

5 Things Salespeople Really Need From Marketing

New products and services are the lifeblood of organizations. The sales force eagerly awaits their arrival, hoping for a short-term competitive edge in a cut-throat market. Yet most new products fail to achieve the desired results in the vital first months after their introduction. When launching new products or services, here are five things Marketing can do to ensure the sales force is successful.

1. Provide a Strong Value Proposition

Weak value propositions are a leading cause of new product failures. Customers don't buy phrases such as increased productivity, more robust or reduced cost. Quantification of the value gained is essential in today's market. Be explicit. How much money is saved? What additional efficiencies are gained? What is the financial pay-off of getting a product to market two months sooner? Specificity sells. Use beta tests to learn this information - and then make sure to write it up in case studies.

2. Deliver Insightful Competitive Information

Salespeople need much more than a features comparison to be successful. They need to understand the competitor's go-to-market strategy, their financial condition and any other newsworthy information. They want to know how their peers "won" the business when up against the primary competitors and the selling strategy their competitors employed. They need to know about losses too. Don't just deliver competitive info at launch time - provide it for 3-6 months after you've introduced your new offering.

3. Create Diagnostic Sales Tools

Research into product launches shows that sellers are much more likely to "pitch" then than at any other time. Providing diagnostic assessment tools to salespeople helps them uncover customer problems and understand the related issues more deeply. The audit process itself builds the relationship and keeps the focus where it belongs - on your customer, not your product or service.

4. Develop Proposal/Presentation Templates

Preparing customizable proposal and presentation templates for your salespeople at launch time is an invaluable gift. For many sellers, creating these documents is takes an inordinate amount of time and quality is often mediocre. Additionally, if these templates are totally focused around customer's needs, you can help salespeople be more effective. Plus, you ensure the consistency of your message.

5. Facilitate "How-to-Sell" Training

Most launch meetings are totally centered around the new offering - its capabilities, ordering processes, support. Certainly this info is needed, but don't let salespeople leave the kick-off meeting yet. Facilitate discussions around how customers do things without your offering. Explore the difficulties caused by the current method and the business impact of these problems. Talk about positioning, questions they should ask and the logical next steps in the sales process. Salespeople desperately need this type of training before they make calls.

Successful new product introductions require Sales and Marketing to work together prior to launch. Involve top sellers into beta site interviews to strengthen your value proposition. Get their input on what to include in diagnostic tools, the best structure for your templates and defining good selling processes. Invite all salespeople to contribute competitive information and quickly disseminate it to others.

This is what salespeople really need from Marketing. It's what makes all the difference between a new product's smashing success or its descent into obscurity. Take the extra time to do it right and reap the benefits.

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Jill Konrath, author of *Selling to Big Companies*, helps sellers get their foot in the door of large corporations, create demand and win profitable contracts. Get a free *Sales Call Planning Guide* (\$19.95 value) when you sign up for the Selling to Big Companies e-newsletter. Just send an email with "subscribe" in the subject line to jill@sellingtobigcompanies.com. For more info, visit <http://www.SellingtoBigCompanies.com>.