

## Trending with ...

Sales thought leader Ray Makela on winning the sales & marketing relationship

**R**ay Makela knows sales. With more than 20 years of management, consulting and sales experience, the managing director of the Sales Readiness Group (SRG) has an up-close-and-personal look at how the process works from all sides. Today, Makela is an industry thought leader who frequently writes on best practices for coaching and developing sales teams. As SRG's sales leader, he serves as a senior facilitator on sales management, coaching, negotiation and sales training workshops. Here are his thoughts on how to keep your sales and marketing teams on top of their games.

### What is the new mantra for today's sales process?

It's really all about the customer today. Because so much of the buyers' journeys have been completed before you talk to a salesperson, you must work harder to connect with your customers, understand their unique needs, differentiate yourself and position your solutions as the best option. That means doing a better job of pre-call research, asking relevant questions, offering content and insights relevant to your customers and, ultimately, giving them a reason to move forward in the relationship.

### What is the best way to motivate your sales team?

Sales professionals are motivated by different things – what motivates one person may not be valuable to another. Some are motivated by doing a great job, while others thrive on recognition. Some love being part of a great team, while others value autonomy. The key is to understand the motivators for each member of your team, and then tailor your communications and feedback accordingly.

### How is the relationship between sales and marketing today?

I love that they are becoming better aligned. I'm a big fan of the new "Smarketing" movement. This suggests that marketing and sales are collaborating and analyzing the customer together. We've all heard the complaints that sales doesn't follow up on the leads that marketing gives, and that marketing provides bad or dead leads. Working together helps



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remove some of the finger pointing. There should only be one view of what good customers look like – and that should be from the company perspective.

### What is the best way to fortify this relationship?

There are a couple of ways. They can collaborate on the content provided through video, blogs, white papers, etc. Because sales is becoming more engaged in the content marketing aspect of the buyers' journey, they must understand what content is available and

where it comes into play during the sales cycle. You can't just send links to generic resources. At the end of the day, the sales rep who adds insights and engages more with the customer will typically win the deal.

Another way is by leveraging the technology that allows both groups to see the same view of the customer. Sales should see how the lead was scored and what their interactions were like before they became a Sales Qualified Lead (SQL). And marketing should understand which leads are converting to actual proposals and customers, so that they can validate their assumptions and improve the marketing engine. The days of "dumping" leads into the funnel and letting sales figure out what to do with them is over. It's about having a common view of the customers' journeys at each stage.

### What are the biggest takeaways for which every marketing/sales team should strive?

There are no magic bullets here, but sales and marketing can work much more closely and effectively together if they understand the opportunity and make it a priority.

First, they must engage in open communication and collaboration through recurring meetings to discuss what's working, what needs to be improved and how they can work better to achieve the organizational objectives.

Next, they should share customer feedback. Both parties should keep a close ear out for the voice of the customer. By listening to the customer and working together, you will get to the right answer.

Finally, they must strive for continuous improvement. Today's customers are changing. The sales process is becoming more complex, and new technology and tools threaten to disrupt our industry at every turn. Successful organizations will be those that are nimble enough to listen, adapt and continuously evolve as the environment changes. Doing otherwise will ensure a slow, painful slip into irrelevance. ■