# B2B Marketers:

## *Move Closer To the Money*

When it comes down to it, few B2B marketers get the respect they deserve. Operations gets the product out the door. Finance pays the bills and balances the books. Sales brings in new business. And marketing…? Well, marketing often spends an unfair amount of time reminding everyone in operations, finance and sales exactly what marketing does. But it shouldn't be that way. B2B marketers can move closer to the money by reconnecting with their sales force. Some of the best B2B marketers are the ones who have invested time to understand what sales needs from marketing, and aligned their efforts with the revenue-generating troops on the front line.

It helps to start by understanding what a sales person's job is all about (bonus idea: spend a day with one of your company's top reps). What you'll find is most sales professionals are motivated by two basic concepts – numbers and relationships. If marketers can help their colleagues in sales 1) build and strengthen relationships, and 2) meet their sales targets – they'll be on the road to not only reconnecting with the sales force, but moving marketing closer to the money.

Here are four ideas that B2B marketers can put to work today to reconnect with the sales force, and move closer to the money!

### Ask the sales force for their definition of a qualified lead

Until you sit across the desk from a prospect and have to close a sale to pay the bills, it's hard to understand the life of a sales professional. Your sales force has countless conversations and interactions with customers and prospects. Through this process, successful sales people develop a good understanding of what an ideal customer looks like. If you want to help your sales force identify new opportunities with your lead generation campaigns, make sure the leads you generate look a lot like that ideal customer profile.

That's why successful lead generation starts with a definition of a qualified lead that both marketing and sales agree to.

Ask your top sales reps this question – "What do you need to know to have a good conversation with a customer?". Get them thinking about successful sales calls and what made those calls productive. Then take this feedback and translate it into a series of questions to ask in your lead generation campaigns. Bounce it back off the reps to ensure their buy-in.

Documenting your qualified lead definition creates the "service contract" between sales and marketing. The qualified lead definition should be reviewed periodically and updated as needed.

### Understand how customers buy your products

Everyone moves through a series of steps in considering a purchase. These steps may take place in minutes, or they may occur over several months. Understanding the steps your prospects go through when considering your company's products or services will help you better understand the true "buy cycle". It's important to note that the buy cycle and the selling process are two different things. The sales process may be "initial contact | first meeting | proposal | close". But your potential customer is thinking "who are you? | what can you do for me? | are you better than the other guys? | okay, I'll give you a try".

Truly understanding the buy cycle for your products requires a little homework. That could be a primary research study, but it can also be as simple as marketers actually talking with customers! Engage the sales force in helping you from the start, even arranging your customer conversations and visits. Explain what your objective is and how it can ultimately help them. You'll find the input and experience to be invaluable in understanding your customers.

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### Help your company become a trusted advisor

People buy from people they trust. One of the best ways to help your company become a trusted advisor is to transform the wealth of knowledge within your company into relevant content that helps solve your customers' problems. Once you understand the steps of the buy cycle, it's easier to develop tools that become part of the customer's solution. Develop presentations and training to help your sales force become familiar with the tools available on your company's website.

Take the time to explain the thinking and strategy behind the marketing materials you develop. Remember that general information will help establish awareness and a core comfort level early in the buying process. More detailed and sophisticated knowledge will help the customer as they move forward in their purchasing decision. Over time, you'll know exactly when to introduce new content to the dialogue.

### Accept the fact that sales lead follow up is a waste of time

The sales force's time that is! The average cost of a sales call is well over $300, it takes roughly five calls to close a new deal, and most customers see no more than two sales reps per week. Do the math - it truly is a waste of time for the sales force to follow up on leads. Successful lead generation programs shift responsibility for the follow up process from the sales force to the marketing department. Using internal or external resources, marketers are able to follow up more efficiently and stay in touch until the time is right to turn the opportunity over to the sales force.
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Imagine the look on the sales rep's faces when you tell them you know following up on sales leads is a waste of their time. Then think about the response you'll get when you deliver a well-qualified, sales-ready opportunity that can help them hit their sales goals. By rolling up your sleeves and helping sales solve this age-old challenge, not only will you dramatically improve the relationship between marketing and sales – you will deliver measurable results that will help drive sales growth

All B2B marketers are challenged to make every campaign count. The best B2B marketers are always focused on delivering positive return on investment (ROI) – and moving closer to the revenue stream within the organization. Reconnecting with the sales force is the first step in moving marketing closer to the money.

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