

Should Sales Do Marketing?

By David J. Cichelli

Your first response to this question should be, of course, “No.” And with good reason: The dividing line between marketing and sales is clear. Marketing does marketing and sales does sales, right? Well, if you lead a sales department, you might want to reevaluate this division.



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Think back to when you were a youth, looking at a map of the world. “Gee,” you probably thought, “it looks like Africa and South America share the same connecting sides of puzzle parts, but that can’t be.” Your uneducated mind dismissed the likelihood that these two great continents were actually, at one time, snugly connected. Later on, in fourth grade Geography, you learned that plate tectonics actually pulled these two great bodies apart and a big ocean now separates them.

Does that sound like the marketing and sales functions at your company—two distinct entities separated by a large body of water? If so, don’t be alarmed; it’s natural. Be warned, however, that this division could be the basis of future failure if left unaddressed.

Yes, sales should do marketing, and here’s why: Market segments (what marketing understands) will evolve into buyer segments (what sales professionals fully grasp) as markets mature.

Thankfully, this is a non-issue for start-up, fast-growing young companies. But don’t get too comfortable; your challenges will come.

How It Plays Out. Here’s how it plays out: As sales volumes grow and new products are added, the need for marketing specialists becomes unequivocal. Marketing and communications professionals are transformed

into product managers with special competencies in product definition, market sizing, promotion, pricing, collateral, distribution and, hopefully, customer research.

The sales department begins its own tectonic journey of specialization, beginning with geographic territories, moving on to stratified sales units, progressing to the addition of field specialists and, finally, the creation of new, unique sales channels.

Failure Is Near. At the peak of this division of responsibilities, there are multiple product managers attempting to access the sales department. . .by this time a well-defined fortress. Failure is near. This rigid model is highly susceptible to new value propositions promoted by competitors and, at times, requested by customers. Neither of these two highly specialized continents (marketing or sales) can do anything to stem the loss of customers to niche competitors.

The bottom line? It really is time for sales to bite the bullet and do some marketing.

So it’s time for sales to do some marketing, specifically, buyer segmentation analysis. Using data gathered by market managers, the sales function needs group buyers to weigh in on how they want to buy. Accordingly, sales departments need to identify buyer populations for new, unorthodox coverage models based on buyers’ needs, not on historical sales coverage solutions.

This critical planning effort will help determine buyer populations, product requirements, revenue opportunities, sales coverage choices and sales messaging needs.

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