

Marketing

Tools and tactics for the business-to-business expedition

Sales & Marketing: one big healthy and wealthy family

Sales & Marketing speak

Brand strategy: the unique selling proposition that truly differentiates your organization and is relevant to a majority of your customers

Customer relationship management (CRM): a system that entails recording and analyzing all customer and prospect interaction, prompting recurrent nurturing and communications

Integrated direct marketing: campaigns delivered to targeted recipients within segments via a variety of coordinated touchpoints

Lead generation: planning and executing marketing activities that generate an interest and action of targeted market segments

Lead: a prospect who shows interest in your company, product, or service based on their actions

Lead management: assigning leads for follow-up; nurturing leads; tracking sale/no sale; determining the ROI of lead sources e.g., ads, email, web

Sales cycle: the sequence within the sales process, measured in time, from point of contact with the customer to the final sales transaction

Sales & Marketing integration: to generate, qualify, follow up, and nurture leads in a collaborative manner



The old adage “can’t live with them, can’t live without them” is normally associated with certain family members. But this saying may also apply to our business associates. It takes a diverse group of people to run an organization. With such an assortment of perspectives, it’s likely not everyone will see eye to eye. The fact is, when people in any sort of relationship try to understand and support one another, the whole “family” will gain from the effort.

All in the family

In the corporate world, there is often tension among departments. One of the more predictable tiffs is between Sales & Marketing. Yes, they are family—siblings in fact!

Sometimes the criticism goes, “Marketing doesn’t give me what I need out there.” Or, “Sales doesn’t follow up on the leads we give them.” If these siblings choose to be stubborn and don’t cooperate, the bottom line will suffer. Even though they don’t show it, one needs the other and can benefit from the strengths the other possesses. When they stand together, they create a formidable team.

No resemblance whatsoever!

The thinking in some organizations is that Sales and Marketing are synonymous. In these cases, sales people may be hired and expected to “market” a product/service by prospecting, which is very inefficient.

The wise approach entails Marketing supporting Sales by priming the pipeline with prospects who are influencers or decision makers in the buying process. These prospects may have shown interest in a campaign offer. Marketing’s activities can help align Sales with qualified potential buyers and produce sales tools that provide proof of the value proposition.

Born to market or to sell

Marketing’s role is to strategize, integrate, build brand awareness, position, generate and nurture leads, warm up and pre-sell prospects, analyze data, forecast, and look for trends—setting the stage for Sales.

Marketing’s responsibilities include market research and planning, brand management, developing/managing literature, advertising, publicity, online marketing, direct marketing, trade show marketing, and social media.

Sales’ role is to identify customers’ needs, consult, follow up, represent, interact, transact, negotiate, get a signature, close the sale, and maintain relationships.

Sales’ responsibilities include customer relations, demonstrations, gathering customer/prospect feedback, staffing trade shows, connecting with the sales channel, and inputting information and interactions in the CRM system.

When Marketing focuses on producing viable leads, Sales can be more productive by following up with those prospects who have indicated interest. By strategically combining both disciplines, a business will enjoy more growth and success.

Sales & Marketing house rules

Borns will play the parent and set the rules so everyone in the family knows what is expected of them...

Rule 1: Just get along

Sales & Marketing must collaborate. Both disciplines can bring acumen, expertise, and insight to the table. While Sales & Marketing both have the same goal—to increase business—they have different perspectives. Marketing is trying to build awareness among prospects and generate leads while

Sales is trying to qualify leads and convert them into customers.

Collaboration means Sales & Marketing come to understand the interests and needs of prospects and customers and respond accordingly.

***Rule 2: Analyze customers—
profile, segment, and personify***
One of the more strategic things that Marketing can do is to dissect the customer and prospect base. This starts with an analysis of customer sales history so that a customer profile can be created. Factor in industry codes, size, contacts' titles, location, products/services purchased, etc.

Ideal customer profile

By looking at the history of the top 10% to 20% of your customers, you can create a profile of your ideal customers. A combination of factors will determine which customers are most desirable (e.g., frequent orders, located within 500 miles, growth industries). Anecdotal information such as “easy to do business with” or “pays according to our terms” should be factored in as well. An ideal customer profile will help when developing a prospect database because you are creating a description of potential customers that resembles the best of your existing customers.

Segmentation

Then you are able to break down the profile into segments such as small, medium, and large companies and/or those who buy all of your products/services vs. only specific offerings.

Personas

From here you can drill down even deeper to define personas within your ideal customer profile. Because buying decisions often involve a cross-section of departments, personas can help tailor your message to appeal to specific positions. For example, an engineer may have different purchasing criteria than a buyer, but both may be involved in the buying decision. In comparison, the engineers at your largest customers may be primarily interested in a unique product that only your company can supply. The buyer may focus on price and lead time.

Putting the data into action

Once the customer and prospect database is broken down, Marketing can devise tactics for each segment.

As leads are generated, Sales will be prepared for follow-up and meetings, and may be able to glean additional intelligence from each contact.

Rule 3: Warm regards

Marketing can launch meaningful campaigns based on the personas of the influencers and decision-makers they want to reach. Relevant messages that address the needs of these distinct audiences can be conveyed throughout the sales cycle. Marketing should be keeping prospects warm so that Sales' follow up is timely and welcome.

Rule 4: Learn to share

Sales can provide Marketing with insights on the selling/buying process. Getting to know your customers is not a one-shot approach. While Marketing may occasionally survey customers, Sales must make the effort to continuously update Marketing on the changing buying patterns, habits, and preferences of prospects and clients. They need to share with Marketing both negative and positive experiences, issues, and challenges they learn about.

Rule 5: Always there for you

When a marketing campaign is launched, Marketing is not so much passing the baton to Sales, but rather pacing them. Business-to-business sales cycles can last months or more than a year, so Sales and Marketing must be side-by-side going the distance together.

After a direct marketing campaign release, Marketing should provide Sales with intelligence, such as: QR codes scans, email opens, forwards, and click-throughs. Marketing can also report what visitors looked at on the website and how long they were there and the number of times they returned to the site. All of this activity will indicate the level of prospects' interest.

Marketing should provide ongoing support to Sales. This may include market-specific literature, case studies, product/service enhancements, warming devices, a lead management program, etc. All this is Marketing's way of helping Sales be more effective and efficient.

There is no better way to gauge the marketability of a company, product, or service than by getting customers'



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and prospects' impressions firsthand. Sales must share the feedback they are getting from the field and help Marketing measure the accuracy of their data and the interest in campaigns.

Rule 6: Preach what you practice

The brand must be continually reinforced by Marketing. The brand message states there is no other company, product, and/or service like yours. A clear, consistent brand will differentiate your offering from the myriad of choices available in the market. The brand must be presented and communicated comprehensively, in every form of communication, with absolute consistency. And when you can provide proof (e.g., case studies), customers will be more confident in their choice to purchase from your company and possibly even be willing to pay a premium for your product and/or service.

Rule 7: Solution selling

A professional sales person is a problem solver. As the Sales team develops relationships with customers and prospects, they are looking for opportunities to solve problems. During the sales process, Sales uses the tools developed by Marketing (white papers, case studies, comparative data, presentations, etc.) to demonstrate how their company's product/service can provide the needed solution.

Rule 8: What's a good lead?

Sales & Marketing should develop a process for identifying qualified leads. One way is to establish a lead scoring system that measures the degree of interest by a prospect. The scoring system can be relatively simple. If you apply a point for each action prospects take, those who take the most actions (and closely match the ideal customer profile) earn the highest scores and get prioritized follow-up.

More details on lead scoring is available in the Lead management issue at borns.com/marketeting.

Rule 9: You push, I'll pull

Push marketing can be described as communicating through the established sales channel to reach the end user. Pull marketing entails reaching the end user directly, building awareness and interest, and encouraging them to contact the seller and ask for your specific product and/or service. Applying both approaches will increase sales.

Ready for a mixed family?

If your "family" is sales-oriented, adopt Borns as the marketing member of the family. Contact Randy Borns at 616.502.2213 or randy@borns.com to talk about Sales & Marketing integration.



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