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MARKETING

SALES ENABLEMENT BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

Written by the Heinz Marketing Team

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Heinz Marketing, Inc.

Great marketing makes the sales job more efficient, more predictable. Great sales programs capitalize and convert on great marketing.

To say that sales and marketing are in this together is an understatement. One or the other isn't at all sufficient. Coordinating efforts is a great start.

But the market-leading companies today and into the near future will continue to treat sales and marketing as a unified, coordinated, tightly-blended effort.

Market leaders deploy every resource across the sales and marketing organizations to deliver and reinforce the right message, the right value, at the right time to prospective, current and future customers. Period.

This best practices guide is full of strategic and tactical advice to help your organization increase collaboration, efficiency and results from sales and marketing working more tightly together.

Best of luck as you innovate, sell and succeed moving forward.

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A QUICK (AND FREE) HACK FOR MEASURING ACTIVE SELLING TIME ACROSS YOUR SALES ORGANIZATION

I'm thrilled to see the increased focus on measuring and managing **active selling time** from sales organizations nationwide – both those with dedicated inside sales teams as well as those with hybrid inside + field sales teams.

According to multiple research reports I've seen this year, the average B2B sales professional spends just 33 percent of their time actively selling. The rest of that time is spent preparing, researching, updating CRM, in meetings or training, etc.

Some of that "downtime" of course isn't going away. But even if you can move that 33 percent to 40 percent by eliminating wasteful activity, redundant behavior, unnecessary slack time, etc. – across the entire salesforce that's a massive **increase in productivity** and potential new business with minimal cost and zero additional labor.

There are many expensive options to measure a baseline for active selling time across your team. Or you could have everybody install **RescueTime**.

Yes, there are **team versions** of RescueTime that will give you visibility into who's doing what.

But start cheaper (read: free).

Designate different applications as active vs. inactive. For example, time in CRM is inactive. Time in email is active (again, generalities). There's an **advanced version** of RescueTime that can manage offline activities such as phone time and meeting time too.

Using RescueTime, get a baseline for how much of your team's time is on active vs. inactive selling activities. Then identify the primary culprits of inefficiency and get to work.

Worth a shot...

7 REASONS WHY YOUR BDRS AREN'T MAKING QUOTA

The role of sales development is exploding, as companies exponentially grow the number of sales professionals employed and focused on lead development and appointment-setting capacities.

Simple job right? Find the right audience, identify those with need, and get them interested in learning more.

Of course reality isn't nearly that simple. Yet companies continue to hire aggressively, throw people at a phone and a list, and wonder why they aren't hitting their number.

If you're managing a sales development or business development representative (BDR) team, make sure the following seven symptoms aren't dragging down your results.

They Lack Discipline

Sales development is a difficult job. It requires a high volume of activity that can typically only be consistently achieved by staying focused on execution for stretches of time. This takes discipline and a set or productivity and efficiency skills that most BDRs aren't naturally equipped with. This training alone – helping your reps hone the ability to focus and execute – can alone significantly increase their capacity and results.

They Don't Understand Your Customers or Their Industry

Sales training too often focuses on product knowledge at the expense of customer and industry knowledge. Do your reps know who they're speaking to? Do they know their language, their slang, their acronyms? Do they understand the calendar cycles of their industry such that they can speak credibly, build rapport, and continue the conversation?

Their Lists Suck

Lists always suck. There is no perfect list. But too often BDRs are given lists that marketing says are fine, but in reality cause a dramatic drop in their productivity. Those lists may "appear" fine when used to send email, because the resulting response metrics look fine. But if you require an individual rep to call each and every prospect, they'll end up wasting time with a high volume of prospects that don't exist, are the wrong buyer, or take five times too long to reach simply because the data hasn't been updated in forever.

Their Pitch Sucks

Left to their own devices (and far too many BDRs are), and in a vacuum of customer/industry understanding, your reps will create a pitch that is product-centric. It will confuse your prospects, delivered out of context and in the midst of a crazy-busy day that allows for zero wiggle room

to interpret something new that isn't easy to understand. Great pitches aren't about product, they're about people and products.

They Lack Motivation

Motivation can be simple. It can be $20 bucks in beer money on a Friday afternoon. It can be recognition in front of their peers. It can be the little things that help jump-start behavior and create habits. If you think motivation is "well, they have a job and our comp plan is solid", you're missing an opportunity to not just drive greater productivity but retention and loyalty as well.

They're Pushing Prospects Too Far, Too Fast

"Thanks for downloading our white paper, would you like to see a demo?" Uh, no thanks. You can't ask prospects to sleep with you on the first date. If your primary metric across the sales development team is demo appointments, you might be moving too fast for your prospects. Appointments are fine, but up front they should be positioned based on the prospect's needs, not your product pitch.

They Lack Empathy and Customer Understanding

This is a culmination of training and practice. Of listening to those who came before you, and to the shifting needs of the prospects you're speaking with every day. The BDRs that care

more about their prospects than they do their products consistently perform better. Even over the phone, your prospects will hear this and respond positively to it.

A QUICK LINKEDIN HACK FOR ADDING DETAIL TO PROSPECT LISTS

Let's say you're attending an upcoming conference and have asked for the registration list. The conference can't give you the whole list, they say, but they will give you a list of titles and companies.

No problem!

Go to LinkedIn, and click on Advanced Search. Then click on People.

Add the title and company name in the search fields and click Submit.

It won't work 100% of the time, but for smaller companies and/or more unique titles, it's a great way to fill out the details you need and still reach out to potential or existing customers before the show (especially if they're already on your prospect list or in your pipeline).

WHY SALES STILL DOESN'T COMPLETELY TRUST MARKETING

It's simple: At the end of the day, sales stands alone.

The marketing team may have the same objectives, on paper.

You may have common definitions between departments of qualified leads, qualified opportunities. You have a common technology plan, integration between CRM and marketing automation.

The marketing team talks about revenue responsibility. And it all sounds good. It all sounds right.

But at the end of the month, the end of the quarter, who feels the terror? Who can't sleep at night? Who scrapes and claws to hit their number?

Marketing goes home, heads to happy hour, satisfied that they hit their lead number. Mission accomplished.

Meanwhile, their sales counterparts are making frenzied calls to get deals across the line, are pulling in favors to get a few more dollars in to make their quota.

This may not be an entirely fair comparison.

There aren't many companies asking marketing to hit the phones, negotiate with procurement, literally push those last deals across the line.

It's not necessarily fair or rational. But when marketing claims revenue responsibility, yet abandons the sales team for their happy hour and "we hit our lead goal" celebrations, you can hopefully see where, and why, sales feels alone.

They've always been alone. On the last day of the month, it's the sales team that succeeds or fails. It's a fairly recent, new and refreshing trend for marketing to embrace revenue responsibility.

Just don't expect sales to trust so quickly, to believe without seeing you embrace and share the end-of-month terror regularly.

Thank you for the leads, the MQLs, the sales enablement initiatives. Are you there with us on the final lap, and at the finish line?

WHY YOUR SALES REPS SHOULDN'T BE CREATING CONTENT

It's not that their content wouldn't be valuable. It's just that creating content isn't worth their time. It's just not the best way for them to spend their time to maximize earning potential for themselves, as well as for your organization.

Ask me if sales reps have great ideas for content, and the answer emphatically is "Yes!" Ask me if many sales reps have the ability to create fantastic content, and the answer still is an enthusiastic "Yes!"

But that doesn't mean it's worth their time. The same goes for social media activity, really. Every solid sales executive I know is telling me they want to see less social and more selling. But what they really mean is that they want their reps to focus on selling. They want their best, highest-paid people focused on the activities that help them build relationships, rapport and velocity with targeted decision-makers at their best prospective accounts. I don't really care whether you call it selling or sharing or helping or whatever. Your best reps should focus on sales.

There are plenty of social selling strategies that do, in fact, accelerate sales. They can get you new introductions to your dream client, help you get more attention and engagement from early-stage prospects, increase the volume and value of conversations with your best sales reps. Much of that can be done by curating good content vs. creating it, and you get basically the same external value for your sales reps at a fraction of the time.

Great content drives attention, influence and engagement. It puts your sales reps in a position to win.

Great content is still required, I'd just rather see your best sales reps focus on what they do best – for their benefit and yours.

THE TOP INGREDIENT (AND INHIBITOR) TO SALES ENABLEMENT SUCCESS

*Guest article by **Michael Cannon**, CEO and founder of the **Silver Bullet Group***

Your sales enablement program is probably going to be less successful than you expect because, according to a **decade of research**, it's highly likely that:

- Over 50% of your marketing and sales communications aren't relevant to your customer.
- More than 70% of your marketing content isn't relevant to your sales teams.

This summary data indicates that you can have all the right sales enablement components (people, process, technology, knowledge, and assets) in place and still have an underperforming program because the majority of "words" coming from your sales and marketing teams are not relevant and useful.

Enabling Sales Enablement

To address this substantial customer communications problem, organizations are using persuasive messaging as the core enablement tool because:

- It's more highly correlated to the primary actions Sales and Marketing want the customer to take, and to what the customer wants to know.
- It enables both Sales and Marketing to engage customers with more relevant and influential conversations and content.

What Is Persuasive Messaging?

Messaging is a summary answer to the prospective customer's primary and secondary buying questions, a.k.a. the key points that must be communicated in order to convince a person to engage and buy. Messaging is integrated into content via the copyrighting/creative process and integrated into sales conversations via the communicator. Content can be delivered in the form of documents, audio, and video.

The two messaging styles are descriptive and persuasive. The categories of messaging can include: Company, Solution, Platform/Product, and Market Segment/Role messaging. (**See a Typical Customer Communications Model with these styles and categories of messaging.**)

As an example, descriptive product messaging is the typical "what and how" content in a product brochure. It answers the customer's secondary buying questions, such as:

- What does the product do?
- How does it work?
- What features are included/optional?
- What are the key benefits?

Persuasive product messaging is the "why" content that is typically missing from a product brochure. It provides clear, relevant, differentiated, provable, business-language answers to the customer's primary buying questions, a.k.a. persuasive messaging types, such as these:

- "Why should I consider your product?" for demand creation

- "Why should I meet with you?" for meeting creation
- "Why should I change from the status quo to a new solution?" for opportunity creation
- "Why should I buy this new solution from your company instead of your competitors?" for order creation
- "Why should I buy now?" for urgency creation

As you can see, persuasive messaging is more highly correlated to key Marketing and Sales objectives than descriptive messaging, and to what the customer needs to know in order to engage and buy.

How Persuasive Messaging Enables Sales Enablement

Imagine a 1-page persuasive battle card (**see examples**) or best-practice answer to some of the "Why" questions above, such as "Why Change?" and "Why You?" These cards enable your sales team to be an instantly influential Subject Matter Expert (SME) in customer conversations. They help Sales get and prepare for meetings, qualify, sell solutions, set landmines for the competition, etc. They are exactly what Sales wants.

As one Sales Manager said about the order-creation or competitive messaging: "It has made our competitive information much more concise; it is information that the salespeople now use. It has taught them how to ask the right questions to steer customers our way."

Imagine a version of this same 1-page persuasive messaging summary is also deployed into the majority of pre-sales marketing content, such as collateral, demand-generation campaigns, sales tools, and sales support training. These cards enable each piece of content to be much more relevant and influential.

Without persuasive messaging-enabled content, Sales is not likely return to the sales portal and is likely to return to their old ways. And, given that 30-60% of the buying process occurs online, persuasive messaging-enabled content is also critical to the success of your "content selling" effort.

As one Product Sales Manager said: "Highly persuasive competitive messaging increased our products' win rate by 30% and reduced the time we spent supporting the field by around 50%." Persuasive messaging is to sales enablement as octane is to gasoline. It makes all the "words" coming from your sales and marketing engines more effective. It's a quick win with Sales. It's a practical way to align Marketing and Sales. It's why persuasive messaging should be the #1 ingredient in your successful sales enablement program too.

Michael Cannon is an internationally renowned marketing and sales effectiveness expert, best-selling author, speaker and an authority on enabling B2B companies to engage customers with the most influential communications. For more information visit **www.silverbulletgroup.com**.

NEW YEARS HABITS WORTH FORMING FOR B2B SALES PROFESSIONALS

I recently wrote about several New Years habits (vs. resolutions) that could help B2B marketers kick-start their new year. Frankly, many of the habits highlighted could apply to anybody in any role, including sales. However, there are a handful of specific habits, specific to sales, that are worth highlighting as well. They include:

Prospecting

I do a fair amount of sales coaching – with teams as well as individuals – and without a doubt the number one thing we talk about and reinforce and remind people of is regular prospecting. This includes starting new conversations with decision makers at your target accounts, following up with qualified but not-yet-ready-to-buy prospects, asking for specific introductions and referrals, etc. Whether you have a full pipeline or empty pipeline, constant prospecting is absolutely essential to sales success. Even if you have an inbound marketing team supporting you, regular prospecting is the "insurance policy" that ensures you have deals to close at the end of every month and quarter.

Reading and Learning

This applies both to sales in general (best practices, new ideas, new tools) as well as the industry into which you are selling. The better you understand industry issues, trends,

developments and more, the better you'll be able to sound like an educated insider, someone who understands the prospect's environment, situation and needs.

Pick Up the (Damn) Phone

Social tools are great. Email still works. But the phone remains the most important tool in the sales professional's communication arsenal. Stop hiding behind electronic communications and waiting for prospects to return your tweet or InMail. Find something valuable to say or share, and do it via phone.

Prepare

Before you leave work for the day, develop an explicit game plan for how you will execute when you start work again tomorrow. Before you head into that next meeting or call, do your homework on the participants, their company's latest news, and the agenda you want to follow to make the meeting successful. Bottom line, invest the time (and develop the regular habits) to be prepared to execute and succeed.

Practice

The last thing you want to do is practice something new in a live prospect or customer conversation situation. Whether it's a new message, a new sales script, an upcoming trade show, new methodology or other, practice first

either by yourself, with a peer or with your manager. Heck, even with your significant other. No matter how well you understand or memorize the words on a page, they don't necessarily translate to success and smoothness when shared live.

Be Curious

If you don't understand something, ask questions. Demand to be taught what you need to know. If you don't know the answer and need it, it's likely your peers are in the same situation. Take the lead, for your and their benefit.

10 WAYS TO INCREASE THE PRODUCTIVITY OF YOUR SALES TEAM

A certain amount of non-selling time for your more efficient salespeople is inevitable. But for most salespeople and organizations, there's still plenty of opportunity to tighten up processes, workflow and general productivity in a finite amount of time to increase the percentage of the day and week your best reps are spending in front of customers and prospects.

Think about the difference between 55 and 65 percent active selling time across a 100+ person inside sales team. Just that 10-point improvement could mean significant additional sales without impacting cost, lead requirements or other expenditures.

How do you get there? Every selling environment is different, but these 10 opportunities are relatively universal.

1. Batch admin work

Don't get in the habit of making a call, leaving a voicemail, then disrupting your phone time to record the conversation in CRM, send a follow-up email, etc. Batch work items together to get and keep yourself in a groove. For example, make 10 calls all at once. Keep notes on a pad of paper for any unique follow-ups. Then do all of your CRM and follow-up work at once. This batching of activities is proven to be faster and more efficient than doing everything in a linear

sequence over and over and over again.

2. Auomate parallel or redundant tasks

For example, every Salesforce.com user has a unique email address assigned to them. If you blind-copy yourself with that email address on any outbound email to a customer or prospect, it'll automatically record that email as an activity in the contact or lead's record. No need to go in and mark that separately. Anywhere you can automate activity on parallel tracks, you save steps and save time.

3. Automate buying signal and trigger event alerts

Driving efficiency on your floor is about more than cutting or eliminating steps and tasks. It's also driven by automating the filtering, highlighting and execution of prospect touch-points that are more likely to generate a response and conversation. Every day, there are buying signals and trigger events among your prospects and customers worth following up on. But rather than search through your social channels for hours on end, set up a series of alerts via LinkedIn, Newsle, OFunnel and more to bring those alerts right to your inbox. Dedicate time each day (first thing in the morning is ideal) to process through these alerts, thereby increasing the likelihood that you get a response later that same day.

4. Develop and follow a prospect/account research process

Do you leave your sales reps to their own devices to research a prospect before a meeting or call? How much time should this take anyway? Create a standardized system or process and you'll increase both consistency and success of these efforts while significantly reducing the time it takes to complete. For example, design a three-minute process for each rep to follow prior to any new prospect call. Have them check LinkedIn profiles, do a quick Google search, etc. to identify a specific set of information to leverage in the call – as an ice-breaker, to begin a consultative conversation, etc. Train the team on how to do this quickly, cleanly and efficiently. This alone could cut up to an hour a day of non-selling time for some of your reps.

5. Invest in better tools (penny wise, quota foolish)

Don't be penny-wise but quota-foolish when it comes to tools investments. Think about that increase in sales output for the 10-point productivity gain referenced above. What would you spend to get there? Take **Velocify**, for example, which could help your sales reps more quickly decide who to call next. How much time do your reps currently waste deciding who to call? And what if they decide to call someone that's not as ready for that call, and that decreases their connect and success rates? All of a sudden, that tool investment looks mighty attractive.

6. Fewer victory laps

This can be hard to enforce, but a disciplined sales rep can save themselves a ton of time by simply staying in their seat and moving to the next task. Breaks are fine, but we've all seen reps get an ounce of momentum on the phone, then get up and refresh coffee, flirt with the receptionist, etc. Encourage your reps to stay in the zone longer, and establish some rewards at the end if necessary.

7. Better leads

Not more leads. Better leads. More leads might mean the reps are calling prospects who aren't ready to buy. Their dials and talk time might increase, but their conversion rates will suffer. Many sales organizations see dramatic increases in productivity and output by delivering fewer leads to the sales team, but ensuring that those leads are qualified and ready for the conversation.

8. Invest in great sales operations teams

We've written about this **before**, but it bears repeating that a great sales operation can be the most important investment in sales productivity you can make. Read more about why we think so **here**.

9. Improve the organization and availability of good content

How much time does your sales team waste looking for the right piece of content to get to their prospect based on their unique stage of the buying process? When they find it, is it the most accurate and up to date content? Does your team know which piece of content (or type of content) is most appropriate for each prospect at each stage? Enormous efficiency gain potential here.

10. Structure meeting time better

This applies to both 1:1 meetings with your reps as well as group meetings. In your 1:1 time, have a specific agenda and keep your time focused. If you complete the agenda early and there's nothing left to discuss, give everybody their time back. In group meetings, have an agenda as well and ensure that what's covered is relevant to as many people in the room as possible. Pipeline reviews for example can be highly inefficient for the rest of the room if all you're doing is focusing on one rep's pipeline at a time with little to no value for the rest of the room.

What would you add to this list? What have you seen particularly drain productivity from your sales team, or work well to increase their active selling time?

HOW TO SORT, TRIAGE AND INTERVIEW BDR AND INSIDE SALES REPS

We get asked quite frequently for a cheat sheet of interview questions for inside sales and business development representative (BDR) candidates. In most cases, it's not enough to simply enumerate a handful of common questions that work in every hiring situation.

Further, successfully identifying and evaluating candidates starts well before the interview, and requires careful consideration and mapping of candidate attributes with your intended and/or existing sales culture, approach and methodology.

Below are several of our typical recommendations to improve consistency, efficiency and success of hiring insides sales roles.

Sort resumes based on customer-facing experiences

Past inside sales experience is interesting, but not a primary indicator of potential future success. In addition to knowing the personality traits, strengths and attributes you need, I recommend looking for past experience and success in a variety of industries that require a keen focus on customer understanding and engagement. This includes hospitality, professional services, financial services, even food and beverage.

Look for industries and sales cultures that mirror your own approach and values

If you hire people out of hard-core call centers, they may have trouble adjusting to a more consultative, independent format. Candidates that come from a similar selling situation will also more likely be able to get up to speed and productive quickly for you.

Look for manager (vs. peer) recommendations on their LinkedIn profiles

It's easy to get your selling peers to endorse you for a new job. It's another thing entirely for an active past manager to say the same thing. Know the difference, and look for the latter.

Know whether you're looking for independence, process adherence, or both

Are you going to give reps a goal and let them work independently? Are you going to give everyone a specific process and expect consistent adherence? Or a mix of both? Be clear with candidates about what they're getting into so there are no surprises. This can help eliminate early new rep churn and morale/ management issues that might result with mismatched expectations.

Drill into organizational and time management skills

No matter your culture or approach, being organized both overall and "in the moment" is a

common differentiator that often separates the mediocre from great inside sales reps. When you interview, ask questions about and seek examples of how candidates keep themselves organized and focused. Get a handful of scenarios related to sales process, email management, etc.

Ask for work product

This might be my favorite part. Have them spend 20-30 minutes pitching you on your product. **Here's an outline** of how we often do it ourselves. Highly effective.

THE MOST IMPORTANT TRAINING IN YOUR NEW YEAR SALES KICK-OFF

For many sales executives, December is the busiest month of the year and for more reasons than you might think. They're trying to close out the year strong. They're building projections and budgets for the new year. And they're planning their new year sales kick-off (SKO).

Many of those SKO meetings in January and early February will feature product updates, methodology training, selling skills and more. But I could argue that the single-most important component of new year sales kick-offs, the piece that ties everything together and makes everything far more likely to succeed, is productivity training.

I'm not talking about CRM process. This isn't about filling out the right forms and contracts and procurement paperwork.

It's the basics, and it's never been more important. I'm talking about email management, calendar management, time management, task management.

Your sales reps are under more pressure than ever before. They're being bombarded with more information, more requests, more distractions than ever. Their ability to cut through the clutter and keep themselves organized, disciplined, focused on what's most important to hit their number and exceed quota – that's what could very well make or break your year.

You can get a bunch of best practices and templates from our **Productivity Best Practices Guide here**. And if you're really interested, I'm happy to share a sample productivity best practices SKO presentation that might work for your sales team next month. Just **email us** for a copy.

YOUR PROSPECT'S ASSISTANT IS AN ALLY, NOT AN OBSTACLE

In most sales situations, if you're treating the administrative assistant who supports the decision-maker as a gatekeeper, you're introducing unnecessary friction into your sales process. You may actually lengthen your sales process, and decrease your chances of winning the deal.

If you're thinking about the assistant as gatekeeper, you're going about it all wrong. That assistant is an extension of their boss. They are intimately familiar with the organization's priorities, and their boss's priorities. They also know the organizational and external challenges that exist as roadblocks to achieving results.

That assistant may be able to articulate the organization's challenges and needs more precisely than the decision-maker herself.

What's more, that assistant stands to gain quite a bit if their boss succeeds. The assistant's own success, recognition, raise and promotion is directly tied to their boss's success.

And the icing on the cake? The assistant will pick up the phone. They'll more likely answer their email. And they're so used to having salespeople try to get around them, that if you take the time to address them directly – they'll likely give you all the time you want and need.

Use that time not just to gain insights into the selling environment, but to convert the assistant into an ally. There's no reason the assistant can't become the antithesis of the stereotypical gatekeeper.

Think of them not as an obstacle to the decision-maker, but as a catalyst to getting your deal done.

3 FOOLPROOF STRATEGIES TO CONVINCE YOUR CEO TO CREATE AN SDR TEAM

Guest article from Tami McQueen, Director of Marketing at **SalesLoft – Sales Information Automation**

Executives are focused on driving results: revenue and return on investment. *If you are thinking about launching a sales development team, your mission is to prove that it will meet these needs.*

Sales development isn't a new strategy, but it is one of the biggest shifts in how successful technology businesses are approaching sales. Over the years, sales development has evolved along with technology and processes. While its roots are still centered around the role of prospecting, today's reps use different techniques for success more than ever. SDR teams focus specifically on qualifying leads to set appointments and demos. They specialize in prospecting and have a **strong history of success**.

Your primary focus is to demonstrate to your CEO that having an SDR team on board will be a game-changer in the sales process. That it will provide **instrumental value, return on investment, and foreseeable growth for the company.**

As challenging as this may seem, here are a few tips to get started:

1. Show Them the Success Stories
Sales development teams who send their metrics soaring off the charts and consistently crush quotas are prime examples to present to decision makers.

For example, there are many sales teams who have implemented **Aaron Ross' strategy** and have exceeded their sales goals with flying colors.

Three companies who have built incredible sales development teams include:
- **Acquia** added an extra $12 million in a single year.
- **Responsys** grew from a $20 million to $200 million in just five years.
- **WhatCounts** added 26% to their new sales growth rate in a single year.

Talking in terms of revenue and productivity opens the door to a more detailed conversation of how it can work for your team. Take these case studies and share the proven results.

2. Explain Why Sales Development Works
At the heart of the 21st century sales development team is specialization.

Henry Ford said it best – "Nothing is particularly hard if you divide it into small jobs."

Adding a team focused entirely on setting demos and qualified appointments means that your Account Executives will have more time to close deals and crush quota. **As each role specializes**, your organization will see more demos and more closed deals, because each role will be able to hone in and focus on their daily requirements.

In the simplest terms, **sales development lets each member of your sales team be better at what they do.**

3. Make Saying Yes Easy

So far, you've built a solid case, but that's not enough, just yet...

What is the last spark of inspiration you can inject in your pitch to the decision makers on your team?

Illustrate a roadmap where all paths lead to achieving a specific goal, achieving quarterly targets, and a means for driving revenue. One of the best ways is to **outline a playbook** for your own business.

As you build the playbook, outline key themes such as these:
- What email templates will you use?
- What is your cadence for phone vs. email?
- Will you use social media?

- How do you build your lists for outbound prospectors?
- How will you reach a decision-maker for inbound leads?
- What email tool will you use to increase efficiency?

While you might not be able to be specific in an initial pitch, it provides a strong foundation and shows you've given it some thought.

From here, let your CEO or manager ask questions.

They may show resistance to change if they feel like you're reinventing the wheel, but presenting a clear case will make saying "YES!" a walk in the park.

*Article courtesy of Tami McQueen, Director of Marketing at **SalesLoft – Sales Information Automation***

SEVEN LINKEDIN SALES ENABLEMENT BEST PRACTICES

Driving consistency, quality and habits across an enterprise sales team (or even a smaller inside sales squad) is often easier said than done. Even though, for example, it's easy to justify a dedicated focus on LinkedIn best practices to help each rep increase their size, quality and conversion of prospects, putting that in practice is often much more difficult.

Still, there are several best practices you can easily put into practice to help immediately increase the quality and performance of LinkedIn-based social selling practices across your sales team – whether it's four people or four thousand people. Here are a few places to get started.

Professional photos (get a photographer into the office)

Hire a photographer and get everybody's headshots taken at once. Do it on sales kick-off day or sometime when otherwise the highest percentage of your reps are in one place at the same time. Consistency and quality of those photos will make a great first impression.

Headline writing consistency

That line under your name? It's not for your title. LinkedIn calls that space your "headline" for a reason. Help your reps create a value-based, customer-centric message that doesn't describe their job, but rather describes

the benefit you create or enable for your customers. Another great impression builder that speaks to outcomes vs. means and roles.

Summary template copy

Many people don't even bother to fill out the Executive Summary section, but in many cases it's the next thing people will read when "checking out" the sales rep that's been calling them. And guess what? Your prospects don't care that you've won President's Club four times! They care about how you've helped their peers achieve success. Describe that success and outcome, and otherwise demonstrate (in more words than you'd use in the headline) how you can do it. Marketers – please write those summaries for your sales team. Work in plenty of bullet points to increase engagement from the "scanners" among your prospects too.

Narrow down "Skill and Endorsement" choices

Choose categories that speak to the industries and services your prospects are engaged in and care about. Temporarily "hide" categories that don't immediately relate to that customer value. That way your growing network will endorse you for sales-centric attributes first and foremost. Marketers, help your sales team choose these attributes wisely to increase targeted endorsement value.

Incorporate the Wheel of Destiny (or something close to it)

We recently **featured** a scrappy but highly effective tool from a client that drives daily social selling engagement. You can **read more about it here**, but suffice it to say the objective was all about developing regular, consistent habits to engage, add to and feed your growing network. The more you engage, the more you get out of it in the way of new referrals, warm leads and repeat purchases.

Share a new "feature of the week" in sales meetings

It could be just five minutes once a week or 1-2 times a month. Help your reps "discover" a new feature or tool (there are tons in LinkedIn they can utilize better) so that you're not training them on everything all at once. Incorporating one new feature or tool or habit at a time will increase the depth and sustainability of how your reps engage with social selling tools.

Develop a specific pre-call research checklist

I would near guarantee that your reps will enjoy greater conversion of new calls and warm introductions by using the first few minutes to connect on something they have in common with the prospect. And marketers, you can improve consistency and execution by helping reps understand exactly where to look – including educational experience, hobbies and personal interests, links to Facebook and other social channels, etc. Literally think about it as 1-2 minutes to identify 1-2 things you may have in common to break the ice.

WORK THE FUNNEL, BUT SELL TO THE BUYER'S JOURNEY

It's become trendy in B2B circles to say that the funnel is irrelevant. That it isn't valuable as a tool to track buyer behavior and the sales process.

Poppycock!

The sales funnel hasn't just now become irrelevant. It has always been a poor indicator of how buyers work. But that's not the point worth considering.

The funnel is still valuable, but primarily as a way of organizing our sales process and helping to direct what we do next, based generally on where the buyer is in their decision-making process.

But it's asking too much of that funnel to hope it reflects both how we sell and how the buyer actually engages and buys.

I'd argue that you need two tools to manage sales.

First, you need a sales funnel that organizes your sales process, broken up into stages, that can help you consistently track progress across the team. This is done based on common definitions, and drives accurate forecasts of future closed business.

Secondly, you need a deep, consistent understanding of the buyer's journey – how they go through the stages of observing or experiencing pain, clarifying desired outcomes, eventually identifying and engaging with potential solutions, etc. That journey has general stages, but the specifics are truly unique to each individual buyer.

Let's not pretend that the sales funnel approach means every buyer is engaging in exactly the same way. But if we tried to build a sales process that mirrored each individual buyer's behavior, there's no way we could ever create a consistent, accurate and useful sales strategy.

I believe we need sales funnels as selling tools, but the way we actually sell – the way we engage with, observe and respond to buyers – is based on an understanding of and adjustment to each individual buyer's journey.

The trick is making those two work together. Your sales process needs to be based on the most common buyer's journey for your target market, but allow for interpretations based on the uniqueness of each buyer's plight.

Work the funnel, but sell to the journey.

SEVEN RULES TO IMPROVE THE ROI ON YOUR CAPABILITIES DECK

Most companies have them. Many sales processes include them. And I'm sure you've seen dozens if not hundreds of them.

How many of those really stood out? How many were mind-numbingly boring? Or self-serving? Or completely uninteresting?

Just because it's a "capabilities" presentation (implying it's about what you do and can do for your customers) doesn't mean it can't stand out, differentiate you immediately from competitors, and drive greater urgency to engage and buy among your prospects.

Here are seven rules to follow that the best capabilities presentation I've seen consistently have in common.

1. Start with them, not you

If you do nothing else, take those "about us" slides at the front of the deck and move them to the back. If you start your presentation with a company history or review of executives or a picture of your world headquarters, you're doing it wrong.

Instead, demonstrate that you've done your homework. Focus on insights and attributes about the prospect or company you're engaging. Get them immediately engaged in your content and the conversation overall.

2. Prove that it works

Instead of moving your "demo" slides to the back of the deck, consider removing them entirely. How you achieve results for your clients isn't nearly as important right now as demonstrating that you can and will generate results for the prospect right in front of you.

Share more case studies and success stories from similar companies. Demonstrate the value cleanly and clearly. Make the "how" an afterthought (or at least part of the close, not the pitch).

3. Get the prospect talking early (about themselves)

Do your homework in advance so your first slides include analysis of their current situation that they can validate. Then ask follow-up questions to get them talking, confirming where your talk track should focus, and which benefits/outcomes you should particularly highlight.

If the presentation is all about you talking and them listening, they aren't engaged. Get them talking early and they're not only internalizing more of your message, but also helping you customize to what they're thinking about and focused on right now.

4. Focus on problems and pain

Talk less about your product. Talk more about problems and pain that you solve. The product is simply an enabler. Sell the hole, not the drill.

5. Visuals vs. words

If you're presenting live, cut as many words off the slides as possible and use visuals that augment your primary message and story. This can be images, charts, data representations, etc. that reiterate and further your point.

Consider having two versions of the deck, so that the "leave behind" has more words that make sense when reading without you there to talk through. But when presenting live, make sure prospects are listening to you vs. trying to read the slide.

6. Are they listening, reading or participating?

The best capabilities decks are interactive throughout. Not just with the small talk up front. Not just with the qualifying or confirming questions in the first couple slides.

You still need to lead the discussion, get it back on track when necessary, and drive towards a clear decision or next step. Keeping the prospect engaged throughout is a requirement.

7. Start doing the work in advance

What analysis can you give the prospect immediately based on their unique situation? What insights or recommendations could you include in the capabilities deck that gives the prospect immediate value?

How could you templatize doing some of the work in advance so that the prospect immediately sees what it would be like to work with you?

THREE TIPS TO AVOID THE CREEP FACTOR OF MODERN SELLING

Guest article by Jason Wesbecher

Here's a real world situation we all deal with. The big meeting with your executive buyer (whom you haven't met) is coming up next week. If it goes well, you are sure to close the deal and make your quarter. Your boss has decided to attend to "help out." Given how high the stakes are, you are carving out the next few business days to focus solely on preparation.

As part of that preparation, you check the public profiles of your buyer – we'll call him Mr. Moneybags – for things you might have in common. You look at LinkedIn for common connections and professional experiences. You look at Facebook to see if Moneybags has a family and kids. And you look at Twitter for common interests.

What you find is exciting – Moneybags is also a member of the Oracle Alumni group (though you didn't have intersecting tenures while working at Oracle); he appears to have a son that is your son's age; and he is fanatical about the NY Giants (you are an Eagles fan).

Now comes the tricky part – how do you use this information without coming across as a creep, a sneak, or a stalker? This is a daily conundrum faced by every sales professional who engages in social selling.

We know to mine the social profiles of our customers to learn more about them and gain some situational awareness. But we aren't really taught what to do with that information and how to use it. Here are 3 principles that guide our efforts internally at myDocket:

1. Use your channels wisely.

Each social channel has a specific purpose and voice associated with it. Acknowledge and respect that fact. You don't load family vacation photos to your LinkedIn profile for the same reason that you don't Like the Facebook pages of prospective customers that you haven't met. It's just weird. Think of using the information gleaned from these channels across a spectrum of appropriateness in the workplace. On one side, LinkedIn, represents the safest and most appropriate source. On the other side, Facebook, occupies the spot of the most risky and dangerous to use. Twitter is somewhere in the middle of the spectrum unless, for instance, Moneybags puts his Twitter handle on his LinkedIn profile. In which case, it's most likely fair game.

2. Would you say that on a date?

The fact that you know that Moneybags vacationed in Mexico last spring break is one thing. But using that fact in your discussion with him is entirely something else. Think of your relationship development process with

Moneybags like you would think of a dating process. Having backstory or inside information is fine. But disclosing that you have that information amplifies the creep factor. Instead of being overt about it, try to use that information to engineer a moment of serendipity down the road.

3. Authenticity, above all else.

At the end of the day, engaging Moneybags in a genuine and authentic conversation matters far more than any pre-meeting sleuthing that you may have done. Demonstrating that you possess the credibility to solve his problem in the least-risk possible way is paramount to anything else.

So, revisiting the meeting prep for Moneybags, this is how I would handle the information I gathered. I would kick off the meeting by saying something to the effect of:

"Mr. Moneybags, I was looking at your Linke-dIn profile before the meeting and noticed that you also worked for Oracle. I was in the Applications group in the late 1990s. Did you happen to know Miss Moneypenny while you were there? She was one of my mentors."

Get him talking about the good ol' days and then transition into the original purpose of the meeting. If the meeting were to go well and lead to another one, I would open the second

meeting with an anecdote about the NY Giants. And so on...

The way to think about how to use the social information you gather about prospects is to start with LinkedIn and, with each subsequent positive meeting, allow yourself to take an incremental step towards the more familiar. And avoid kids and family until your customer opens that door.

Jason Wesbecher is CEO of myDocket, a software company that helps sales reps manage and track all of the collateral they email to customers.

4 COMPENSATION TIPS TO GET MORE OUT OF YOUR LEAD GENERATION TEAM

*Guest article by **Devon McDonald**, director of growth strategy for **OpenView Venture Partners***

Outbound lead generation is an exhausting role, filled with constant rejection. While the act of finding new business for your sales organization can be very rewarding at times, it can also be very hard to stay motivated when your target customers are continuously turning you down.

While money isn't everything (particularly for millennials who tend to be motivated by mentorship and career development), with the proper monetary incentives in place, you will absolutely have a greater likelihood of keeping your team's spirits alive, retaining your top talent, and maintaining new business coming in the door.

Here are five helpful changes you can implement to your **compensation plans** to keep your team competitive:

1. Pay Bonuses on a Monthly Basis

Outbound lead generation is often an entry-level job. As such, the people you recruit will be fresh out of college with things like rent, groceries, credit card bills, and student loans consuming much of their income. Since a significant portion of their pay stems from their bonus, they're likely relying on that money to pay their bills.

As a result, if they work hard every day and deliver on the goals you set for them, it's only fair to reward them with their bonus as

frequently as possible. That being said, keep in mind that with a monthly payout, managers will need to perform more due diligence and work with finance to ensure that the payouts occur and that the payout is for legitimate results. In the end, it's worth it.

2. Don't Penalize Reps for What They Can't Control

The focus of lead generation is obviously to create new sales opportunities. It isn't the responsibility of a lead generation rep to actually close out those deals.

Naturally, you benefit more from opportunities that close, but the act of closing is really out of the hands of the lead generation team.

From our observations in OpenView's investment portfolio, lead generation reps that have major goals around closed deals often end up spending less time generating new business, and more time chasing after the sales reps, questioning them on when their deals will be closing. This is a huge distraction to everyone! And trust me, your sales reps are going to get pissed off.

That doesn't mean that the lead generation should have absolutely no tie at all to closed deals. A very small percentage bonus for closed deals (perhaps something as small as .02% of the first year contract value) can be a

nice perk. It encourages outbound lead generation reps to stay focused on generating high quality opportunities for the sales team, and also shows them that the fruits of their labor will ultimately payoff in the long-term.

3) Gamify Lead Generation with Challenges and Spiffs

On top of traditional commissions and bonuses, many companies give rewards to their top salespeople known as spiffs. These rewards can be handed out daily or weekly and can help establish good motivation and a healthy competitive atmosphere for employees.

The best way to set-up a spiff is to have a challenge such as, "Whomever gets the most conversations with C-level executives today/whomever hits the goal of X opportunities this week wins _____." The prize can be anything from a small cash prize to getting to leave early on a Friday to something more creative.

This should be a fun event for your team. Consider having an award ceremony or a big announcement at the end of the period to get everyone excited, and motivated to be the "best on the team" next time around.

4) Have Walls, But No Ceilings

You never want to encourage subpar performance. To avoid this, set-up an incentive wall that employees must pass in order to start receiving bonuses. To be fair to your employees, it shouldn't be set too high — most hover around 50% of the quota.

On the other hand, you should always encourage your reps to exceed their numbers. If they do reach their quota, why not let them keep going? Don't cap your bonuses for overachievers. There is no reason to put a constraint on good performance. Doing so could cause employees to save leads for the next quota cycle.

If you are looking to build out your sales funnel with highly qualified prospects, check out OpenView's eBook, "**Get More Customers: How to Build an Outbound B2B Lead Generation Team that Drives Sales**."

THE FIVE W'S OF SALES CALL RELUCTANCE (AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM)

It happens to every salesperson I know. Newbies, veterans, everyone. And in my experience, call reluctance most often boils down to two things:

1. Confidence: Do you have confidence in the product or service you're selling, the approach you're about to take on the phone (or in email), and the conversation you can have with a live prospect?

2. Process: Specifically, what am I doing? How do I track it? And what do I do next? Many companies put focus on training the first part above. They do product training, apply a sales methodology, execute role playing, etc. And all of that is important.

But more often than not, when you sit down and watch how salespeople work, they get bogged down in the execution. Specifically, "What… do…I…do…next?" And the answer to that question is really five answers:

1. **Who:** Do you know specifically who you're about to call and why? It's not enough to have a company name. You need the name of a specific decision-maker or sales target. You also need their specific contact information to initiate contact. This may sound basic, but way too many salespeople are given a phone book and/or simply a list of companies and asked to get

rolling. This bogs down their process and also creates artificial call reluctance that significantly deceases their activity and results. Focus on providing your sales team with explicit lists, with accurate contact information. It may cost a bit more up front, but the ROI on your sales team's time and performance will be more than worth it.

2. **What:** What are you going to say? What value are you going to provide to the prospect? You can't script a phone call, but you can certainly script a voicemail. And a follow-up email. Without these templates, it takes way too much time to work through a reasonable prospect list.

3. **Where:** I'm not just talking about physical location, but also channel. Are you just calling? Are you leaving a voicemail? Are you following up with email? A ping on a social channel? Mapping this specific sequence is important not only to maximize the value and impact of those touchpoints, but also to make sure execution is swift and efficient.

4. **When:** Are you really trying to reach decision-makers on the phone in the middle of the morning? When they're all in meetings? Are you really trying to call a bunch of East Coast prospects at 3:30 Pacific time? Dayparting your sales activity is important, especially if you understand the work habits of your prospects.

5. Why: Think content. Think teachable moment. Think about why the prospect would want to spend time with you, and would get measurable value from the conversation. This is a high bar, higher than just avoiding a product discussion up front. But the more you can successfully build high value in the first sales interaction, the more confidence your sales team will have in what they're about to execute. It will reduce call reluctance, drive higher sales activity, and create better first impressions and value with your prospects.

When I **execute our own sales process** for Heinz Marketing, I have to do the same thing. When I have the crisp answers to the above questions, I'm far more effective and efficient at working through my sales execution. Curious to hear your perspective and/or experience as well.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SALES FUNDAMENTALS (AND FOUR THAT REALLY MATTER)

It's amazing. We work with companies in a wide variety of sizes and types. Multi-billion dollar enterprises. Early-stage start-ups. Companies in tech, healthcare, construction, professional services and more.

Every time, the success of the sales effort often comes down to consistent execution of the fundamentals.

It shouldn't be surprising. In baseball, especially the playoffs, experts often note how key games come down to things as simple as catching and throwing the ball. Or running the bases. Fundamentals that are easy to overlook, yet can make or break your success.

It's no different in sales. There are no shortcuts, and the fundamentals that will drive success can just as easily be forgotten, or ignored, or brushed aside when things get particularly busy.

Here are four sales fundamentals I find most important:

1. Customer focus

It's really easy to shift into talking about yourself, your product, your perspective. But if you force yourself to keep the customer's perspective, you're far more likely to drive interest, credibility and momentum from all of your efforts –

prospecting, qualifying, presentations and closing.

2. Rational optimism

Think of this as a general approach to the huge volume of "no" answers sales gets on a daily and weekly basis. You can't be successful in sales if you're pessimistic about your chances of success. But you can also set yourself up for failure if you expect too much success. For example, if you expect 75% of your sales pipeline to close, that might not be realistic. Expecting a deal that's close to sign by the end of the month is a great goal, but make sure the elements are in place to make that happen (agreement on price, procurement is involved, etc.).

3. Tenacity

While it's important to know when you get a final "no" from the prospect, it's equally important to keep pushing when others might give up. Identify, isolate and address the specific obstacles in the way of your prospect achieving what they want, and buying. Be persistent when the prospect goes dark (often they're still interested, and your persistence is what they need to keep it top of mind). Be relentless in pursuing the objectives of your clients and prospects, as well as the hard work you need to do every day to exceed quota.

4. Activities

Sales organizations that focus purely on activities are often being short-sighted. But organizations that don't look at all at activities are missing the very root of success for any consistently performing sales professional. This doesn't mean you're making 120 dials a day. Maybe your goal is to reach out to five new prospects every day, and follow-up with five prospects every day from the previous week. Hitting that number on a daily basis still takes a level of focus and discipline that few people actually have. But hitting those activities, consistently, could be THE most important thing you do to feed your pipeline and meet your quota.

THREE STATISTICS THAT MAKE THE CASE FOR SALES AND MARKETING ALIGNMENT

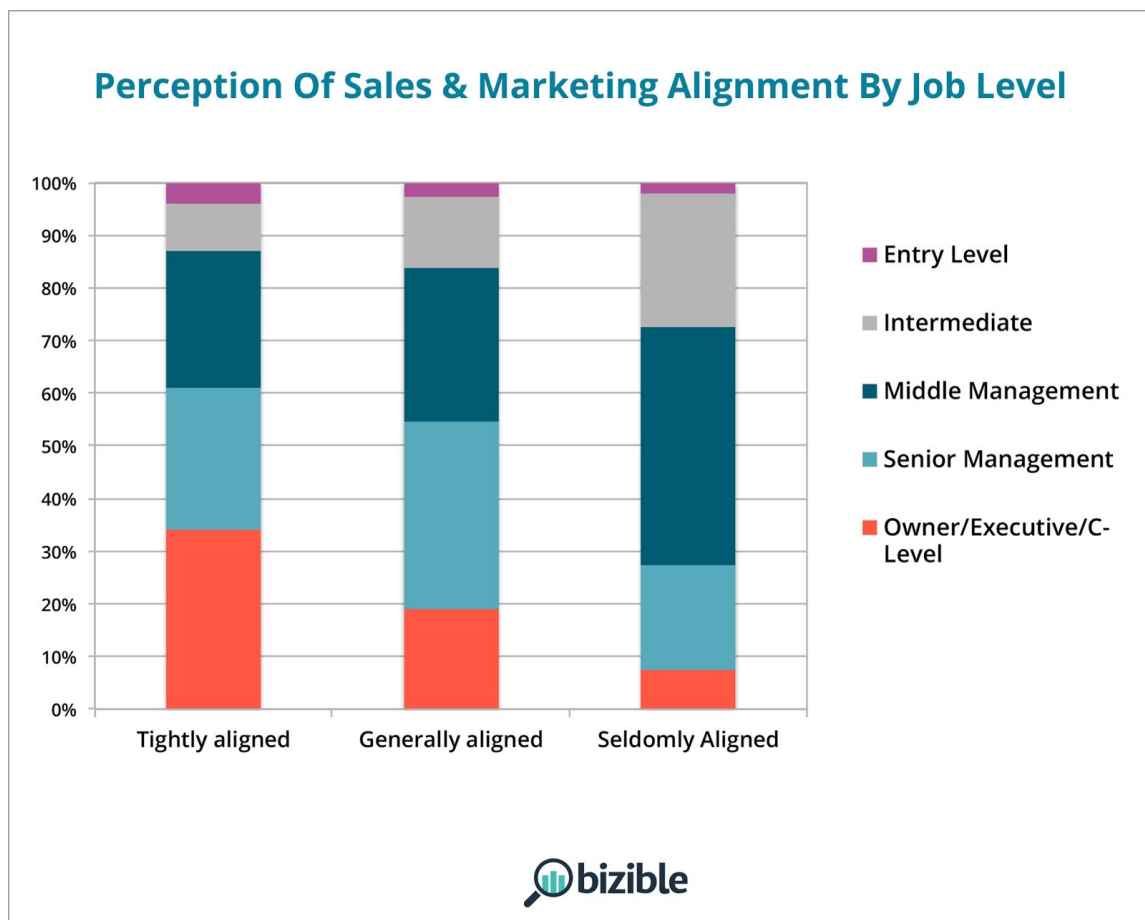By **Alexis Getscher** | *Content Marketing – Bizible*

Recently, **Bizible** published our first annual **State of Pipeline Marketing Report** after surveying over 350 B2B marketers on various topics like how they measure success, which metrics have the greatest impact on revenue, and marketing priorities.

In this post, I'd like to break down the results surrounding sales and marketing alignment. Apparently, it's not as cut and dry as I would have expected: Of all marketers surveyed, 68.4 percent said they were "tightly aligned" or "generally aligned" with sales, leaving 31.6 percent as "somewhat aligned," "rarely aligned,"

or "misaligned." (I've combined the latter three answers into "Seldomly Aligned" within the charts below).

Sales and Marketing Alignment vs. Job Level

In the chart below, we compare marketer's job level to their degree of sales and marketing alignment. Notably, 72.6 percent of those who answered within the category seldomly aligned with sales fell into the job levels of middle management and under. While 61 percent of senior management or higher say they are tightly aligned with sales and 54.7 percent say generally aligned.

Perception Of Sales & Marketing Alignment By Job Level

Legend:
- Entry Level
- Intermediate
- Middle Management
- Senior Management
- Owner/Executive/C-Level

X-axis: Tightly aligned, Generally aligned, Seldomly Aligned

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There are a couple takeaways here:

One, it seems that C-level execs understand the importance of aligning their marketing and sales teams, but this value gets lost as you move down the job ladder. And two, upper management may place value on overall revenue metrics while the lower job levels are more concerned with their job function metrics like leads and conversion rates. While those are also valuable, it's important for teams to be optimizing for the same metrics. Otherwise, it creates a marketing team that's not only siloed from sales, but also from each other, and it's easier to be successful when everyone is on the same page.

Sales and Marketing Alignment vs. Budget Over Next 12 Months

In the graph below, we find that 61.5 percent of marketers who are tightly aligned with sales expect their marketing budget to increase in the next 12 months. While only 3.13 percent expect it to decrease.
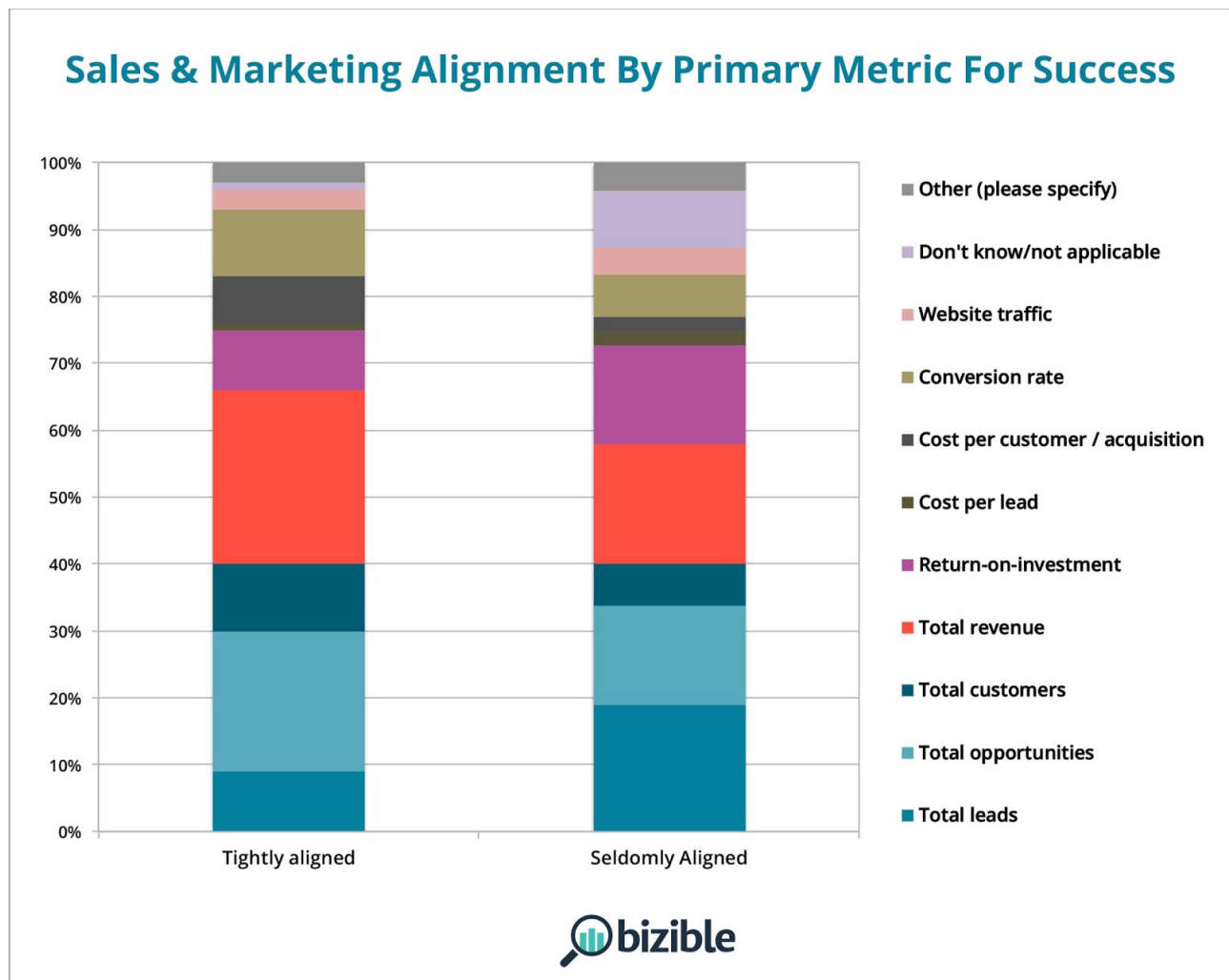
Of those who are rarely aligned (combines answers for "rarely" and "misaligned"), 62.9 percent say their budget will decrease or remain the same, while only 33.3 percent say it will increase.

Sales & Marketing Alignment By 2016 Budget Forecast

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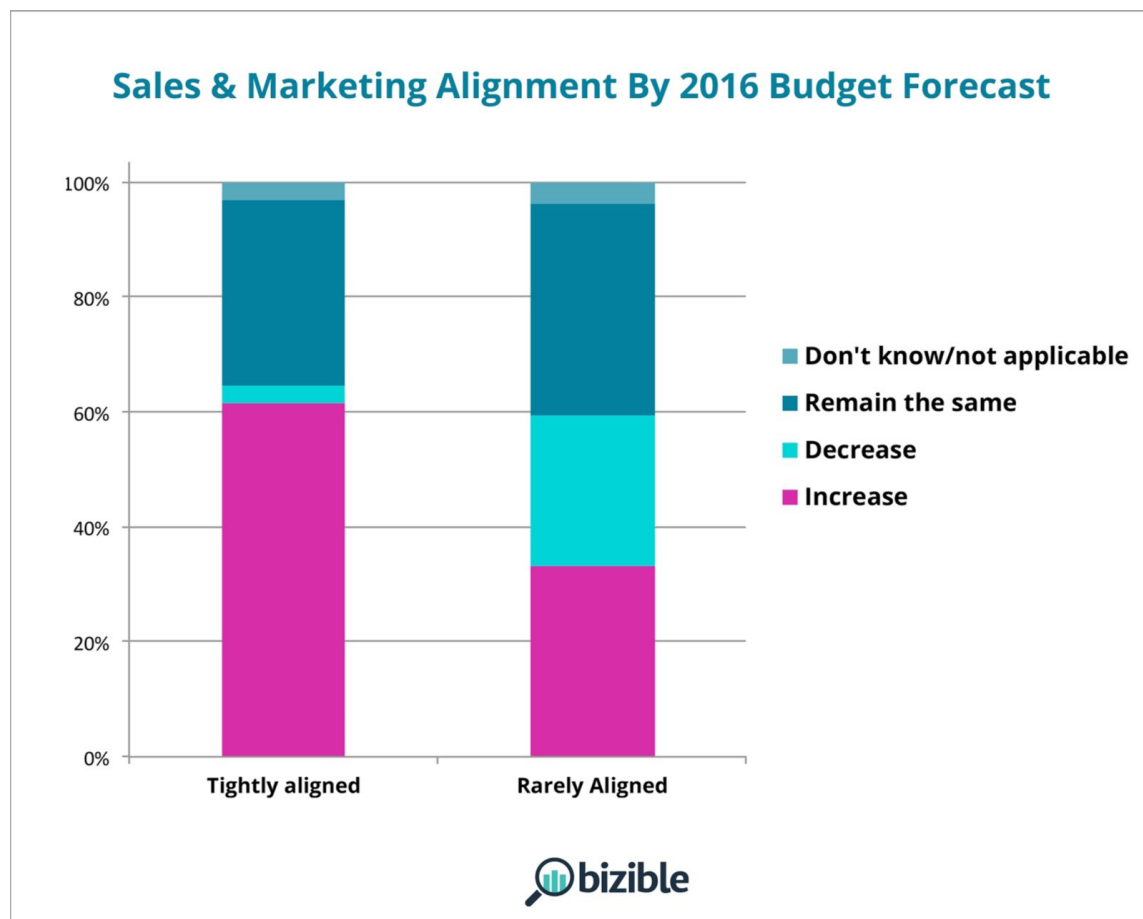
This tells us that when sales and marketing are aligned, they work better together as a team and it's paying off in terms of marketing budget growth, which of course supports sales. So not only does aligning with sales mean you're just more connected as a company, it can drive change and new business value as well.

Sales and Marketing Alignment vs. Primary Success Metric

Of those who answered as being tightly aligned with sales, 46.2 percent distributed their answers between two primary success metrics– total opportunities and total revenue. Those who answered within seldomly aligned had success metrics all over the board. Total leads took the slight edge as the primary success metric, coming in at 18.9 percent of the answers.

Sales & Marketing Alignment By Primary Metric For Success

Legend:
- Other (please specify)
- Don't know/not applicable
- Website traffic
- Conversion rate
- Cost per customer / acquisition
- Cost per lead
- Return-on-investment
- Total revenue
- Total customers
- Total opportunities
- Total leads

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These results show that tight alignment between marketing and sales, means a more focused and unified measurement of success. Drawing a parallel, the metrics used to measure success are the same ones used as optimization goals. So, in the case of tightly aligned, marketing and sales teams are both interested in increasing total opportunities and total revenue.

Within the bar for seldomly aligned, the balanced distribution across multiple answers shows that when sales and marketing isn't aligned, teams may be optimizing and measuring for completely different metrics. Disjointed goals make it difficult to grow a business.

Overall, the report is showing that the more aligned sales and marketing are, the more positive results the team has– increased budget, more unified focus, and the ability to prove value to upper management.

For more insights from our **2015 State of Pipeline Marketing Report** download the full report **here**.

NINE MOBILE PRODUCTIVITY TIPS FOR SALES PROS ON THE GO

These tips apply to anyone who travels frequently for work – and especially for those who find themselves going from meeting to meeting away from their desk. These can be significant time savers!

Carry paper: Seriously, as awesome as note-capturing apps can be, sometimes what you really need is to write something down! Depending on the circumstance, writing a note on pen and paper is better etiquette than pulling out your smartphone or tablet.

Make your CRM available online: Contacts, accounts, notes. The more of this is available anywhere, the more likely you have whatever data you need at your fingertips.

Use voice controls: Control CRM by voice? It's possible. Check out **Nuiku**.

Organize your apps better: Which do you use most often? Which do you use in succession? Sort them more effectively on your phone and/or tablet so you spend less time fumbling and more time doing.

Use **Dial2Do**: For **$2.49/month**, leave yourself a voicemail and it'll translate that message into text and email it to you. Huge time saver not to mention master capturer of far more ideas, tasks, etc.

Prepare in advance for your day: The night before, make your to-do list. Keep it handy so you can quickly switch to priority tasks when you have time between meetings. Do research on your next day's meetings via LinkedIn, Charlie and others. Do the math on where you need to be first, when, how long it'll take you there, when you need to leave your hotel or office or home. Life savers.

Avoid distractions as best as possible: Your email will be there for you when you get back to the office. Voicemails too. You're on the road for a reason, focus there and get the job done.

Capture and triage to-do's before day's end: Don't stop working until you've captured your next steps somewhere in a trusted system. Pull them out of your notes and brain before they get lost.

Set up **Evercontact** back at the office: It'll capture updated contact information from emails in your inbox automatically, keeping your contact list up to date. That way when you need that updated phone number on the road, it's right there for you.

DOES YOUR SALES PROCESS MATCH YOUR CUSTOMER'S BUYING PROCESS?

Companies often design their sales processes to fit their needs versus aligning with their customer's buying process.

All too often activity measures get in the way of a smooth progression through the sales process from the buyer's perspective.

Number of calls made matters less than number of quality conversations completed.

Trials and self—guided product tours can actually help further qualify a prospect prior to sales engagement.

Demos can hinder the process or become an artificial indicator of buying interest if over-emphasized as a performance metric.

You should be focused on enabling the buying process and design both your team and how they engage around how your customer wants to go through it.

I see all too often presentations that are out of context that "must" be delivered in their entirety regardless of the prospect's questions or interest and demos that become the closing objective for early sales engagement that can actually slow the process down.

Take the time to understand your prospect's needs and apply that context to your engagement. Doing a bit of homework ahead of time or personalizing a product tour based on their needs will go a long way towards winning the business and retaining a happy customer. Understand how your customers want to buy and enable that process. You may actually be slowing things down by forcing your sales process on them.

THE HIDDEN, CRIPPLING DAMAGE OF BAD SALES PRACTICES

You can make a spreadsheet say anything right?

You can hire people to make 100 dials a day, call prospects five times a week, push push push and make the numbers work out. With enough activity they'll get enough appointments, close enough deals, to help you make your number. Manage to the expectations in your spreadsheet model and everything will be fine.

Except….

Those reps may be calling too much, too often, pissing off prospects who now will never buy from you. Your brand is now associated with high-pressure sales reps, not anything to do with the value your product or service provides.

Your reps may be pitching product instead of communicating something of value, wasting the prospect's time vs. sharing something worth paying for. Multiply that by constant emails and voicemails that never stop and you're in trouble.

When your prospects recognize the phone number or area code every day, even without any interaction (or voicemail left), those passive interactions reinforce your growing, damaging brand value.

Your reps may be receiving direct, negative feedback on their tactics, but they sure aren't

sharing that feedback with you. That'll make them look bad so they ignore it, delete it. You never see it.

If two percent of your prospects convert, that means 98 percent don't. And among those 98 percent, how many will never do business with you again? How many will tell their colleagues and peers about the experience? How many will forward that horrible email to their teammates, blog about it, tweet about it, talk about it?

How many will get promoted to manager, then director, then VP and beyond – and remember how you treated them?

The negative, long-term impact of bad sales practices is difficult to isolate and measure. But it's there. And I guarantee that your future spreadsheets will suffer for it without attention and course correction.

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Matt Heinz is the Founder and President of Heinz Marketing Inc. Matt brings more than 15 years of marketing, business development and sales experience from a variety of organizations, vertical industries and company sizes. His career has focused on delivering measurable results for his employers and clients in the way of greater sales, revenue growth, product success and customer loyalty.

ABOUT HEINZ MARKETING

Heinz Marketing is a Seattle marketing agency focused on sales acceleration. Heinz Marketing helps clients achieve sustained sales success by growing revenue from existing customers and cost effectively identifying and winning new customers.

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LEARN MORE ABOUT HEINZ MARKETING

Interested in learning more creative ways to make the most of your marketing?

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