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Editorial Uk

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The Importance of Alignment in Sales & Marketing to Drive Business Growth in 2021

Although it's 2021, companies still seem to have a problem aligning their sales and marketing functions. As these are the two most important factors that drive business growth, we decided to examine the causes of this misalignment. The ultimate goal of this ongoing project is to understand how sales and marketing professionals can achieve true alignment in 2021 and beyond.

Freshworks recently produced a report, [‘The State of Sales and Marketing Alignment in 2021’](#). The 35-page report aims to highlight the current challenges of cross-team alignment from the perspective of both the sales and marketing teams. It seeks to give businesses the insight they need for their sales and marketing functions to work as one team and forge a competitive advantage.

The report is based on data collected from more than 1,200 sales and marketing leaders based across five continents. It's the largest ever survey of its kind and we think you'll find its insights helpful. While we'll cover some of the key findings in this article, you can [access the full report here](#) for more details.

The Impact of Misalignment in Sales & Marketing

Did you know that businesses without highly aligned teams are twice as likely to experience a revenue decline of over 20% compared to the previous year? Fortunately, 90% of the survey's respondents do at least believe sales and marketing should be aligned. However, this isn't reflected by the reality that only 44% of marketing and sales leaders believe their teams are currently aligned. This misalignment has an adverse effect on individual job performance and business-wide growth objectives.

Both teams feel they are hindered by a lack of accurate data on customers and prospects, which is compounded by a lack of visibility between teams. Consequently, both teams struggle with only a partial view of the customer journey – a problem that is exacerbated in smaller companies.

The Greatest Challenges Organisations Face to Achieving Alignment

Several challenges inhibit sales and marketing alignment. They range from tangible problems such as disparate systems and siloed or inefficient technologies to intangible challenges, which include different attitudes and approaches, a lack of transparency and skewed expectations.

Sixty-five percent of sales and marketing professionals claim they don't have a 360-degree view of the customer journey. This lack of visibility robs both teams of the fundamental context they need to provide the best customer experience. Ultimately, it's the business that suffers by losing out on revenue as customers turn elsewhere.

The Biggest Challenges from a Sales Perspective

Sales have a direct responsibility to generate profits for their organisation, so it's not surprising they feel frustrated by a lack of good leads and information. Sales teams want more insight into upper-funnel activities – the domain of marketing teams. Their biggest challenge is getting the right amount of customer context to craft strong pitches to the right prospects and close more deals.

A significant proportion of salespeople (39%) ranked “more visibility into prospects' upper-funnel activities” as top of their wish list. As the first stage of lead generation, it could provide the all-important context they need to follow up on prospects rather than waste their time on poor-quality leads.

A third of sales professionals want marketing to provide “better quality leads” (34%). A further 24% want “more leads” in general because a low volume makes it difficult to meet sales targets. Interestingly, while a quarter of sales teams want prospects to have better brand awareness, they have very little to no interest in lead scoring and more events.

The Biggest Challenges from a Marketing Perspective

Better visibility is a common challenge for marketing teams too. More insight into lower-funnel activities is the top wish of 71% of marketers. Marketers can mine the sales team's data to refine their marketing campaigns and generate higher quality leads. Marketing might pass on a lot of leads but get frustrated when the sales team doesn't pursue them.

More than half of marketing professionals wish salespeople would follow up on leads faster and provide clear reports on outcomes. With insufficient feedback, marketers are left without enough direction. Fifty-six percent of marketers also indicated they wished their sales counterparts would use the CRM more consistently and adhere to good data hygiene practices. Marketing teams need access to up-to-date information on prospects so they can keep producing content that engages them.

From a marketing perspective, it's a challenge to keep everyone on-brand. They dedicate a lot of time towards developing a consistent brand image and they wish the salespeople would do a better job with their messaging. However, being brand-specific doesn't entail a one-size-fits-all approach. If sales teams thoroughly learn their brand's messaging, they can still adapt it to reach different targets.

The Importance of High Alignment on Job Performance

The survey demonstrated the significant effect high sales and marketing alignment had on job performance. According to 60% to 72% of respondents, high alignment makes them better at their job. The most important area of high alignment relates to goals and objectives. Most people want to work in a company with clearly defined goals otherwise they lack direction. Whether you're working in sales or marketing, you'll find it beneficial to track progress against shared goals and KPIs.

High alignment in strategy and planning is also crucial to better job performance. Both teams need to know who they are selling their product to. Without clear buyer personas, sales teams can waste time chasing anyone with money, while marketing will have a very specific idea that they haven't shared outside of their team. Collaboration between your company's salespeople and marketers on a shared strategy creates more individual focus and generates more sales.

Other important areas of alignment that correlate with better job performance include clear processes, common information systems for prospects/customers, and daily work. You can [read the full report](#) for a complete breakdown of these categories.

The Main Roadblocks to Achieving Alignment

While sales and marketing typically chase the same goals, they don't always see eye to eye. The lack of a coherent and unified sales and marketing strategy causes a disconnect in the way the two teams engage with each other and customers.

The main psychological roadblocks to achieving alignment boil down to a lack of understanding of each other's roles and a corresponding low level of trust. This distrust is exacerbated by the lack of transparency with data and metrics caused by separate working tools and practices.

Customer Information is Fragmented Across Systems

The survey found that fragmented customer data across different tools and technologies is a huge obstacle to optimal alignment between sales and marketing. Half of all respondents cited fragmentation of customer information across multiple systems as their greatest challenge. This makes it difficult to provide customer context to different teams and diminishes the ability to enjoy a complete view of the customer journey. This absence of centralisation results in lower engagement levels and conversions.

Lack of Integration on Platforms

Smooth integration of CRM tools is essential to managing the customer journey from initial interest to aftercare. Sales and marketing executives need a single platform to help them gather and share insight to map buyer journeys and drive sales. But instead, what they get is often subpar solutions that are time-consuming or require manual implementation. Clunky software contributes to siloed departments and a lack of transparency.

A sizeable number of respondents (28%) mentioned the lack of integration and automated flow of data from one tool/system/solution to another as a major challenge. A further 22% of personnel found the technology too complicated or difficult to use. More than a third of respondents revealed that their sales and marketing teams use separate systems to view and understand prospects and customers. The same number reported that their organisation has too many different work systems and platforms, some of which overlap. Meanwhile, 35% are not very impressed with the quality of their sales tools and feel the technology is not up to the job.

A Greater Need for Effective Reporting Tools

A quarter of all respondents mentioned reporting challenges as being a major roadblock to achieving alignment. Reporting tools gather valuable insights regarding everything from customer habits to pipeline effectiveness, so reporting should be a high priority for businesses.

However, 21% of respondents say difficult or poor reporting capabilities are hindering their company's marketing-sales alignment. High alignment corresponds with common reporting lines for 63% of respondents. Sales and marketing need access to the right reporting to differentiate sales and marketing stages. An effective CRM reporting tool will help them fine-tune their reports and share any relevant data effectively.

Reporting tools are essential for maintaining good CRM hygiene. If you don't run the right reports, you risk getting an incomplete or inaccurate overview of the customer. Both sales and marketing need access to these reports to understand customers' preferences and which products or services are the most profitable.

How Alignment Can Differentiate Between Generations

Perhaps the most interesting finding from the survey was the way different generations approach working practices. Millennials appear to be the changemakers, adapting to new technologies and driving workplace policies forward. Millennials are proponents of sales and marketing alignment and they collaborate with their counterparts more frequently than older generations.

Millennials also report a higher level of visibility over the customer journey, which 88% of them say helps them with their job performance. Conversely, only 81% of Boomers and Gen Xers combined rely on a similar level of customer and prospect visibility to help them fulfil their duties.

While 90% of all respondents agree that sales and marketing strategy should be aligned, younger employees consistently find more value in alignment between both teams. This attitude manifests in the everyday alignment of team proximity, collaborations and the frequency of meetings.

Discover How Freshworks Can Create Unity Between Sales & Marketing

Sales and marketing have the same goal – acquiring customers and generating revenue – so how can we help them work together? CRMs are the key to solving the challenges outlined in the 'The State of Sales and Marketing Alignment in 2021' report. CRMs are essential tools for ensuring sales and marketing alignment, and yet they are consistently overlooked. A central platform allows members of both departments to enter information accurately to offer context and a 360-degree view of the sales journey.

Freshworks is a leading sales and marketing CRM tool that enables organisations to work as unified teams. It empowers marketers to provide better briefings and context so that salespeople can keep on top of qualified leads. Freshworks CRM keeps a record of all calls and interactions with various mediums. The intuitive dashboard offers an overview of each customer, with AI-powered lead scoring and advanced reporting capabilities. It eliminates friction, repetitive tasks and disruption in the workplace while consistently delivering on-brand messaging to prospects and customers.

Is your organisation struggling with sales and marketing misalignment? If so, you're at risk of experiencing a 20% decrease in revenue this year. Learn how misalignment can impact your growth and how you can overcome this challenge by [downloading the full report](#).

Achieve true alignment between your sales and marketing teams by using Freshworks CRM. [Request a Freshworks demo](#) to see for yourself or [sign up for a free trial](#).

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