B2B Whitepaper

Published October 2013
b2bmarketing.net

B2B Marketing

Using data to align sales and marketing

In association with: birst

Using data to align sales and marketing

Sales versus marketing is the business world's 'Tom and Jerry', so well documented is their fractious relationship. Yet, just like their cartoon counterparts, they would be lost individually. Even if it's just so each has a scapegoat for when things go wrong, a dependency exists that cannot be ignored.

The irony, of course, is when they work together they create something greater than the sum of their parts, resulting in better ROI and more sales. Everyone can be a winner. No one would argue such alignment is easily achieved, but it's now far from impossible.

"No one would argue such alignment is easily achieved, but it's now far from impossible"

The transformation of the communications landscape in recent years, spawned by a series of environmental, cultural and technological developments, has served to transform sales and marketing beyond all recognition. It's true these developments have brought with them a plethora of new challenges. But they also come with their associated opportunities. And interdepartmental alignment is chief among them. It's worth highlighting a few of these developments, and mapping the ways in which they are impacting on the emphasis your organisation should be putting on improving the relationship between sales and marketing teams.

Technological development

Digital developments such as search, the rise of social media and the incredible speed with which the world has gone mobile, all mean marketers are having to tick more boxes than ever before. Communications need to work across multiple channels simultaneously, and that is no easy task. Of course, all these developments, which serve to liberate the buyer and create new challenges for the marketer, have spawned a raft of business solutions designed to allow the marketer to wrestle back some control. Marketing departments are awash with solutions that can help make sense of the confusing digital buying landscape. But consorting with the old enemy is becoming ever more important for marketers looking to make full use of these technologies.

The empowered customer

Recent research from a burgeoning list of organisations has proved what many marketers have known for some time: namely that B2B buyers are considerably more in control of the buying process than they once were. Control of the process has been wrestled away from sales and marketing, and now lies firmly in the hands of the people looking to spend. Indeed, conservative estimates suggest on average 60 per cent of the buying process is complete before any engagement with sales takes place. The message is clear: the sales department needs to be included earlier in the process, and the only way the empowered buyer is likely to accept such involvement is via inbound marketing messages.

The rise of sales enablement

Sales enablement is the content and insight-focused answer to the challenges caused by the changing role of marketing and sales. It is tied up with the concept of closed-loop marketing and sees marketing and sales working together in order to fine tune the messages they are sending out to customers and prospects. The basic idea is that sales is able to take advantage of insight and content from marketing to shape conversations with prospects, and once a sales conversation has taken place sales is then able to feed back to marketing, enabling highly tailored messages and content, based on direct prospect feedback. If this process is carried out effectively it should create a situation where an organisation is able to constantly refine the relevance of its messages. It relies on very close working between sales and marketing but sales enablement is increasingly on the agenda of many within the B2B space.

Data, big and small

If one thing best reflects the proliferation of digital technology, the empowerment of the buyer, the expansion of the average marketer's focus and the expansion of skills required to succeed in marketing, it is probably data. Regardless of whether this data is labelled as being 'big', the amount of potential insight available to businesses in the digital age is one of its most definitive characteristics. The huge increase in the amount of data created every day represents one of the biggest challenges a marketer is likely to face as well as their greatest ally. The fact is: hidden within the reams of insight and numbers comprising an organisation's data is the answer to most of the questions the marketing and sales departments are currently asking. And, though many will not enjoy hearing it, data is also the key to realising the benefits of aligning the sales and marketing functions.

The cultural shifts required and personal battles with disinterested colleagues – all par for the course in the sales/marketing alignment process – will never prove worthwhile unless you successfully leverage the insight hidden within your organisation's data.

To successfully implement a sales and marketing alignment strategy you must learn to embrace data as an enabler. Sales and marketing alignment is all about ensuring each department is on the same page, pulling towards the same goals. Without utilising data effectively realising this objective is impossible.

"To successfully implement a sales and marketing alignment strategy you must learn to embrace data as an enabler"

The five data challenges of sales and marketing alignment

By Charlotte Graham-Cumming, director, Ice Blue Sky

Depending on whether or not you're a details person, the concept of data will elicit either a sigh of contentment or one of frustration. We all know it's important, especially when aligning sales and marketing, but most marketers see it as a huge, un-crossable gorge. The associated challenges tend to fall into one of five common areas, and they are worth bearing in mind when attempting to use data to team up with your sales team.

1. Too much, too soon
Trying to do it all at once, while being a very valiant objective, will just prolong your agony of lack of integration and information sharing. Can you really wait 12-24 months for your data to be aligned? Can you afford to start again when you realised you didn't anticipate every situation?

2. All the right letters, just not in the right order
We've all seen it; company names duplicated, but each one ever so slightly different; same guy in your database with three different first name references: it can be hard to know where to start. And this doesn't even mention the fact sales may have different definitions of lead stages and different data requirements.

3. You're all I need to get by
It's tempting to try and integrate everything straight away. Weeding out what you need to integrate and what you don't can be a challenge, making sure you understand each process so that you understand what's needed can be a time-consuming task.

4. Toing and froing
You need to understand the ins and outs of every data sharing process – back and forth – between sales and marketing. You want to remove silos, and you need to be able to identify the processes that can effectively link those silos together.

5. Culture club
Once you're set up, you then need everyone to use it properly. Keeping everyone bought in to the process can be tricky, maintaining compliance and excitement after the initial interest is hard work. But it's necessary if you don't want to undo all your hard work.



CHARLOTTE GRAHAM-CUMMING
DIRECTOR
ICE BLUE SKY

"It's tempting to try and integrate everything straight away. Weeding out what you need to integrate, and what you don't, can be a challenge"

What data?

Each department within your organisation will probably envisage something different when they think about data. And this is because data refers, really, to many different things. It could include the web analytics data stored in your Google Analytics account, insight drawn from your organisation's social media interactions, information held on your CRM systems, your marketing automation system, your email platform and your market research findings. It also includes those personal notes people make and don't share with the rest of the organisation, particularly when you're talking about different departments sharing insight.

"Data is everywhere, and pretty much every company operating today will have a bewildering volume of data to analyse"

Data is everywhere, and pretty much every company operating today will have a bewildering volume of data to analyse. The ideal scenario is for sales and marketing (and all the other distinct functions within the organisation) to be using and enriching the same sets of data. When this is a reality sales and marketing alignment is considerably easier to achieve.

But the starting point for many is far from this ideal. This challenge is compounded by the fact mastering data management and analysis is not something commonly associated with the traditional marketing skill set. The first key task has to be assessing exactly what your data looks like today.

Essential questions to ask when assessing data quality:

- How up-to-date is our data?
- Do sales and marketing share the same data set?
- Is anyone responsible for ensuring the integrity of the data?
- Where is our data stored: is it in unhelpful silos or do we have universally accessible, clean data?
- What analytics approach will you take, and who will own it? Will you be looking at data sets from a single application, or from multiple systems?

What do we need to know?

At the start of your alignment programme it makes sense to sit down with all relevant stakeholders and map out exactly what information you need about your customers and prospects. Try and resist the urge to demand too much. Of course you want to know as much as possible but bear in mind, any records that don't satisfy every obligatory field will be placed in a separate set as not to pollute your prospect pool. Agree a minimum requirement with sales colleagues, and encourage them that 'shoe size' and 'mother's maiden name' may not be essential for your average B2B transaction. With agreement in place, the task of delivering and nurturing what you are looking for will grow easier. Remember too, that with the use of progressive profiling and marketing automation, those less essential fields will become complete over time.

De-duplication

One of the most common problems found in a company's CRM system is duplication. It's no use to anyone if one prospect is listed several times in your system, especially if they appear with different levels of completion and levels of qualification. Updates made to one entry will not be carried over to others, and insight will be lost. Similarly, a situation may arise where you're sending the same person the same messages – be they emails or phone calls – multiple times. This is unlikely to secure business. The more likely result is they will ask you to remove their details from your database altogether. A wise starting point for anyone looking to leverage data to facilitate sales and marketing alignment is data de-duplication. Depending on the size of the data set you're dealing with it may be advisable to use an app or third party de-duping programme to flag repetitions.

Expiry dates

A duplication-free data set is a beautiful thing; but it really amounts to little more than a good start. The next thing you'll need to do is ensure your data is up-to-date. It's commonly accepted that business data decreases in quality by around three per cent per month. The challenge is obviously greater in B2B than in consumer marketing because there is a natural wastage as people move jobs, rendering old email addresses redundant overnight. Warning signs should come in the guise of months' worth of unanswered emails or finding out someone has moved on when a sales rep makes a call. It's vitally important to update records when you find out certain pieces of information are out of date. It is a continual process, requiring constant updating. Marketing and sales alignment depends on data quality. It is vital to instil a culture of data management and technological proficiency within your organisation.

"It is vital to instil a culture of data management and technological proficiency within your organisation"

Five tips for using data to align sales and marketing

By Adam Sharp, group managing director, CleverTouch

1. Know your total addressable market (TAM)
You will be surprised at the number of companies that hire expensive sales and marketing people first and then rely on marketing lists and existing contacts. Know the size of your market, the addressable contacts and their location before you start.

2. Map your territory before you hire
Never buy data lists, and never rent them. Instead invest in building out your TAM and have someone maintain it for you. After all your data will decrease in quality at a rate of between two and four per cent each month. You need to have a minimum quality level and have that maintained.

3. Build stratas into your marketing funnel and your sales pipeline
Build a common language. Sales and marketing is about having a shared language – agreeing your MQL, your SAL – lead definition is pretty fundamental. You need to know the metrics and the conversion rates, the speed, the size at every stage. Sales and marketing leadership is not about infographics, it is about continuous and sustained improvement.

4. Build a sales and marketing infrastructure
CRM on its own is rubbish. Build a CRM and marketing automation infrastructure where leads and opportunities can be moved between sales and marketing seamlessly. Organisational workflow is essential; an infrastructure where there is no lead leakage.

5. Begin with the end in mind
Know what success looks like. According to a recent Adobe CMO survey only 20 per cent of CMOs even try and measure marketing ROI. The first thing to do after the sales and marketing alignment programme of change is implemented is to build a reporting model that works for both sales and marketing and shows the health of the business in the context of incremental improvement and shared ownership and accountability.



ADAM SHARP
GROUP MANAGING DIRECTOR
CLEVERTOUCH

"Sales and marketing leadership is not about infographics, it is about continuous and sustained improvement"

Lead qualification

Expanding now on what is, perhaps, the biggest point of contention in the sales/marketing relationship; simply put, sales and marketing do not always agree on what a hot prospect looks like. Traditionally, this has led to sales ignoring marketing's offerings and working on its own prospect lists, and this is exactly what sales and marketing alignment seeks to avoid. Both departments need to be on the same page, and there needs to be a solid agreement about what exactly constitutes a lead. It might even be worth attempting the impossible and trying to make a marketing-qualified lead and a sales-qualified lead the same thing.

"Both departments need to be on the same page, and there needs to be a solid agreement about what exactly constitutes a lead"

Lead scoring

One way of moving towards creating some level of harmony between what sales and marketing each believe a prospect looks like is to agree a system of lead scoring. Such a system, clearly, relies on both departments working on clean, well integrated data sets. But that is, let's not forget, the starting point for sales and marketing alignment. Lead scoring is all about turning the invisible clues your prospects are leaving around the internet into actionable insight. It can also be a hugely useful activity in helping align the sales and marketing function.

It's worth listing the kind of activities your customers generally undertake prior to buying from you. Given the famously lengthy buying cycles that dominate the B2B space, it's likely the list will be fairly long. But if you can start assigning a point system to activities, where, for example, a prospect collects more points as they open emails, download content and register for webcasts, you are able to gain a personalised understanding of how likely they are to buy. When they reach an agreed stage of the way through the process, messages can be honed, and prospects eventually passed over to sales at the ideal moment. It should mean an end to sales being invited to the table too early and an end to them concentrating on their own offline prospect lists.

Marketing automation

Marketing automation is among the marketing technologies best disposed towards helping facilitate sales and marketing alignment through improved lead generation and nurturing. Indeed, many of the major vendors have been responsible for championing discourse around the associated best practice techniques. And where there was once a belief that the considerable benefits of marketing automation platforms were only for the organisations with the biggest wallets, it is now commonly regarded as a solution smaller organisations can also look to leverage. Investing in the technology isn't a guaranteed ticket to success; commitment, data management and a desire to use it as more than just a fancy email platform are all required. But when it joins forces with a clean CRM system, it can be incredibly useful.

How to use marketing automation to align sales and marketing

By Ellen Valentine, product evangelist, Silverpop

1. Prioritise technology's place in marketing

Gartner research found that by 2017 CMOs will spend more on technology than CIOs. With today's buyers expecting timely and relevant messages this is virtually impossible to handle manually, so marketers must get more automated and set aside a dedicated budget to do this.

2. Incorporate behaviours into your scoring model

Behaviours will improve the accuracy of your scoring model, resulting in a higher quality of leads going to sales. With behavioural data embedded in your model, sales will be more confident about marketing leads. And the scores will more accurately reflect engagement with your company.

3. Provide behavioural trends to the sales team

Behavioural data allows that first phone call to a client to be highly personalised, and to make this happen easily the marketing operations team should ensure behavioural data is easy to view within the CRM system. For example, if a prospect has visited your website, let sales know precisely which pages they have visited and when. It will make that first contact a great experience.

4. Empower sales with nurture campaigns

Research indicates that prospects are far along their purchase path before they're comfortable inviting a sales rep into their evaluation process, so it's vital to correctly handle the early part of the sales process. Build nurture campaigns and set them up so sales can activate the nurturing process for clients that are not yet ready for a sales relationship.

5. Review and evaluate

When reviewing the year, see what marketing initiatives contributed the most to the sales pipeline and then prioritise them. If you have marketing automation or CRM technology in place, one or both of those systems should give you clear answers. Proactively meet with sales to show them the revenue and lead insights you have collected. The more they know about what you are doing the more comfortable they will be with your efforts in the top and middle of the opportunity funnel.



ELLEN VALENTINE
PRODUCT EVANGELIST
SILVERPOP

"When reviewing the year, see what marketing initiatives contributed the most to the sales pipeline and then prioritise them"

An ongoing process

Of all the prerequisites for successfully aligning sales and marketing, commitment is perhaps the most significant. It is a difficult path to tread, and one that really has no finishing line. It's an ongoing process that, if approached in the correct way, should be continually refined and evaluated in order to drive business growth and improved ROI. This means successes and lessons learnt along the way must always be recycled back into the process and that, in theory at least, you should see gradually improving returns as a result of your alignment efforts. Once you can point to these early, hard-earned victories, it should become much easier to persuade unconvinced colleagues to re-evaluate the benefits of helping with the process.

Perhaps the most encouraging message regarding sales and marketing alignment is that the power to start facilitating the change rests in your hands. The data that already exists within your organisation is your greatest ally. You just need to move to unlock the secrets it holds.

"The data that already exists within your organisation is your greatest ally. You just need to move to unlock the secrets it holds"

Bringing sales and marketing together with business intelligence

By Wynn White, vice president of marketing, Birst

For many organisations, sales and marketing can be completely separate teams with their own languages, apps and ideas about how to be successful. To cross this divide requires an understanding of what everyone is looking to achieve, the right data to make decisions with, and a roadmap for the future. Here are four points to help you on your journey.

1. Do you have the right data?

Marketing has traditionally been around lead capture, and that means getting people to part with their name, email address, phone number, and maybe their job title, if you were going to push the boat out. However, this approach ignores a lot of contextual information that you should also be gathering. Examples here include behavioural data, such as web interactions and likes/dislikes from social channels, and historical information like previous purchases or customer support requests.

Putting together this 'in the round' picture of a customer or prospect not only helps you target your messaging to the right target, but helps sales pitch prospects more efficiently too. Bringing marketing data alongside CRM records helps the sales team to gauge what kind of response they might get from a customer and prepare accordingly.

2. Do you have the right metrics?

Feeding a marketing automation machine is a necessary investment, but this on its own will not result in better alignment between sales and marketing. This will change, due to how marketing professionals will be measured in future.

Rather than looking at standalone marketing metrics like 'number of marketing qualified leads generated', the measurement of success will be linked to more general business goals like the percentage of revenue that can be attributed to marketing activities.

This will be based on the data that marketing and sales can generate over the course of a customer going through the sales process, interacting with different company assets. This could include content marketing pieces, sales professionals getting in contact, or specific targeted campaigns that generate interest. However the customer journey is made up, being able to see how marketing touch points helped the process along will be a vital part of demonstrating that wider strategies translated into more tangible results.

It also stands to reason that if you are being measured on company-wide success, then the urge to collaborate will be higher. Similarly, your opposite number on the sales team will equally want to understand more about how marketing activities will help drive success too.



WYNN WHITE
VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING, BIRST

"Being able to see how marketing touch points helped the process along will be a vital part of demonstrating that wider strategies translated into more tangible results.'

3. Understanding how to put data together and get predictive
While pure analytics helps marketers understand what their best programmes are or what channels are producing the most return, predictive analysis can identify the best marketing mix and help guarantee future revenue goals.

With predictive analysis, you can answer questions like:
- Of the thousands of prospects my sales team is speaking to, which are most/least likely to buy?
- Which of my current customers are likely to buy some of my other products?
- Which of my current customers are most likely to terminate their service if I am not proactive in contacting them?

This is a gold mine of information for both marketing and sales to exploit. It also provides the business leadership team with the ability to formulate strategic development plans. With this valuable management information, marketers can help guide and predict their future investments by discovering the actions they can take to improve their performance and help the company win in deals.

4. Use data for long-term strategy
Getting this process for gathering data, analysing it and providing decision support to sales, marketing and business teams should provide a strong reason for marketing to get involved in more strategic decisions. The person who owns the flow of data to the business is in a great position to provide the organisation with information that can be used for decision-making.

Marketing can bring together the data analytics side with the ability to put stories and ideas into context. This mix of the emotional and the rational is therefore a great skill set for the CEO to call on.

Ultimately, aligning sales and marketing should make everyone more successful in their roles. By picking the right data sources and bringing that information together using business intelligence, marketing leaders can make the process much easier and achieve better results.

About B2B Marketing

B2B Marketing is the comprehensive information resource for B2B marketers. Its mission is to provide practitioners with the information they need to perform better and achieve more, whatever sector of the B2B space they are operating in.

Launched in 2004 as *B2B Marketing* magazine, it has since evolved into a multi-faceted resource, delivering a broad range of content in a variety of different forms and formats. Its key products are:

- Online community
- Magazine
- Awards
- Research and reports
- Training
- Events
- Membership

For more information on any of these products or services go to b2bmarketing.net or call +44 (0) 20 7438 1370

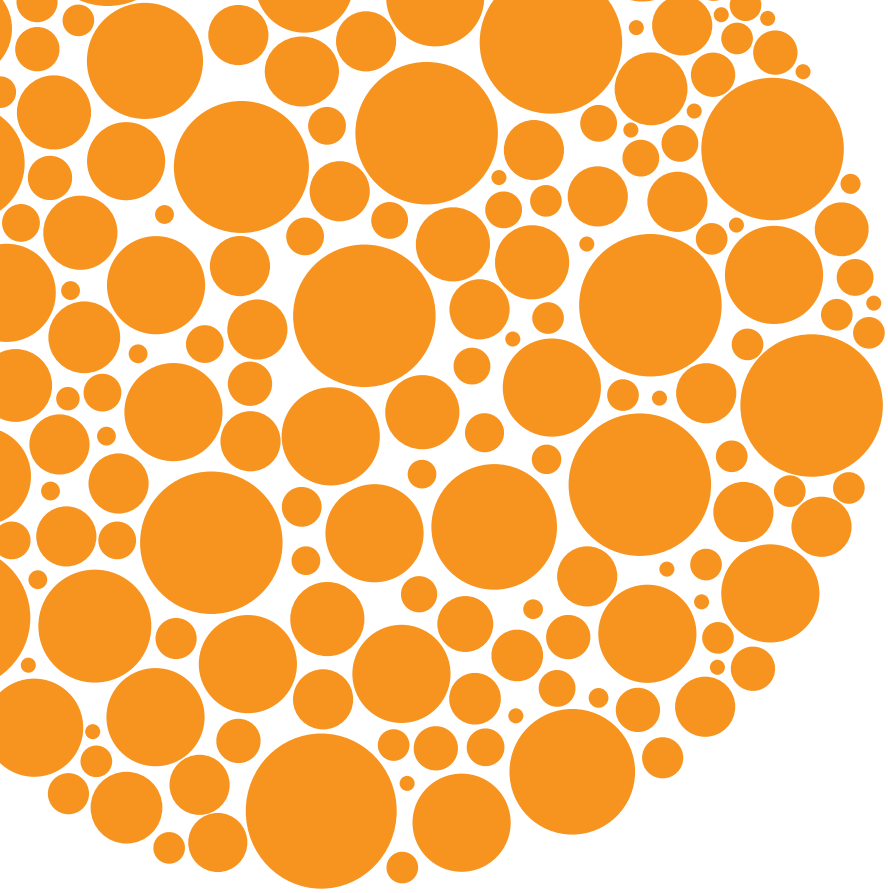
About Birst

Birst brings the benefits of fact-based decision making to a much broader audience by providing enterprise-class analysis and reporting that is quick to deploy, easy-to-use and affordable.

The company's cloud-based approach to business intelligence is aimed at organisations that want to make better decisions around their sales, marketing, finance and people.

Birst partners with the likes of Salesforce, NetSuite and Marketo to help organisations make the most of the data stored in their CRM, ERP, marketing analytics and other IT systems.

For further information visit birst.com





B2B Marketing
Colonial Buildings
59/61 Hatton Garden
London
EC1N 8LS

Tel. +44 (0) 20 7438 1370
Fax +44 (0) 20 7438 1377

info@b2bmarketing.net
b2bmarketing.net