

Built for Success: Sales and Marketing Alignment Best Practices from Channel Leaders

NEWSFLASH: Sales and marketing alignment gets results!

OK, that's not exactly news. In 2013, a study emerged that yielded a now-infamous trifecta of statistics touting the benefits of sales and marketing alignment, and the sales and marketing worlds have been chasing the brass ring ever since:

- 67% higher probability that marketing-generated leads will close
- 108% better lead acceptance
- 209% stronger contribution to revenue from marketing-generated leads

While the numbers may vary depending on the research and the industry, they point to the same overall trend: massive gains from sales and marketing alignment. That's true when selling to end users and recruiting channel partners.

10 DOs and DON'Ts of Channel Marketing and Sales Alignment

With that potential – or, more accurately, those benefits – in-play, we asked a panel of channel sales and marketing pros for tips that can help you kickstart or give new life to your sales and marketing alignment efforts.

1 DO Start with Communication

The overwhelming consensus from our group of experts was that opening lines of dialogue between sales and marketing is the essential component in building sales and marketing alignment. Keep the interaction positive and help your teams understand the challenges the other team faces, focusing on collective goals and each team assisting the other in meeting those goals.

2 DO Focus on Building Trust

It's perhaps no surprise that the biggest hurdle in sales and marketing alignment is developing (and maintaining) trust. A vital part of cross-departmental interaction should focus on delivering visibility and transparency between departments so all parties can see the hard work of the other team toward their common goals.

3 DO Make Time for Knowledge Sharing

Most of us live in a fast-paced, whirlwind world. Time – or lack thereof – is a well-known obstacle to sales and marketing alignment. Make sure you establish time for your teams to not only talk about their challenges and objectives, but also to share knowledge as well. Doing so helps ensure that everyone begins to speak in the same language and remains on the same page.

4 DO Leverage Portals and Platforms When Possible

From partner onboarding to sales enablement, portals and platforms can go a long way toward helping with channel sales and marketing alignment. They help keep consistency, provide a common frame of reference for all team members (regardless of department), offer a common “marketing well” of resources (e.g., data sheets, email campaigns, etc.), and progress along shared key performance indicators (KPIs).

5 DO Use Familiar Tools When Practical

Some portals and platforms facilitate end-to-end interaction and enablement. But in many cases, they integrate with major CRMs and sales-automation tools, too. Leveraging well-known platforms that your channel teams and partners are likely to have worked with (say, Hubspot or Calendly, for example) can facilitate better campaign execution.

6 DO Facilitate Education and Training

Pursue the development and implementation of educational programs that enable marketers, partnering professionals, and sales to be aligned. In addition, consistent use of automation tools can also help to drive knowledge exchange by osmosis.

“Marketing, digital marketing specifically, has become much more important. If you believe that is happening because of COVID and the new way of work, then it furthers the importance of sales and marketing interlocking. Marketing, sales, and — if you have it, a channel or partner ecosystem — all need to be interlocked together in order to be successful. The degree to which that interlock happens is the degree to which companies that have partner and channel strategies are successful.”

Theresa Caragol
 Founder & CEO • [AcheiveUnite](#)

7 DO Use Budgets Strategically

The way you use budget is crucial: When there's alignment between sales and marketing, the conversation about budget is the same.

Expectations around goals, sales, pipeline and revenue become the “common financial ground” everyone meets on.

8 DON'T Point Fingers

It's crucial that marketing and sales both steer away from “the blame game.” How? Use facts and data. They tend to inspire constructive collaboration, since it's harder to argue with numbers, and removing emotions from the table makes it easier for everyone to work together.

9 DON'T Allow Poaching from the Sidelines

As has become clear, successful sales and marketing alignment is all about the details, whether we're talking knowledge exchange, goal setting, or testing and refinement. It's difficult to sustain the open lines of communications and trust when one party opts out of portions of the process. (A classic example is the blind handoff of leads from the marketing department, though it can happen in the other direction, too.)

10 DON'T Be Afraid to Speak Up and Ask Questions

B2B sales and marketing is complex — especially when you're selling technology solutions. Channel sales and marketing is even more complicated. Mesh them together, and opportunities for confusion abound — especially when you're aligning departments. Make it safe for your teams to ask questions without feeling self-conscious. One of our interviewees had this useful reminder (that we all probably remember from school): “Don't be afraid to look dumb and ask questions. I guarantee somebody else in the room has the same question.”

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