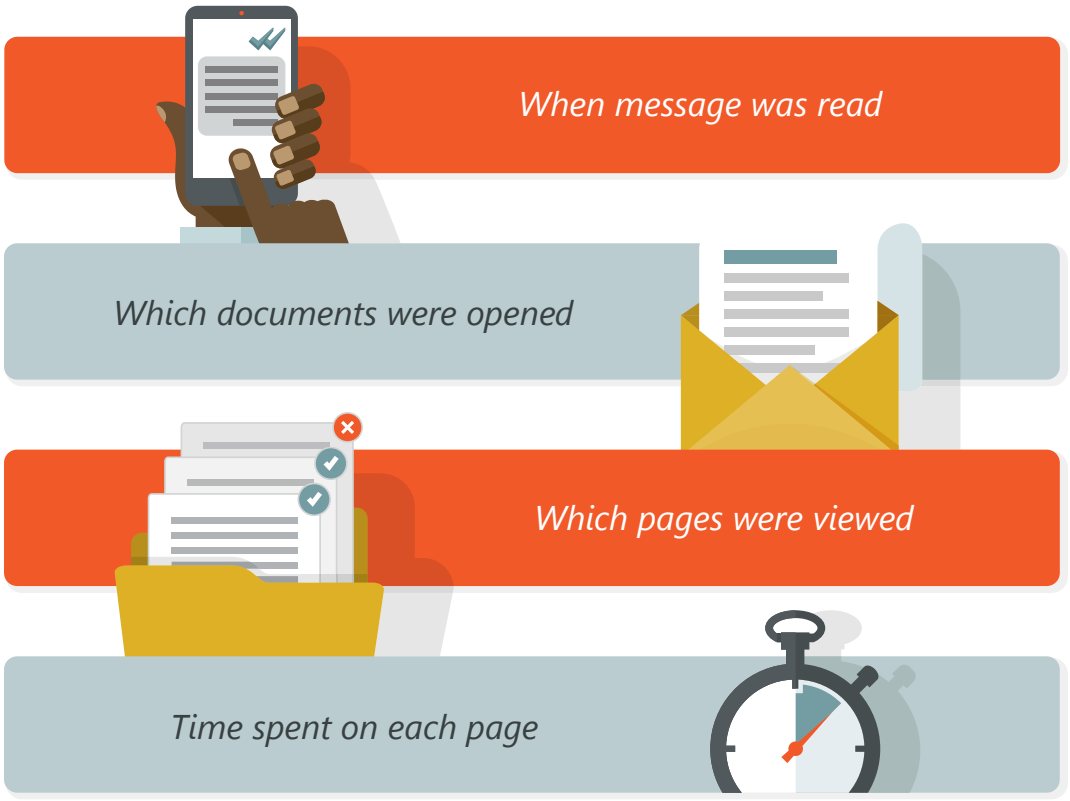


## **Challenge #2:** Is the content being sent to buyers effective?

After finding the right piece of content and sending it off to a buyer important questions remain. Was that piece of content actually effective at moving the buyer along their journey? Did it truly resonate? What sections spoke to their needs the most? Most of the time those questions are unanswerable, unless they are directly asked of a buyer. Otherwise sending content is more guesswork than data-backed decision making. This approach makes it impossible to derive meaningful conclusions from content usage.

**Solution:** Utilizing content engagement analytics unlocks the answers to all of those questions for Sales. When content is sent using technology that can accurately track a buyer's engagement with the piece, sales reps' jobs become a whole lot easier.

Instead of hoping that a buyer read the whole piece and picked up on relevant information, Sales is presented with the data on what they actually viewed, and for how long. This quickly becomes an invaluable tool as the information gleaned from the usage analytics helps refine and hone the next approach. Soon enough Sales has a crystal-clear picture of what content resonates with a particular buyer, what their particular pain points are, and the messaging that most effectively moves them through the funnel.



## **Challenge #3:** Sales feels like they're on their own for one-off content.

Marketing is clearly working hard and bogged down by a ton of requests for content. Sales needs a piece that is specific to one situation and would benefit from a personalized touch. If Sales builds that piece themselves it raises a host of problems. It wastes valuable time that could be spent selling; the new content runs the risk of being off-brand and using outdated material; and Marketing loses oversight on the content creation process.

**Solution:** To maintain control of content creation, but also give Sales the flexibility to create one-off pieces, Marketing must provide a solution that allows for the creation of easily customizable content without creating a logjam of requests.

A solution that gives Sales the ability to edit components of previously created content satisfies both parties. Marketing can restrict areas that won't need to be edited to prevent branding or messaging mishaps, and Sales can be free to personalize the areas they need with names, logos, and hyper-relevant data. This arrangement keeps content up-to-date and extends the life of a piece of content by providing flexibility and customization.

## **Challenge #4:** Sales technology doesn't provide key insights.

A CRM is a valuable database for recording the engagements Sales has with buyers, the key contacts within accounts, and monitoring opportunities as they advance. What a CRM lacks though, is vision into a buyer's behavior when engaging with marketing materials. Without this information, Sales touchpoints aren't as effective as they can be.

**Solution:** As mentioned earlier, a sales enablement platform aligns a CRM with an MAP to give Sales the background necessary for high-level engagement. When a lead is handed off from Marketing to Sales with this alignment in place, Sales has a wealth of knowledge available that can be used to shape their outreach. By providing insights within the CRM into the content the buyer viewed, what particular areas they engaged with, and content recommendations a sales enablement tool allows Sales to continue the personalized buyer experience that Marketing started.



# Conclusion

All organizations experience some level of sales and marketing misalignment. It can be daunting to find the reason for tension, but most of the time it can be addressed by reconsidering the cause of pain points and getting to the root of the problem. These eight challenges usually aren't explicitly Marketing's fault or Sales' fault, but they are often categorized and handled as such within the organization.

By reframing the challenges above as issues that affect both sides, you will find that solutions often solve problems for both Marketing and Sales. Consider these solutions as you work to better align your sales and marketing organizations to work as a single, selling machine.

To achieve alignment it is important for both departments to truly see themselves as part of the same team. When the teams see that they are not in conflict with one another and that the problems they face are often the inverse of one faced by the other, then true Sales and Marketing alignment can be achieved.

***Maximize Your Engagements***

**Achieving an End-to-End View of Your Buyer's Journey**

# About Seismic

Seismic's leading sales enablement solution allows marketing teams to personalize content at scale and equips large sales teams with the right content for every interaction, dramatically improving time spent selling and win rates. Seismic is the only sales enablement platform powered by machine learning algorithms and the award-winning LiveDocs® technology, which automates the creation of personalized sales materials within seconds. Real-time analytics provide unprecedented insight for marketing teams looking to gauge which content helps close deals, further aligning marketing and sales efforts. Headquartered in San Diego and with more than 250 employees across the globe, Seismic is privately held by its executive team and investment firms General Atlantic, JMI Equity, and Jackson Square Ventures.

To learn more, please visit www.seismic.com.