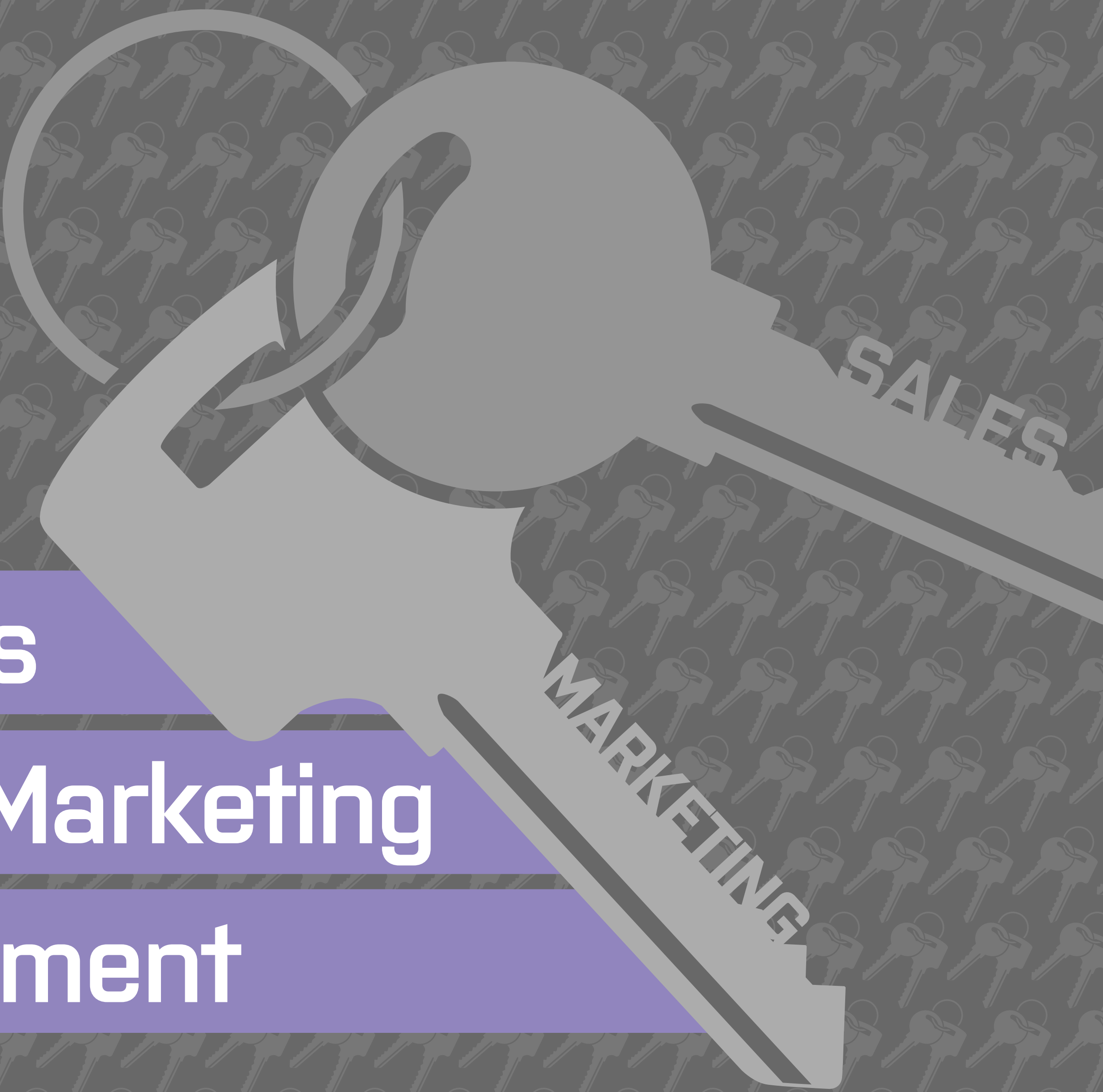
Beginner's Guide

Published June 2014
b2bmarketing.net

B2B Marketing



Sales and Marketing Alignment

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Marketing is a collaborative process

It's now widely accepted that the digital revolution has been the catalyst behind buyers taking ultimate control of the sales process – in the pre-digital age this was sales' job.

And while this doesn't necessarily make the salesman void, it does mean sales and marketing has become a numbers game. Add in the fact the value of marketing is constantly being questioned, and the pressure on the pipeline becomes unrelenting.

Sales and marketing alignment is a pipe dream for a lot of organisations out there, but it needn't be. Those bold enough to show unity in these traditionally disparate departments are making waves when it comes to understanding customer needs.

Sales enablement is an opportunity for marketing to re-establish credibility, bring balance back to its relationship with sales, and reshape the conversations sales is having with prospects and customers.

Marketing and sales need to pull closer together and accept the buying process has changed. Marketing needs to open conversations with empowered buyers so sales can pick up further down the funnel.

If you're interested in further best practice advice, our Sales Enablement Best Practice Guide will enable you to maximise sales' ability to sell more effectively by providing them with key insights and resources to better understand buyers. Premium members can download it for free, and non-members can buy it online for £99 +VAT. You can find the report here: b2bmarketing.net/sales-enablement-best-practice

How to achieve sales and marketing alignment

KIRSTY DAWE
AGENCY DIRECTOR
REALLY B2B

Since the advent of sales and marketing in business, these two rival factions have been at loggerheads. Sales believe that marketing isn't providing enough high-quality leads; and marketing believes that sales isn't converting enough of the leads they do provide. So what is the solution?

Well, only by aligning sales and marketing and focusing their attention firmly on the prospect, will a business be able to generate the maximum amount of leads, sales and revenue in future.

1. Define the customer

Start by identifying your ideal customer and ensuring sales and marketing are both singing from the same hymn sheet. Creating a single vision of your customers means both parties can now work towards a common goal. It's vital to identify the following key information:

- Business demographics.
- Their challenges.
- Their media consumption.
- Where they spend time online and offline.
- Where they look for information.

This data can be gathered via online surveys, speaking to prospects at events and telephone research. But don't forget to involve sales too. By reviewing the path current clients took while travelling through the sales funnel, it's possible to identify behavioural patterns that indicate a readiness to buy.

The outcome of all this research will be a two-page profile of each decision-maker and influencer group (i.e. persona documents). These personas need to become sacred texts that are continuously read and digested by sales and marketing alike.

2. Decide what a sales-qualified lead looks like

The sales team has previously been quick to say marketing isn't providing enough high-quality leads, so it's time to ask sales exactly what they want in a lead, and make sure marketing knows what it is.

The likelihood is that sales will set criteria within the BANT outline. They may also include requirements such as geographic location. For organisations with marketing automation software, sales may stipulate they only want leads who've reach a certain lead score.

Ultimately, once these criteria have been selected, they need to be communicated between the sales team, the marketing team and also the inside sales team – and agreed by all.

To generate the best results, sales and marketing need to be openly communicating with each other at all times. If sales find they need to update their lead criteria, then marketing needs to be the first to know. Communication is key.

3. Create open dialogue

Having carried out comprehensive persona research in step one, this phase should be relatively simple for the marketing team. The ideal approach is to find the point where your organisation's knowledge and experience matches the needs of your prospects (i.e. how you can best resolve their pain points and issues).

Once the messaging has been chosen, the ideal marketing channels can be identified by returning to the persona documents. Having discovered the prospects' preferred channels and media consumption, the marketing team can begin creating relevant/engaging material.

The key to this step is ensuring that marketing keep sales constantly up-to-date and provide complete access to the marketing material. This means that whether a lead is digesting material or speaking to sales, the messaging and solutions will be the same.

An open dialogue between sales and marketing means that if sales discover that a particular piece of marketing content is not engaging leads, they can feedback immediately. The direct result is that marketing can continually update material and both parties can ensure only the activities that generate ROI are utilised.

4. Share content

In the modern B2B sales cycle, decision makers are doing their own research and only making contact with a salesperson near the end of the process. This means marketing needs to ensure the continued production and distribution of highly targeted and relevant content to keep prospects engaged and travelling down the sales funnel (using the inbound marketing methodology).

By sharing this marketing content with the other areas of the business (i.e. sales and inside sales) it means if they speak to a lead who is experiencing a particular pain point, they can suggest the company's relevant content and again position the organisation as an industry thought leader. Through continually building a relationship and sharing valuable information, the organisation can remain at the forefront of the lead's mind until they are ready to buy.

When a lead meets sales' criteria for qualification (or reaches a particular marketing automation lead score), the inside sales team will look to make contact with them over the phone and process them into one of three groups; qualified, unqualified or needs nurturing.

5. Handover to sales

Once a lead has been identified as qualified, it's time for marketing to handover 'ownership' of the lead to the sales team. Similar to the previous alignment steps, this one is based around better communication too.

This is marketing's opportunity to empower the sales team and prove beyond any doubt they have generated a high-quality lead that meets all of sales' qualification criteria (i.e. BANT and/or lead score). In order to do this, they must provide sales with all of the information they have gathered on the lead, from their first website visit to every piece of content they've read. Marketers with automation software will likely have easier access to this data but all marketers should still look to provide the following information:

- The prospect's situation, needs and intentions.
- The prospect's online behaviour.
- The number of downloads around a particular topic.
- The sequence of downloads.
- How recently they visited the website.
- The time they are spending on the website.
- The web pages they visited.
- Any indications of their plans.
- Inside sales' telephone call recordings (if applicable).

The outcome is that though marketing and sales are communicating better, sales is in a stronger position than ever before to convert high-quality leads into sales and revenue.

6. Close the loop

When a lead requires nurturing this starts a process known as sales enablement. The idea is that, instead of marketing, sales becomes the face of the organisation. They will regularly 'touch' the lead (via calls and emails) and provide relevant content where necessary. All of the actual content and material will be provided by marketing though. The purpose of this approach is simply to ensure a relationship is being cultivated between the lead and the salesperson.

Priceless tools in the lead nurturing process are marketing automation software and an IP tracking tool (Lead Forensics). These solutions will remove the need to manually nurture leads but will also notify both sales and marketing if a lead revisits the website or downloads more content (vital for reacting in real-time). Although not essential, these two tools will enable dramatic improvements in the relationship between sales and marketing.

With both parties now communicating openly, closed loop reporting can enter new levels of detail. Engagement rates, lead rates, conversion rates, closed business, pipeline business and ROI are all traceable therefore allowing for continued process and operational improvement for both the sales and marketing teams.

The outcome? A unification of talented resources resulting in increased leads, sales and revenue.

Sales collateral planner

This **sales cycle collateral planner** is your content production schedule to help you plot what content is most appropriate for the various sales cycle stages. The content pieces below are examples of what you might use at the different stages.

Sales cycle stages	Industry information	Product/service information	Solution	Purchase product/service	Community interaction	Distribution channels
Awareness						
Consideration						
Close						

Example content pieces

- Download materials
- Infographics
- Videos
- Whitepapers
- Enewsletters
- Articles
- Webinars
- Testimonials
- Case studies
- Direct mail
- Benchmarking research
- Press releases

B2B Awards 2013: Best integration of sales and marketing
Winner: 'O2 Enterprise team'

O2 Enterprise was established in 2011 to provide products and services to large private and public sector organisations. As a new division, it was launched with a clean slate for a new set of sales, marketing, product and strategy teams to build their own structures and working relationships. The teams developed a new set of broader IT and communication services to take to market – a long way from the traditional mobile and landline services that had been offered to businesses before.

In 2012, there was a clear requirement to increase revenue from the newly established ICT service areas (in the face of declining margin from the historic mobile services). But O2 Enterprise was starting from scratch in terms of building a reputation, customer base and revenue stream.

Integration from day one
The division's strategy was to design sales and marketing integration into the core of the new business. To successfully open up the new market, the 150-strong sales team, 20 marketers and The Marketing Practice would work as an integrated unit from day one. The audience would see all of their interactions with O2 Enterprise as a single, joined-up journey.

2012 started with a joint planning process between sales and marketing. Marketing objectives were set, they aligned with the sales targets for new customer acquisition, pipeline and contract value. Marketing would deliver 240 sales leads from a total market of over 4000 organisations. These lead targets were divided in detail between specific propositions (aligned with the sales team compensation/bonus structure).

The O2 Enterprise go-to-market proposition – joined-up business – was sub-divided into solutions addressing the challenges around empowering employees, developing new ways of communicating with customers, and the supporting comms and IT services.

Two-way service level agreements (SLAs) formalise the process of integration. For example, sales are responsible for the speed with which leads are followed up, while marketing are responsible for the number and quality of leads generated.

Inside sales
Marketing campaigns don't exist in isolation or stop with awareness activity or a lead being generated. The core campaigns around each element of the proposition included a range of planned activities that ran from positioning, through to educating/enabling the sales team and accelerating specific opportunities.

One of the keys to the success of the integrated approach was the introduction of the inside sales team, owned by marketing as a core communication channel and point of integration with sales. This was a skilled telemarketing team tasked with lead generation. As the front line of the customer relationship development strategy, they liaised with the sales teams on a daily basis and were involved in the earliest stages of planning and campaign development.

In 2012, a review of sales' needs and use of existing education and enablement tools led to a new collection of materials. All these items were prepared on the basis of input from the sales and technical teams. They were stored online and accessible via the phone/tablet 'box' app, or through a web portal. Marketing provided sales with access to expertise, including the 'inner circle' online portal/app, where marketing managed a directory of senior execs from across O2.

The next evolutionary step was to establish dedicated practices, focusing more closely on specific areas such as passenger services, retail and health. This allowed sales people and marketers to get closer to the business areas addressed by the practices. They could gain deeper insights and translate them more quickly into viable propositions that match what was happening – in the markets they serve.

The campaign exceeded expectations and from a target of 240 sales leads, marketing delivered 304.

Oliver Potter, head of enterprise marketing at Telefónica UK, commented: "My team is not successful if sales aren't made off the back of all the effort we put in. Equally, our sales people are challenging my team to make our product portfolio clear, and pull through demand."

Key learnings

1. Shadow sales to spark ideas on how things can change for the better

- Get a good understanding of your current sales methodology.
- Do you really understand what makes you different in the market?
- Find the black holes in your current sales support efforts.
- Establish what skills and resources you need to achieve sales enablement.

2. Understand your customers/prospects needs and wants

- Create a buyer persona for each of the roles in the organisational buying process to bring to life the information you have gathered to feed back to sales.
- Use social media to listen to what your customers/prospects are talking about. These online conversations will indicate their interests and needs.
- Determine what factors affect the buying decision-making process.
- Good customer research and insight will put marketing in the right place at the right time with the right content.

3. Influence buyers' opinions throughout the different stages of the buying process

- Generation Y is beginning to dominate the buying workforce – they blur the lines between socialising and work, are technically competent, and seek instant gratification. Play to their needs.
- Listening to and analysing social media activity can tell you who to monitor and engage with.
- Capture individual visitor data to provide sufficient information for sales to follow up.
- Work with personas to empathise with customer needs. Content should address priority initiatives and pain points within buyer personas.
- Change sales' behaviour, so that they reframe the customer conversation to engage the customer as an equal.

4. Implement technology to help sales be more effective

- Improve the sales forecasting process with strong pipeline management, the ability to track and see momentum in the pipeline, and a simple methodology.
- Your website is more than a brochure – it should be a marketing hub. It should also clearly position your organisation within the market you wish to operate.
- Use a content management system with templates for fast content curation.
- Adopt a coherent SEO strategy so your organisation can be easily found.
- Host your website locally. The country where your website is hosted can affect your Google ranking.
- Social CRM tools allow you to be a real-time collaborater. Organisations embracing social selling (engaging socially, listening and participating externally) are typically outperforming salespeople using traditional methods.
- Proposals and sales playbook software is an emerging space coming to more prominence as in traditional sales culture a staggering amount of time is wasted on poorly-qualified opportunities.
- Use marketing automation for a fluid end-to-end process. Continuous campaigns can be turned up or down according to demand or the shape of the funnel.

5. Provide a good training and sales empowerment programme

- Assess personal characteristics. Does the sales person have intrinsic qualities to absorb desired behaviours? Put a performance management system in place that enables goal setting on an individual assessment basis.
- Understand what behaviours are accepted/not accepted by customers. Gain insight into how competitors perform and how this puts pressure on the salesforce, and identify if the general sales culture is collaborative or individual performance driven.
- Make sure role models in the salesforce deliver training to their peers.
- Technology acceptance should be interpreted so sales have the necessary tools in place to adequately perform against objectives.

Further reading

The Challenger Sale, Dixon, M and Adamson, B, Portfolio Penguin

To Sell is Human, Pink, D, Canongate

Communicate to inspire, Murray, K, Kogan Page

Network advantage: How to unlock value from your alliances and partnerships, Greve, H, Rowley and Shipilov A, Jossey-Bass

Creating value people to people, Beaufils, B and Fauconnier, C, Innate Motion

B2B Marketing resources

Sales Enablement Best Practice Guide (b2bmarketing.net/sales-enablement-best-practice)

The Evidence (b2bmarketing.net/the-evidence-2014)

Lead Generation and Lead Nurturing Benchmarking Report (b2bmarketing.net/lead-benchmarking)

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:

Magazine: The essential monthly guide to B2B marketing, with a key focus on best practice guidance, plus monthly features looking at current trends, regular research and profiles.

Awards: The showpiece event for brands and practitioners, attracting over 800 people. Former winners include a host of top-tier B2B brands, including Cisco, Dell, Fujitsu, IBM, KPMG, Nokia, O2, Oracle, Orange, SAP, Thomson Reuters, Vauxhall UK, and many more.

Research and reports: A library housing the best in B2B best practice, in-depth practical guidance and research into specific channels or industry issues.

Training: Comprehensive, integrated and flexible training programmes enabling client-side and agency marketers to boost their skillsets and confidence, improve their effectiveness and increase impact on their brand.

Events: Highly-focused events and training sessions aimed at helping marketers hear and learn first hand from the experts in order to hone their skills.

Membership: Become a member and receive all research and reports for free. You will also receive exclusive invites to members-only networking events, get discounts on training seminars, workshops and conferences and receive a subscription to the monthly magazine.

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

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Phone 020 7438 1370
Online b2bmarketing.net/membership
Email membership@b2bmarketing.net

B2B Marketing

Clover House
147-149 Farringdon Road
London
EC1R 3HN

Tel. +44 (0) 20 7438 1370

info@b2bmarketing.net
b2bmarketing.net