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**86% agree –
The growth in
IT spending is
coming from the
business buying
IT, not IT staff
buying IT.**

Source: AIIM



How to Accelerate your Solutions Sales

New best practices for demand generation in an era of cloud, mobile, and consumerization

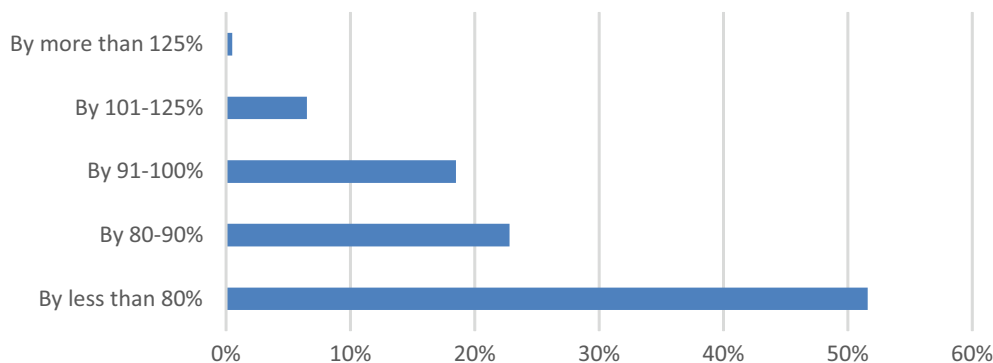
We are seeing a massive change in how organizations identify, procure, and implement solutions. Cloud computing has made it a lot easier to adopt new technology, and the business leaders are now taking over the IT buying decisions. They buy solutions to address a business problem or opportunity, not as enterprise infrastructure. The adoption model is changing from plan-design-implement to try-buy-scale. This is impacting how solutions are marketed, sold, and implemented.

This e-book summarizes research among 185 IT solution providers – most of them sell solutions to better capture, process, or manage business information. The research was done using an online survey the last two months of 2016, and 47% of the respondents were management, 27% sales, 17% marketing, 5% services, 2% support, and 3% others (IT, Finance, HR, etc.).

Time for Change

Many solution providers struggle adapting their sales and marketing to the brave new world of cloud, mobile, and consumerization of Enterprise IT. Only 7% report that they are meeting their sales targets. Seventy-four percent of respondents are only meeting 90% or less of their sales targets.

How well is your company meeting its sales goals for solutions?



We will in the rest of the report explain how top vs poor performing companies are marketing and selling solutions.



60% of the buyer's journey completed before anyone talks to a rep

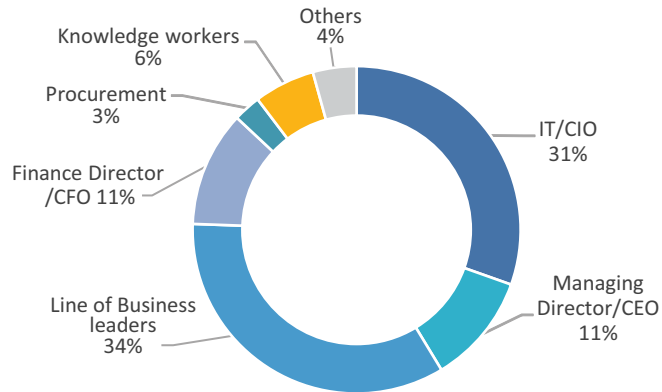
Source: CEB



Target Business Leaders, not IT

Thirty-four percent of the respondents target LOB (line of business) decision-makers for selling new solutions. 11% target Managing Director/CEO, and 11% target Finance Director/CFO. Thirty-one percent target IT/CIO.

Who do you target for selling solutions?

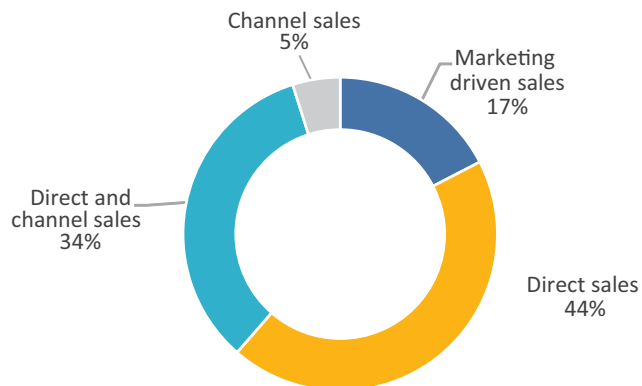


The top performing companies target Managing Director/CEO (23%) and Line of Business Leaders (23%). Only 15% of them target IT/CIO, while 33% percent of poor performing companies target IT/CIO. Focus on the business leaders, Managing Director/CEO, and/or Finance Director/CFO to grow your solution business.

Improve Your Inbound Marketing and Nurturing

The internet gives buyers access to an unlimited amount of information, and research has found that the average buyer now gathers 60-70% of the information they need to make a buying decision before engaging possible suppliers. However, many solution providers still rely heavily on sales to generate new business, not marketing.

What is your company's primary sales strategy for generating your business?



68% of B2B organizations have not identified their funnel.

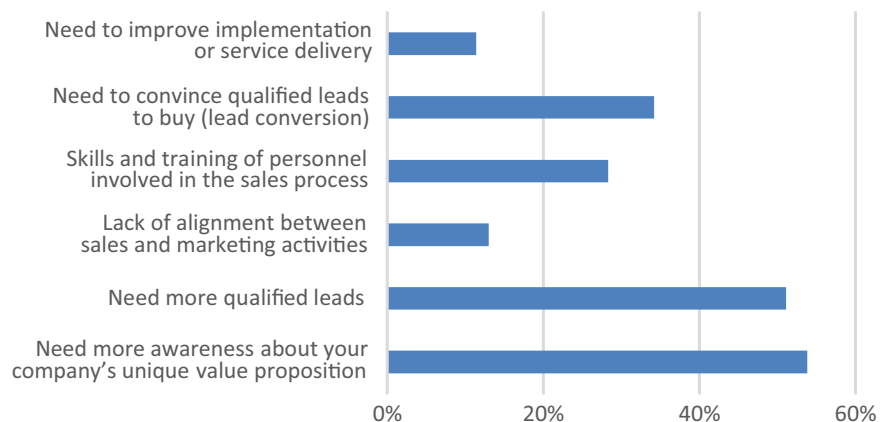
Source:
MarketingSherpa



The best performing companies rely more on marketing and channel sales to drive new business. Marketing-driven sales is 23% for the best performing companies, 15% for poor. Channel sales is 15% for the best performing companies, 4% for poor.

Both poor and top performing companies report that the same challenges are preventing their companies from selling more solutions. They need more awareness about their offerings and more qualified leads. Marketing needs to create more awareness and demand for their offerings to capture the interest of potential buyers, answer their questions and nurture them through the discovery process and then hand qualified leads over to sales at the time the potential buyer is ready to engage directly with an account manager. The key to good sales is good marketing.

What internal challenges are preventing your company from selling more solutions? Select the two most relevant.



Sixty percent of top performing companies claim that their marketing and sales efforts are well-aligned, while only 38% of the poor performing companies claim the same. Fifty percent of well performing companies do a good job at inbound marketing, while only 16% of the poor performing companies claim the same.

Successful Companies Have a Mix of Top-Down and Bottom-Up Sales

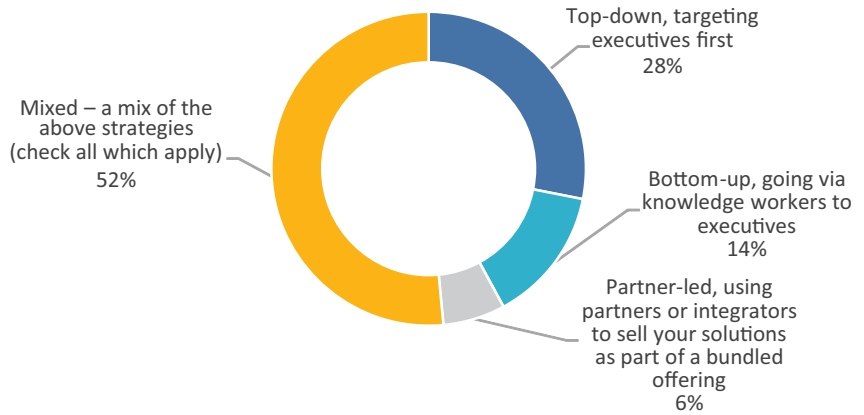
The consumer world is moving from brick-to-click to click-to-brick. The buyer journey starts with a Google-search, social media post, or something similar to identify the possible suppliers. B2B software and services used to be sold top-down (e.g SAP), while new cloud and mobile solutions are often sold bottom-up (e.g. DropBox). Fifty-two percent of companies use a mix of top-down, bottom-up and partner-led sales to get new customers.

If you work with your organization's information or collaboration resources and technologies, you'll surely find AIIM a treasure trove of resources.

Source:
 Andrew McAfee,
 Professor and
 author, *Enterprise
 2.0 and Race
 Against the Machine*



What is your entry point when targeting new customers?

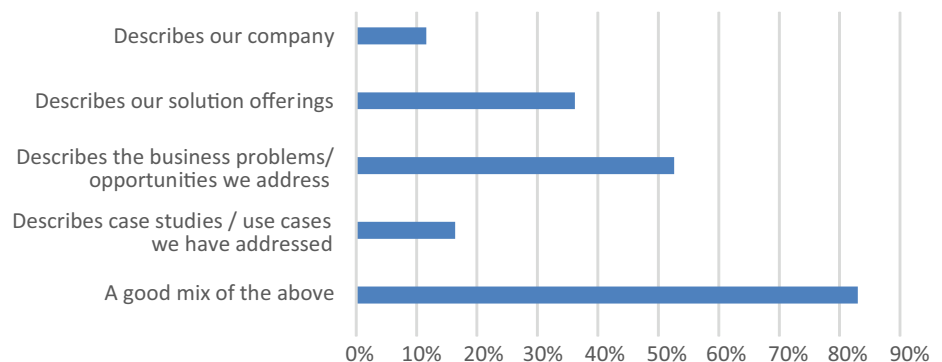


The top performing companies place even more focus on having a good mix of the above go-to-market strategies. This is 82% for top performing companies, 47% for poor. Poor performing companies still rely more on the classic top-down sales. This is 31% for poor performing companies, 9% for top performing companies.

Ensure Your Content Matches the Buyer Journey

Forty-one percent of the survey respondents claim that their marketing collateral is a good mix of business problems, case studies, and offerings.

What best describes (all or most of) your marketing collateral?



Seventy-three percent of the top performing companies claim do a good mix of the above, while only 39% of the poor performing companies claim the same.

Companies that excel at lead nurturing generate 50% more sales ready leads at 33% lower cost.

Source:
Forrester Research



Solution providers need more educational content to improve their inbound marketing and demand generation. Start blogging and develop educational infographics, checklists, videos, and executive summaries to improve the awareness around your offerings. Provide research reports, ebooks, webinars, case studies, and whitepapers to educate and nurture future buyers.



AWARENESS

Buyer: "I've identified a business pain, though I'm not sure how to define it."

Content objective: Help them describe their symptoms and name the problem.

We recommend: Blogs | Infographics | Checklists | Videos | Executive Summaries



CONSIDERATION

Buyer: "I'm not the only one. Okay - what do others do to solve this?"

Content objective: Help them research all the available methods and approaches to solving the problem.

We recommend: Research reports | eBooks | Webinars | Case Studies | White papers



DECISION

Buyer: "Which vendor(s) speak my language? I need to move toward a purchase."

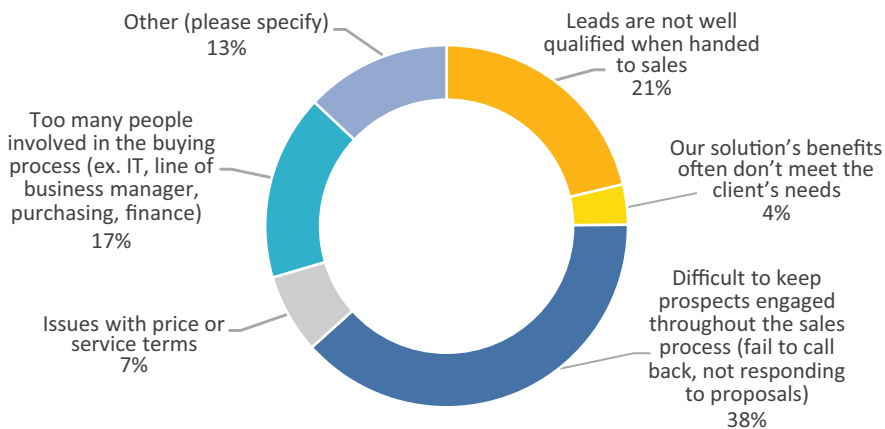
Content objective: Help them understand the look and feel of solutions, find benchmarking data and customer endorsements.

We recommend: Conferences | Regional Events | Webinars | Demos | Analyst Reports

Nurture Leads to Get New Buyers

The top-3 sales pipeline challenges are to keep prospects engaged throughout the sales process (38%), Leads are not well qualified when handed to sales (21%), and too many people involved in the buying process (17%).

What is your biggest sales pipeline challenge?



A big problem for poor performing companies are that leads are not well qualified when handed to sales. This is reported by 26% of the poor performing companies, while none of the top performing companies report

Companies with **STRONG SALES & MARKETING ALIGNMENT** achieve 20% annual growth rate compared to a 4% **DECLINE IN ANNUAL REVENUE** for companies with poor alignment

Source:
HubSpot



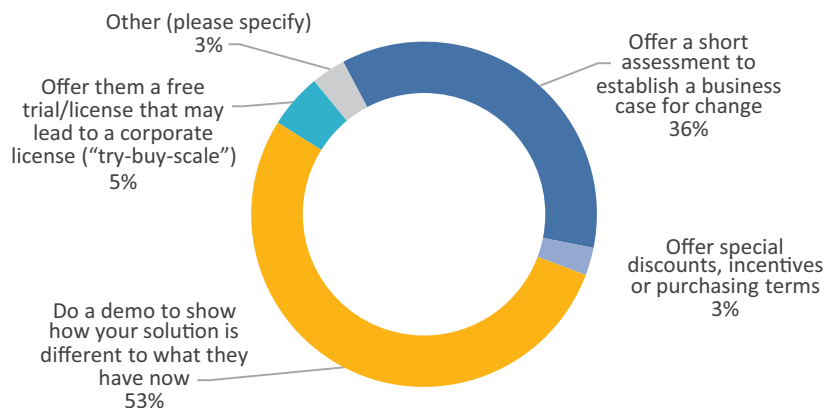
this as a problem. The top challenge for well performing companies is to keep prospects engaged throughout the sales process. This is 46% for top performing companies, 39% for poor performing companies.

Research has found that 1 of 4 leads are often ready to buy. Marketing should therefore nurture the remaining leads with content assets before sales try to re-engage them.

Match Your Sales Approach to the Buyer Persona

The research identified two clear strategies to get buyers to buy a solution. Fifty-three percent do a demo to show how their solution is different from what the customer has now. Thirty-six percent of the respondents offer a short assessment to establish a business case for change.

How do you get customers to buy your solution?
Select the most important one.



The best approach depends on the customer persona. Customers without a current solution will benefit from an assessment to establish a solid business case for change. Customers with a current solution will benefit from a demonstration of how the new solution is a lot simpler and smarter.

Measure the Right Things

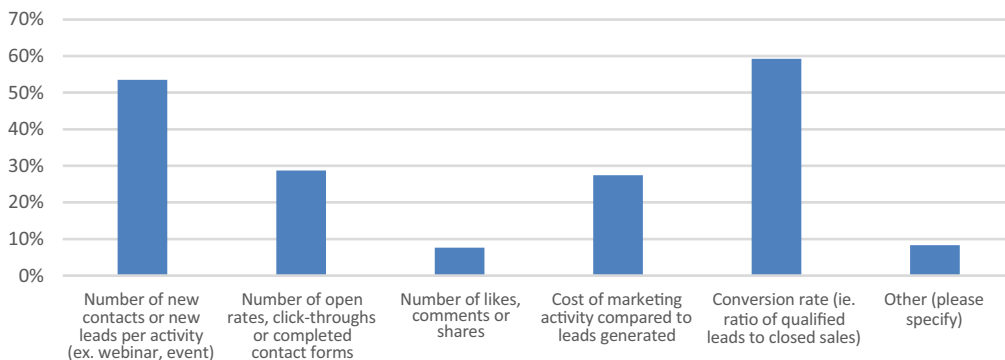
Companies that exceed their sales targets are good at using metrics to manage their lead generation. Fifty percent of top performing companies claim to be good at using metrics for their lead generation, while only 18% of the poor performing companies claim the same.

The top marketing measures are number of new contacts or leads per activity (53%) and conversion rate (59%). All customers are now on social media, but only 8% measure number of likes, comments, and social sharing.

The top measures for top performing companies are number of new contacts or leads per activity (40%) and conversion rate (60%).



How do you measure success of your marketing activities? Select all that apply.



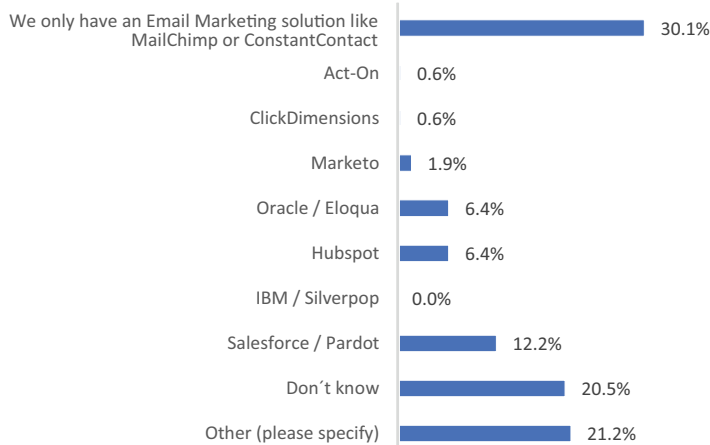
Marketing metrics which rely primarily on opens, clicks, and likes are “old-school” and not very useful for lead nurturing. Marketing metrics which track behavior over a course of time (ie. Lead scoring) and prospects’ reactions and actions (ie. “share”, “comment”) are most useful to identify, filter and nurture your highest potential customers.

Focus 80% on People, 15% on Processes, and 5% on IT

Eighty-three percent of the survey respondents have a CRM solution, the rest rely on Excel spreadsheets and reports to manage the sales pipeline. The leading CRM solutions are Salesforce (27%), Microsoft Dynamics (17%), and SugarCRM (5%).

Marketing Automation has become an important tool for many solution and service providers. Email marketing solutions help you with outbound marketing, while a good marketing automation platform manages both your inbound and outbound marketing to generate more and better leads.

Which Marketing Automation platform do you use for inbound marketing, lead nurturing, etc?



About AIIM



AIIM is a non-profit association for information management. When you take advantage of our market research, expert advice, and skills development programs, you tap into the collective wisdom of a thriving community of folks, like you, who care about information-driven innovation.

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There is no difference in the adoption of CRM or Marketing Automation between top and poor performing companies. Success comes from having the right strategy, processes and metrics, not from just having the right CRM or Marketing Automation solution. It's about people and processes, not IT.

Get AIIM's "Get-Fit" Accelerator for Solutions Sales



AIIM has researched how to accelerate demand generation and solution sales from our 193,000 community members and 250+ solution providers. We decided to lead by example and adopt new best practices for inbound and content marketing. The results:

-  **4.8X increase in leads within 12 months**
-  **74% conversion rate of primary content offer**
-  **87% increase in customers within 12 months**

Now AIIM is leveraging this research and insight by providing a "get-fit" assessment to optimize your demand generation and solution sales. Press link for more details:

<https://myaiim.box.com/s/69duovwj4s8vj54320o4mxasik1a382o>



About the author

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Atle Skjekkeland is a Senior Vice President at AIIM – the Association for Information and Image Management. He is a technologist, educator, and innovator. His interest in the future of information management with social, mobile, cloud, and big data has made him a frequent keynoter and workshop facilitator at events across the world. Atle is also the architect behind AIIM's training programs with close to 30,000 students. He has a Master of Science degree from Norwegian School of Economics, and he has just returned to Europe after 9 years in the US.