

10 Steps to Achieve Channel Marketing and Sales Alignment for Your B2B Company

What's not to love about aligning marketing and sales? Successful alignment positively impacts your top-line and bottom-line metrics by attracting more and better leads, boosting conversions, shortening sales cycles and improving customer experience. In short, you can gain more customers faster and then hold on to them longer – textbook markers for competitive advantage.

Sales and marketing alignment impacts your partner initiatives as well – and not just when recruiting channel partners. It continues to deliver advantages throughout the partner lifecycle – from channel partner onboarding to ongoing efforts to earn partner mindshare and keep them engaged. In other words, like all things channel, marketing and sales alignment requires more effort but delivers greater rewards.

10 Steps to Achieve Channel Marketing and Sales Alignment from Channel Leaders

We spoke with a dozen channel pros to help you establish the three essential pillars of sales and marketing alignment – communications, collaboration and common goals. They provided solid advice that we winnowed into a 10-step plan you can put to work right away.

1 Open Lines of Communication Between Sales and Marketing Teams

It's essential to establish meaningful communication between your sales and marketing departments. Make sure sales understands marketing's challenges and vice versa. Tackle issues like language, terminology and objectives. You'll move on to more detail, but the first step is getting sales and marketing to see each other in a new light to establish empathy and a desire for collaboration.

2 Get Sales Input into Marketing Activities

As business has moved online, sales pros have ceded ever-increasing ground to marketing departments. Yet many marketing teams often have one massive blind spot: results from the direct, face-to-face interaction with partners and customers. But your salespeople have that. And you can learn a lot from them (if you ask and listen).

3 Establish an Ongoing Knowledge Exchange Between Sales and Marketing

One of our interviewees put it this way: "There's no substitute for cross-departmental communication, collaboration and knowledge sharing across sales, channel, marketing, product marketing, customer experience and customer success functions." So don't cut corners; work with change agents inside your organization to instill that in your corporate culture.

4 Map Out Common Sales and Marketing Objectives

Sometimes sales and marketing departments have operated in such deep silos that you'll need to establish a common "North Star." One way to kickstart that process is to map the entire customer journey from customer/partner identification and acquisition all the way through success, retention and renewal.

5 Establish Shared Goals for Sales and Marketing Teams

Goal-setting becomes easier (and potentially even more collaborative) if you reverse engineer the process and start with your end results in mind. Then take a look at those expectations and set a quarter-by-quarter plan for arriving at your objectives by year's end.

6 Check Your Work

You're bridging the chasm between two cultures, perhaps for the first time, so confirm that everyone involved understands the who, what, when, where, why and how of each campaign.

"Sales and Marketing alignment is the cornerstone for driving accelerated growth. But the alignment needs to start from a position of mutually accepted definition and understanding of the customer and, as an extension, the partner. Laboring on building that initial foundation by essentially 'becoming' a part of the sales teams — interviewing your sales peers and partners, tagging along in demos and sales meetings, and listening in on our SDRs and BDRs, among other things, is what will not just define your business growth but how fast you will grow."

Theresa Carogol
Founder & CEO • AcheiveUnite

7 Get Your Sales and Marketing Tech Stack in Place

With your starting objectives and KPIs in mind, it's time to audit your tech stack for any gaps. For example, will your current tools accomplish everything you need? How about measurement

and analytics? Figure out what you're missing and fill those holes so you can get your campaigns moving.

8 Build and Test Your Sales and Marketing Campaigns

At long last (OK, not really, you'll probably get here in 90 days or less), it's time to build and assess your first campaigns. Test them internally with stakeholders first, then run A and B testing on the campaign ideas your internal teams believed were the strongest contenders. You can test other ideas going forward, but in the interest of getting campaigns deployed and revenue moving, pick some "best candidates. Then Deploy those best candidates and watch your metrics closely while they scale so you can make adjustments if you need to.

9 Measure, Adjust, Measure Again

As your campaigns build and you leverage results data to drive continuous improvement, it's essential to focus first on metrics that have the greatest impact. How? By answering this key question: What item do we want immediate improvement on? The answer to that question — and those like it — will impact not just your campaigns but the ongoing interaction between sales and marketing.

10 Nurture Partnership Between Sales and Marketing Teams

Creating a culture of partnership between sales and marketing teams is critical to success. One of the channel innovators we spoke with summed it up this way: "Everything falls under relationship and mentality. Marketing is a partner [to sales], not a resource or provider of support. If you can think this way, you're starting in the right place."

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