

## The Relationship Between Marketing And Sales

When comparing marketing with sales and considering how they relate to one another I always think of the medium sized business where I had my first job. The marketing department people were serious and analytical, always busy with statistics and campaigns and meetings. The sales people were breathless, always on the go, always on the phone or going to meet customers, always on the cusp of some enormous deal, some magic sale that would catapult the company's turnover way over the annual target. As a junior it seemed to me that the marketing people and the sales people were from two different planets. I now know that they were simply two parts of the same continuum.

Marketing can be described as the set of activities that are undertaken in order to generate leads, while selling is the act of turning a prospect a hot lead into a buyer and later a repeat customer. The marketing and sales functions of any organization are glued together by leads. If there are no leads, the two will fall foul of one another. I saw this in that business I was describing earlier. But leads work both ways. The marketing department has to deliver them and the sales department must act upon them to maximum advantage. But leads must first be generated and that is why marketing tends to overwhelm the sales function when the two are discussed.

The various forms that marketing takes are well known because they are so visible. They range from cold canvassing to brand or corporate advertising, through to the more targeted types of marketing such as direct response advertising and referrals, where the particular benefits of the product is explained to the customer. If this is done properly, then qualified prospects will actually approach the sales people for assistance. Sales people love those leads. It is in fact when the sales people take over the communication function that the lead ceases to be a lead and becomes a prospective customer, then a customer and finally a repeat customer.

Actually I have painted a somewhat idealistic picture of the lead relationship between the marketing function and the sales function. It is just not that simple because not all leads are equal. An extremely tiny percentage leads are customers who are ready to buy. Most of them are merely interested in possibly buying at a future date and some are just mildly interested, just browsing. That's why it is important to have some sort of lead management system so that potential customers can be turned into buyers and buyers can become repeat customers.

All follow up communication should be friendly and informative, definitely not hard sell. The company representative should be regarded as a helpful expert rather than a rabid sales person. Fortunately many of the follow up functions can be automated to take the form of email, direct mail, voice broadcast and fax broadcast. Obviously the lead would be encouraged each time to call directly if they have questions or a ready to buy. The follow up effort is usually a function of the marketing and sales departments combined.

## About the Author

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