whiteoaks insights

A Perfect Match:



Introduction

There are many benefits to working agency-side in the PR and communications industry and, after 25 years, one benefit still stands true.

Our agency works with an exciting array of clients from many parts of the technology landscape and the insight we have into organisational cultures, structures and strategic priorities makes our working lives fascinating. It means we have a view on trends in the sales and marketing fields based on our knowledge of each of our clients and how they work, and not just one or two.

The way that PR has become more closely integrated – and I'd argue more influential in setting the content marketing agenda – with traditional marketing, combined with us seeing closer working relationships between our Sales and Marketing client contacts, prompted us to embark on this research study.

It was vital to us that we examined both professionals: how they view each other, how they work together, what their opinions are about marketing tactics and lead generation and importantly, if they have adopted an Account-Based Marketing (ABM) or Account-Based Sales (ABS) model.

Why is this research important to us? So that we can offer the very best consultancy as marketing, communications and businesses evolve. The more the B2B tech industry can prove that Sales and Marketing teams are inter-dependent and that their strategies must be linked at the highest level, the more value all marketing communications professionals and their agencies can deliver for B2B tech brands as they look to grow and develop. **The power of the synergistic combination of the two is vital for direct and effective business impact.**

Suzanne Griffiths, Managing Director, Whiteoaks International



The influence of marketing on lead generation and sales

There is an overwhelming shift by B2B businesses for marketing activities to be more accountable and measurable, proving that leads can be generated for Sales teams to action. Marketing and Sales decision-makers agree with the statement that their company's marketing efforts have a positive impact on sales efforts and lead generation (**89%**).

This impact is most often measured by the number of inbound sales enquiries from the website (**61%**), the number of inbound sales enquiries from social media advertising (**52%**) and the number of sales leads captured from event attendees (**50%**).

However, Marketers are more likely to believe that social media advertising (**60%**), community size growth (**51%**) and press coverage (**47%**) are effective tools to measure the impact of marketing activities compared to Sales decision-makers. It is interesting to point out that social media has the strongest potential to have an impact on marketing and sales output as well as on the lead generation.



Social media advertising (60%)

Community size growth (51%)

Press coverage (47%)

Social media and email marketing best support marketing and sales efforts

Social media (**65%**) is the most effective type of activity supporting both marketing and sales outputs, but significantly more for Marketing at **73%** vs **57%** for Sales leaders, followed by email marketing (**61%**).

Overall and not surprisingly, there are more types of content and marketing activities that effectively support marketing efforts compared to sales efforts, which might indicate a lack of awareness from the Sales team as to which tools are available to support them in their roles.

For **Marketing**, the most effective methods of communicating with their accounts and audiences are:



The most effective marketing activities which support **Sales** are:



Working closely to reach shared business goals

A large proportion (**87%**) of Marketing/Sales decision-makers believe that their department is aligned with their counterparts.

The research found stronger scores for 'very closely aligned' for sole decision-makers (**59%**) vs other decision-makers (**31%**) as well as employees that have been in the company for more than five years (**52%**) vs five years or less (**31%**).



It might be that both groups are more familiar with ways of working between departments, explaining why they have stronger feelings towards alignment. One potential reason for both departments already working well together might come from most companies already having a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system in place (**88%**) to gather, retain and take action based on both potential and current client information (**59%**).

A CRM system plays an important role in facilitating ways of working between departments so both divisions share goals and objectives in the most efficient way. As **Ben Davis at e-consultancy** wrote: *"Access to data dictates a single view of the customer that marketing and sales teams can share. Typically, this means a single CRM, but impacts on many data-gathering technologies"*, perhaps referring to the intelligence marketers extract from a Marketing Automation System (MAS).

When asked what their organisation could do to pursue a high-performance marketing or sales function and collaborate with their counterparts, the overriding common comment from both groups was to have more integrated systems and processes. One respondent said: *"A clear aligned plan that has incentives in place for sales and marketing employees to achieve the set corporate goals"* would help the teams to work more effectively.

Account-based structures are on the rise

81% of Marketing and Sales decision-makers state that they are working to an ABM or ABS structure respectively – the figure is **76%** for Marketers and **85%** for Sales leaders.

Overall, both Marketing and Sales decision-makers are satisfied with their company's adoption (**94%**), yet two-thirds (**60%**) of Marketing leaders say they are dissatisfied with the impact of ABM and the figure is higher at **79%** of Sales professionals and ABS.



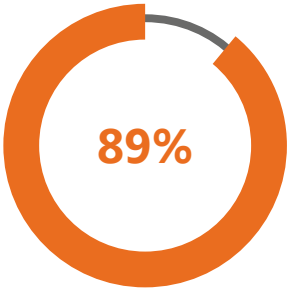
Summary

Alongside an inherent desire for brand building, achieving market differentiation and generating awareness with the right audiences, almost all B2B tech Marketers now want to support the business and their Sales colleagues' goals.

Generating quality, qualified and sustainable leads, using targeted approaches which generate propensity to buy and converting the right leads into clients which reinforce the company's proposition, should be the goals that both Marketing and Sales professionals must continually strive for.

The picture that emerges from this research is one of increasing intent from Marketing and Sales professionals to work closely together and to understand and evaluate marketing activities and their impact on leads.

Encouragingly, they want to use both processes and relationships to achieve their shared goals. And one of those processes is increasingly an account-based model in the form of ABM or ABS – and ideally both, ensuring their company becomes a truly customer-centric one.



The majority of Marketing and Sales decision-makers agree that their company's marketing efforts have a positive impact on sales and lead generation

For many B2B tech Marketers, the message is clear. Their responsibilities are to set clear goals and a strategy, in collaboration with their Sales colleagues, connect personas with the right mix of marketing communications and deliver a powerful content marketing agenda.

With regular evaluation, doing so will challenge and demonstrate their business value.

"While our research challenges the long-held assumption that Sales and Marketing teams are always on opposing sides, the high level of dissatisfaction suggests that the ABM or ABS concept, technology or resource needs improving for it to evidence value to marketing and sales leaders."

Suzanne Griffiths, Managing Director, Whiteoaks International

Appendix

Methodology and demographics

Whiteoaks International worked with the leading research firm and founders of the PRCA Research Best Practice Committee, Vitreous World to produce this research project. 202 interviews were conducted in June 2018 using an online methodology across both senior marketing and sales decision-makers. Quotas were placed on the marketing and sales sectors to ensure a 50/50 split.

Definitions

Account Based Marketing (ABM) refers to a business-to-business (B2B) strategy that aligns both marketing, and sales resources and strategies, to categorise, build relationships and target companies or accounts into prioritised groups rather than on an individual leads basis. It helps an organisation to consider, structure and communicate with individual prospective or existing clients as groups as well as individuals where needed. An ABM strategy covers multi-touch and multi-channel which is realised through the whole company to achieve goals based on high-value, location or sector-specific account.

Account-Based Selling or Sales (ABS) refers to a business to business (B2B) sales model that categorises, builds relationships and targets companies or accounts into prioritised groups rather than on an individual leads basis. An ABS strategy covers multi-touch and multi-channel which is realised through the whole company to achieve goals based on high-value, location or sector-specific accounts.

ABM and ABS (Account Based Sales or Selling) are both required in order to achieve a comprehensive **Account-Based Experience** (ABX), ensuring the business becomes truly customer-centric in a way that creates better engagement and results for business and its customers.

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