



Jumpstart your *revenue growth.*

Align sales and marketing and convert more leads.

Marketing vs. sales: different ends of the *same funnel.*

Sales and marketing departments have the same goal, but they often have different perspectives.

Marketers focus more on the top of the sales funnel, while sales reps close deals at the bottom of the funnel. As marketers move prospects down the funnel and prepare them to be sold to by the sales team, they create better prospects for the sales team to engage with.

According to research we conducted in partnership with ReachForce, half of sales reps' time is spent on unproductive prospecting, with sales ignoring as much as 80 percent of marketing leads. For both teams, that amounts to a lot of hard work for nothing. So what happens when sales and marketing do work well together? Businesses are 67 percent better at closing deals.

Marketing and sales
alignment boosts revenue by

208%



Source: Wheelhouse Advisors

As buyers gain access to more information and research, it's vital that sales departments are empowered with the right information, and that both teams know exactly when the handover between marketing and sales will occur. Marketers have to prepare the sales team with the necessary information and content to continue to add value to existing relationships with leads. If these two teams aren't on the same page, the buyer's journey is bound to be rocky.

The following six steps are the key to aligning your marketing and sales teams.

- Step 1: Define common terms.
- Step 2: Set common goals.
- Step 3: Build a collaborative environment.
- Step 4: Reformat lead scoring.
- Step 5: Define organizational structure.
- Step 6: Create internal service-level agreements (SLAs).

Sales and Marketing Alignment Benefits



1. Increase revenue.



2. Shorten sales cycle.



3. Improve conversion rates.



4. Improve forecast accuracy.

Source: CSO Insights

STEP 1:

Define *common terms.*

The first step in achieving sales and marketing alignment is for both teams to agree on how common terms are defined.

While that might seem simple, it's still pretty rare across organizations. According to CSO Insights, only 44 percent of companies have formally agreed on the definition of a qualified lead between sales and marketing. Without an understanding of what a qualified lead means, teams are naturally going to be out of sync. The understanding of what is sales-ready needs to match between both marketing and sales teams.

Every company defines leads a bit differently. Typically, a lead is defined as a combination of demographics, firmographics (such as company size and revenue), BANT (budget, authority, need, and timeline), and behavior. Depending on your company's definition, some combination of these attributes will determine whether a company is a right match for your product and whether the contact is in a position to make a purchase.

The following are some basic definitions of marketing and sales qualified leads to get you started.

Marketing Qualified Lead

Our marketing teams define a marketing qualified lead (MQL) as a combination of three things. First is the fit score, which determines how well a lead matches the ideal target, both at an individual level (such as target personas) and an account level. Second is engagement score, a metric that tracks a lead's level of interaction with content. Finally, there's buying intent, which records purchase indicators. Based on a combination of these factors, qualified leads are inevitably passed on to sales.

Sales Qualified Lead

Marketing passes MQLs on to a section of the sales department—often inside sales reps or sales development reps—that will determine which leads should be given to an account executive to close the deal. In general, a sales qualified lead has high potential to actually purchase the product.



Only 44% of companies have formally agreed on the definition of a qualified lead between sales and marketing.

Source: CSO Insights

STEP 2:

Set *common goals.*

After your teams agree on the definition of leads across the funnel, discuss common goals between departments.

Marketers and sales teams have their eyes on different metrics and short-term goals. Getting them to see eye-to-eye may require a new point of focus for both groups. Technically, marketing and sales teams share the same goal of generating revenue. However, because of the perceived handoff from marketing to sales, this process can seem like two separate stages. Encourage your teams to think about the sales funnel in terms of one process rather than two.

The Sales Funnel

To achieve alignment, sales and marketing teams need to have a more holistic view of the sales funnel. We suggest dividing the funnel into three parts: top, middle, and bottom, with a number of sub-stages throughout.

Top Funnel

This is the awareness phase. A prospect in this position is aware of your product but not ready to buy. This section is further divided as follows:

New Name: This designates that a name has officially entered the database.

Engaged: A lead moves on to the next stage after meaningful engagement.

Target: To determine whether a lead is a potential buyer, marketers assign them a numerical score based on the lead's behavior.

Middle Funnel

Marketing leads in this stage have displayed buying behavior and have engaged with content, making them a potential sales lead. This section is further divided as follows:

MLQ: At this point, lead scoring is used to determine whether it's time to reach out. If leads aren't ready to convert, the lead nurturing process begins.

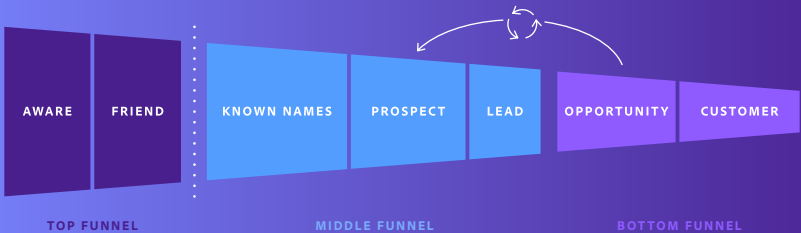
Sales Lead: If the sales qualification team determines leads are sales-ready, they are passed on to an account executive. The account executive has a week to turn the lead into an opportunity or send it back to marketing for more nurturing.

Bottom Funnel

Once sales leads have reached this stage, they are close to becoming customers. This section is further divided as follows:

Opportunity: Leads in this stage are sales-accepted and actively being worked on by the sales department.

Customer: Finally, a sales lead becomes a customer when the deal is closed.



STEP 3:

Build a *collaborative environment*.

Commission structures and department collaboration can be instrumental to success.

Introducing a commission structure into your marketing department and hosting joint activities for both sales and marketing departments builds familiarity and boosts unity.

Joint Activities

Marketers often feel disconnected from what sales reps do. Incorporating the marketing team into regular sales activities can be an important part of engaging them in the whole sales process.

Being present for forecast calls will make marketers feel accountable for the same goals as the sales team. Working more closely with the sales team allows marketers to see how the work they do at the top of the funnel supports and contributes to the success of the sales team.

Commission Structure

One way to achieve a common view of the sales funnel is to structure compensation in a similar way for both sales and marketing. Instituting

a commission structure for marketing could motivate marketers to be more accountable ensuring every lead they pass on to sales is connected to their bottom line.

This structure builds trust between the two departments because both teams have a greater stake in improving sales cycle performance. Marketers gain a better understanding of the impact of lead quality, and sales teams now understand the need to follow up quickly.

STEP 4:

Reformat *lead scoring.*

Lead scoring—a method of ranking leads for their sales readiness—is essential to ensuring that your organization is aligned.

Scoring leads based on their interest in the business, their current place in the buying cycle, and their demographic fit ensures that sales reps are talking to the right people at the right time. Your marketing and sales teams should get together to determine score thresholds for when a lead should be sent to sales.

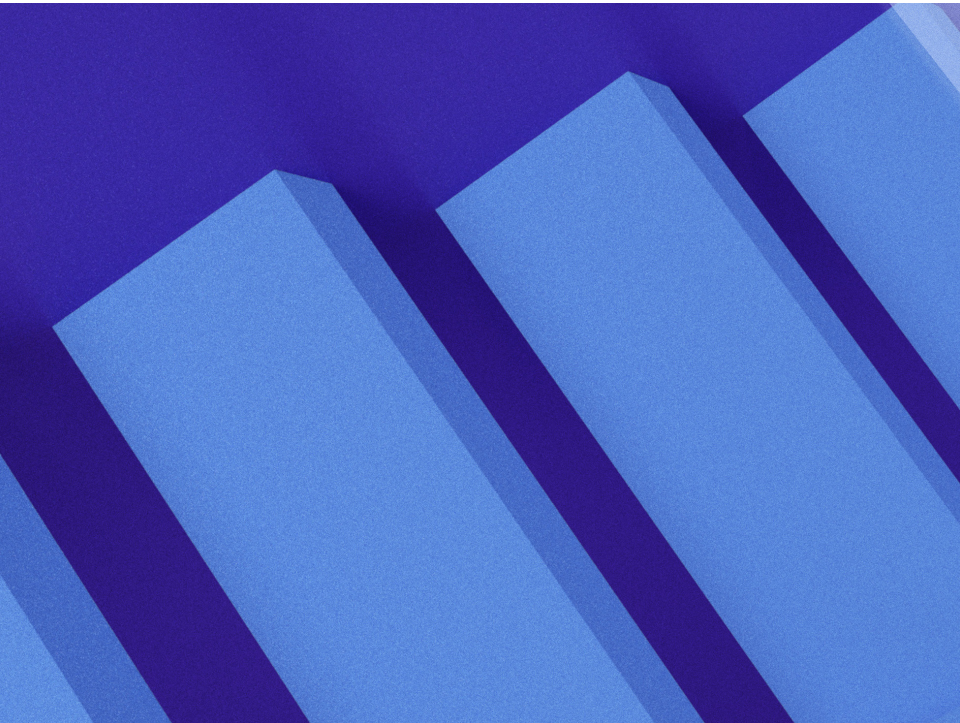
Lead Fit

Determining lead fit, or explicit lead scoring, is based on observable or directly shared information, often collected via an online form. Demographics and firmographics define how well the prospect fits into an ideal buyer profile. Leads can also be scored using BANT criteria.

Lead Interest

Scoring lead interest, often called implicit lead scoring, is done by tracking a prospect's behavior or their online body language to measure their level of interest in your product or solution.

For instance, a lead that downloads a simple white paper has shown engagement with your brand, while a lead who downloads a pricing sheet shows buyer intent. The lead who downloaded the pricing sheet would receive a higher score.



STEP 5:

Define *organizational structure.*

Account for every step in the customer journey by defining roles in both marketing and sales. This move leads through the pipeline faster and with more success.

Marketing Roles

Consider structuring your marketing teams in the following ways.

Demand Generation: This team supports revenue goals by generating more qualified leads to pass on to the sales team. This group focuses on many things, including full-funnel marketing programs, lead nurturing, and analytics.

Product Marketing: Product marketers focus on positioning the product or service in a way that is unique within the industry. This role supports sales enablement through content creation, understanding the sales process, and product and data sheet creation.

Customer Marketing: This role supports sales through customer advocacy, testimonials, and references. Happy, engaged customers not only lead to greater revenue—they also lead to greater trust from new prospects.

In fact, according to Nielsen, 92 percent of consumers trust recommendations from friends and family more than advertising. So customer advocacy plays a key role in gaining trust from new prospects.

Content Marketing: Content is an increasingly vital part of marketing as the buyer's journey becomes more digitally oriented. This team creates valuable and educational content to help out sales reps during the sales cycle, and provides materials for lead generation and nurturing.

Marketing Operations: This role reinforces marketing strategy with metrics, processes, infrastructure, and best practices. It's often responsible for deploying the software required to run programs and measure results.



92% of consumers trust recommendations from friends and family more than advertising.

Source: Nielsen

Sales Roles

Consider structuring your sales roles in the following ways.

Sales Development Representatives: The focus of this role is to review, contact, and qualify leads passed down from marketing. Sales development representatives work closely with marketing to bridge the gap between sales and marketing.

Including sales development representatives can further help you streamline the sales qualification process and ensure the best results in the handover from marketing to sales. Sales development representatives get in touch with MQLs to determine whether these contacts are ready to talk to an account executive.

The sole focus of this position is to follow up with leads and overcome objections. As a result, companies with sales development representatives convert 80 percent more leads than companies without this role defined.

Account Executives: Account executives exist to close sales. In the end, it's more cost effective for top sales representatives to talk to the most qualified leads. The best closer shouldn't be wasting their time on leads that have no possibility of converting. Instead, they should work on leads that have been qualified by sales development representatives.



Marketing



Sales Development
Representatives



Account Executives

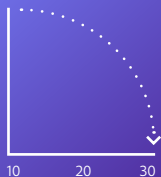
STEP 6:

Create *internal service-level agreements (SLAs).*

Implementing SLAs between marketing and sales departments streamlines processes and creates accountability.

SLA's originated as part of a service contract to formally define specific aspects of the specified service, such as scope and time. We've adapted SLAs within our own business to make our marketing-to-sales pipeline more effective. SLAs contribute to another critical part of sales and marketing alignment: making sure no qualified lead is left behind.

Waiting too long before following up with a lead can create a dead end. According to a study from InsideSales, the odds of making contact with a lead increases greatly the quicker one responds. Response times should ideally be no longer than five minutes. In fact, there's a 900 percent difference in contact rates when contacting a lead in five minutes compared to ten minutes after a lead completes a web form.

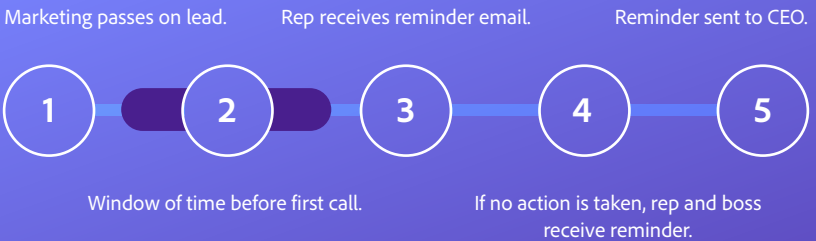


Within the first half hour, the chances of reaching a lead drop 100 times.

SLAs prioritize and assign a timestamp to leads. When our marketing team passes a lead to sales, sales has a certain window of time before making the first call. After a given amount of time, reps receive a reminder email. If there's still no action, the rep and their boss receive the reminder, which is quickly followed by a message to the CEO. The system keeps sales reps accountable for the leads that pass through the pipeline, ensuring that no lead is forgotten.

Once sales reps have reached out to leads, they have seven days to qualify the lead. This gives the sales team three choices: turn the lead into an opportunity, defer the lead, or push it back to marketing.

Marketing and Sales SLA Process



Marketo Engage can help.

Many companies still struggle to find a strategy that will keep their marketing and sales departments in sync. Both teams waste valuable time on leads that will never convert—and often, qualified leads get lost in the confusion.

Marketo Engage, part of Adobe Experience Cloud, is the leader in aligning marketing and sales departments. By helping you align your teams, you can streamline the sales process from lead generation to conversion and increase revenue at a greater pace. As a result, both teams are able to spend more time on processes that truly contribute to your bottom line.

[Learn more](#)

Sources

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