



Velocity B2B Marketing White Paper

Marketing, meet Sales

Eleven ways to do marketing that actually generates sales and does it so obviously that even the sales people have to admit it

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Considering that the ultimate purpose of marketing is to generate sales, it's amazing how little the S-word comes up in the life of a B2B marketing agency.

We've been involved in dozens of engagements where, if we hadn't insisted, we'd never have even met a sales person. Fortunately, we do insist. And everything we do – from our strategic positioning work to a simple web banner or landing page – is better because of it.

Still, in most B2B companies, the sales force and the marketing department are remarkably isolated from each other, if not openly antagonistic.

Sales people think marketers waste money on all sorts of activities that have nothing to do with helping them sell. Often, they're right.

Marketers think sales people are prima donnas who never admit that a lot of their sales start with a lead generated by a marketer. Often, they're right, too.

At Velocity, we think of ourselves as a sales engagement agency. Our job is to get sales people in front of the right prospects, with the right story backed up by the right content (website, brochures, white papers).

One of the big challenges for any marketing department is getting the sales people to actually use the material it took so much time, money and effort to create. In general, it's not used because it's not seen as relevant or helpful – or it's simply not understood. We don't think that's the sales person's fault. It's yours (and ours).

To avoid it – and to drive up the value of all your efforts – you have to make the entire marketing effort sales-centred. The real, person-to-person sales call has to be in clear focus at every stage from brief to final execution and media choice.

Eleven ways to get closer to sales

Connecting marketing to sales comes down to doing these things:

1. Talk to customers and prospects directly

We never do a major engagement without talking to customers and prospects. From them we get to hear the way they talk about their problems; the challenges they face and the language they use. All invaluable.

2. Talk to the sales people early

Always make at least one sales person part of the input process for every important brief. It's not just for consensus-building (though it helps here too), it's to keep the work sales-centred.

3. Harvest all 'hot buttons'

Find out what sales statements work for them. How do they open their sales meetings? What slides do they always use in a presentation? How do they boil the benefits down to a sentence or two?

4. Collect all objections

What things do the sales people hate to hear from a prospect? What objections do they relish? How do they overcome them?

5. Find out who they're calling

We always ask, "If you had a room full of prospects with the same job title, what job title would you choose?". The answer might surprise you (and might be misguided).

6. Find out what they're reading

Media planning based on anecdote is not a good idea. But finding out what magazines, websites, blogs and analysts the sales people read can be a useful guide.

7. Build sales metrics into the brief

Numerical goals are important, even if you have to pull numbers out of the air. But simply counting leads is not enough.

8. Track leads to sales

This is difficult but incredibly rewarding in terms of insight for future campaigns. If you don't know your sales conversion rates and average order values, you simply can't evaluate the success of a campaign.

9. Create new products designed for sell-ability

Listening to sales people lets you design new products and re-package existing products into more attractive propositions. Our conversations with sales people have led us to recommend completely new products, new versions and new ways of presenting existing solutions.

10. Share ideas before they go live

Letting a prospect see an ad, letter, website or video before your sales people is not just embarrassing for them, it's unprofessional. Show them everything. Accept their scepticism and risk their abuse. You can take it.

11. Market your successes back to the sales force

This has nothing to do with blowing your own horn. It's about getting the sales team on-side not just by telling them what you're up to, but by proving its value.

All of these things sound like common sense, but they're remarkably uncommon in practice. If you do half of them your marketing will be twice as effective. If you do them all, the sky's the limit.

Listening is not the same as taking instructions

This is important. Just because you've listened closely and frequently to the sales team, doesn't mean you have to do everything they say. Sales people are notoriously crap marketers. If you do what they tell you to do, the marketing will invariably suck (and you won't enjoy your job any more).

This is a parallel principle to the way we listen to customers. Their *responses* to our work are incredibly important. Their *opinions* about our work are usually worthless.

The same idea goes for the sales team. Listen hard, take notes, nod a lot. But your job is to combine what you learn about their face-to-face engagements with what you know about communication, persuasion, positioning, media and creative. That's your turf (and ours).

And that's the point of this entire paper: the synergy between what the sales people know about selling your products and what you know about marketing them creates an incredibly powerful force.

Using one without the other ensures that you limp to market. Using both together ensures that you fly.

Why don't marketers and agencies do more of this?

Because we're sensitive flowers who don't want the brutes in Sales to laugh at us, call us names and make that... pumping gesture with their right hand.

There's only one way around this problem: get over it. If you can't look a room full of ornery salespeople in the eye and explain your strategy, tactics and creative, you probably don't have a very good strategy, tactics or creative.

Sometimes it goes wrong. We've had excellent campaigns shot down for the wrong reasons. But sales people don't have a monopoly on mis-firing. And 95 times out of 100, the sales people see what we're up to, recognise their own contribution to it, and are up for giving it a go.

And the more you follow the eleven practices above, the more open your sales team becomes to your next hare-brained idea (or your agency's).

Taking a step back

No, we don't follow all eleven steps every time we're asked to create a web banner, but most Velocity engagements with new clients start with a fairly rigorous consulting process. And that's where the input from Sales is essential.

The consulting front-end of our work gives us the grounding to do everything else better, faster and in a more sales-driven way. The process is summarised [on our website](#) but the basic idea is that we dedicate a hell of a lot of time in the input stage before we ever commit our ideas to paper. When we return with a positioning recommendation, message playbook and creative exploration, we're confident that it reflects the intensity, urgency and opportunity of the sales call itself.

Clients who don't want to make this essential investment up front are probably not Velocity clients.

About Velocity

Velocity is a consulting-led B2B marketing agency specialising in technology markets.

We help our clients build solid arguments, tell them in a compelling way and incite action in their target markets. Our services include Strategic Consulting; Market Acceleration Programs; and Digital Engagement (including some innovative ideas we call Web Motion).

You can learn more about us by talking to us or by visiting www.velocitypartners.co.uk.

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