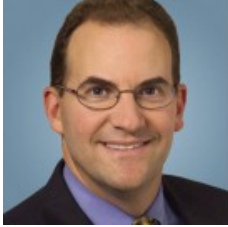


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**Lawrence Siff**, Contributor

“Siff-ting” through the Family Business: I untangle the problems.

ENTREPRENEURS

## Sales and Marketing Together at Last

A middle-market, B2B company is launching a new brand. Sales and Marketing will each play a critical role in whether the new brand will be a success.

Too often, it works like this: The VP of Marketing hands down a marketing budget and plan as if he/she were Moses coming down from the mountain with the Ten Commandments. Sales has a vested interest in making the brand a success, but it is not vested in the process because it has no part in the process. So, salespeople complain that the marketing campaign is not aligned with their efforts. Marketing does not understand why sales is not on board. Bickering, backstabbing and bad attitudes are rife.

What good is a strong marketing plan with no buy in from Sales? What good is a strong sales force with a weak marketing plan behind it?

Here are suggestions of what you can do to get the most from both Sales and Marketing:

### **DO:**

#### **Have Sales and Marketing Jointly Determine and Own a Partnering Approach**

Sales needs to identify the tiers of customers and then sales and marketing *together* need to agree how the marketing money is allocated and spent. By having sales and marketing make decisions together, you are allowing them to have joint and equal responsibility for what happens with the brand. Neither feels dictated to or disenfranchised.

#### **Track the Results by Customer Segmentation**

Did 60% of the spend result in 40% of sales? What happened after 10 ads were placed in trade magazines? Sales and marketing must analyze the results together to figure out what’s working and what is not. And because the decisions were made jointly, people don’t get caught up in playing the blame game.

## **Conduct Market Research**

Perform customer surveys, employee surveys, gather information about how your new product compares to your competitors'. Use industry information from a source like Hoover's, and get information directly from the customers through your salespeople.

Marketing may have more access to research data, but research data is often based on the past; sales has more access to what is really happening in the field. Salespeople can also find out about trends from their customers in real time. They can ask, 'What are our competitors doing better than we are? What new promotions do you see coming up?'

This data, taken as a whole, can be used to determine how your product line and brand are perceived, where you are positioned in the marketplace, and where you want to be or should be. It is easy for people to rely on half truths, what they think is true, or only use information that supports their point of view. This kind of research minimizes biased opinions.

## **DON'T:**

### **Don't Get Caught Up In Who Deserves Credit**

Be more concerned about the results and how they were achieved – not who achieved them. Are you making customers happy? Are goals being met? Success breeds excitement internally. But if sales starts believing things only happened because of their relationship with the customer, or if marketing believes that it was because of their amazing promotion, things get off-kilter. Praise the joint effort, not individual teams.

### **Don't Forget to Reward Both Teams**

The sales department is often judged and rewarded on sales performance, profits, or a combination of the two. But if marketing is truly working in support of the sales force, sales and profits can be even greater. So incentivize the marketing department as well.

Suppose you're a \$50 million company and you're introducing what you think could be a \$5 million brand. Give marketing a reason to go the extra distance. Their compensation doesn't have to be determined the same way the sales department's is, but figure out some bonus structure for marketing. To do otherwise sets the stage for divisiveness – exactly what you are trying to avoid.

### **Don't Create a New Silo**

You want sales and marketing to work together in creating the plan, but bear in mind that all relevant organizational heads should be part of the execution. In certain companies that means not only the CEO but the CFO and heads of production, operation, and manufacturing will need to be involved. It's great to have sales and marketing working together, but their newfound partnership isn't about excluding other relevant parties.

## **Don't Make a 'Promotion of the Month Club'**

There must be consistency in your marketing and sales efforts so you don't confuse the customer. Let's say you're introducing a new brand. You might offer your distributor an incentive in October to encourage them to carry your new brand. But in November, you might be tempted to offer distributors a different incentive, perhaps in combination with one of your existing products.

Saddling your salespeople with constantly changing plans makes their jobs harder, and it sends mixed messages to the distributors about how much you support your new brand.

## **Don't Let Anyone Slam a Customer in Front of Sales**

Your sales force is proud of their customers and the relationships they have built with them. So, it is incredibly demoralizing to have the CFO come in and say, 'We don't want to work with XYZ because they always pay late.' To a salesperson, denigrating a customer is almost like insulting a member of their family. They take it very personally and it can make them question whether the customer is worth their time, or it may build resentment internally. Neither of these outcomes suits your goals.

## **Don't Assume Your Customer Cares about Your Brand**

You need to make your brand matter to customers. I recently sat in on a run through of a client's presentation to a customer. Their presentation was all about themselves – 'We're the market leader, we produce a high quality product, we have a long and distinguished history'—and not one word was said about what the company or its products could do for the customer! Nothing about 'this will help you increase your profitability or give you better returns.'

The client's presentation focused on differentiators, but if they didn't benefit the customer, why should he or she care?

Brand is important to the future of your company, and a strong brand adds real value. A brand is ultimately a promise, and B2B companies in particular need to create a sustainable, competitive advantage by communicating the benefits and the value of your product(s). Brand gives your salespeople a competitive edge in addition to price and gives sales and marketing a shared interest in the concept of brand. Salespeople want to be proud of what they sell. They want to believe in the marketing message.

With Sales and Marketing 'together at last', everyone will benefit: Sales, Marketing, the rest of your company, especially, and most importantly, your customers.

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*Lawrence Siff is a Contributing Editor and Blogger for Forbes Magazine and Forbes.com*