GETTING SALES TO ACTIVELY SHARE YOUR CONTENT

Marketing teams spend a lot of time creating content and creating tools that we think will speak to our buyers, but too often that content goes unused and promotions are never done completely. In fact, as much as 90% of the content that marketing teams create can go unused by the sales department and that is the exact content that the marketing team created for the sales team to use.

This establishes a tiring cycle that wastes both time and resources. One of the causes of this problem is that the sales team isn't involved in the content creation process. Due to that, the content isn't speaking to the customer's (should be sales person's) needs and there isn't a clear understanding of the content being created and the clear connection between the sales team's needs and the buyer's needs.

Creating a close relationship between the marketing and sales departments is essential. You must find common definitions of the objectives and goals or it's going to be really difficult to get sales on board to use the content that your are creating.

You have taken the time to define your target audience, what they care about, where they are, what influences them and how they are most easily engaged. You have created copy to reflect your results. Now, it's time to share your content and you need your sales team's help, but how?!

This guide will help you understand how to get your salesforce onboard and excited about sharing content.

1. Seek To Understand

Sales and marketing are two very different departments. Yes, both are working towards the same goal, but they way they arrive at that goal are very different. As the marketer, it's your job to teach the sales team your goals with content marketing. The importance of content marketing helps teach your sales team to share content.

Quantify what success looks like for you. Start by figuring out how many deals you need to close and how many qualified leads you need to be passing on to the sales department. It's best to know this number upfront so that you and the sales team can fill in the gap and adjust your efforts accordingly.

Next, you will want to create a clear customer profile. Take the time to fully understand who your customers are and what they care about. You need to understand the buyer's journey and the steps they are taking during that journey. If you don't understand what they are going through, you will find it very difficult to effectively communicate with them. Further, you will have a hard time creating content that maps the different stages of the buying cycle and it will be more difficult for you to relate to the buyer.

Also, make sure that you map out the sales and buying process. You want to help your buyers discover the cause of the problem they did (or didn't) know they had, by subtly pointing out the cause of the problem to the buyer, you are also pushing them towards the solution-your product/service.

Keep in mind that the majority of sales collateral focuses 90-95% on the product, and doesn't do anything to connect to the buyer. You need to create content that offers solutions and connects the buyer. Make sure that your sales process follows the natural buying progression, because you don't what a sales process that pushes people in a direction, pace or velocity that is different than what they are interested in. If you do that, you may create an artificial friction in the conversation and the relationship between you and the buyer.

Finally, talk to sales. Ask them what information their prospects are looking for. Sit in on sales calls at different stages of the buying process. Your sales team is much more likely to use content that is helps them address prospects needs.

2. Sell Sales

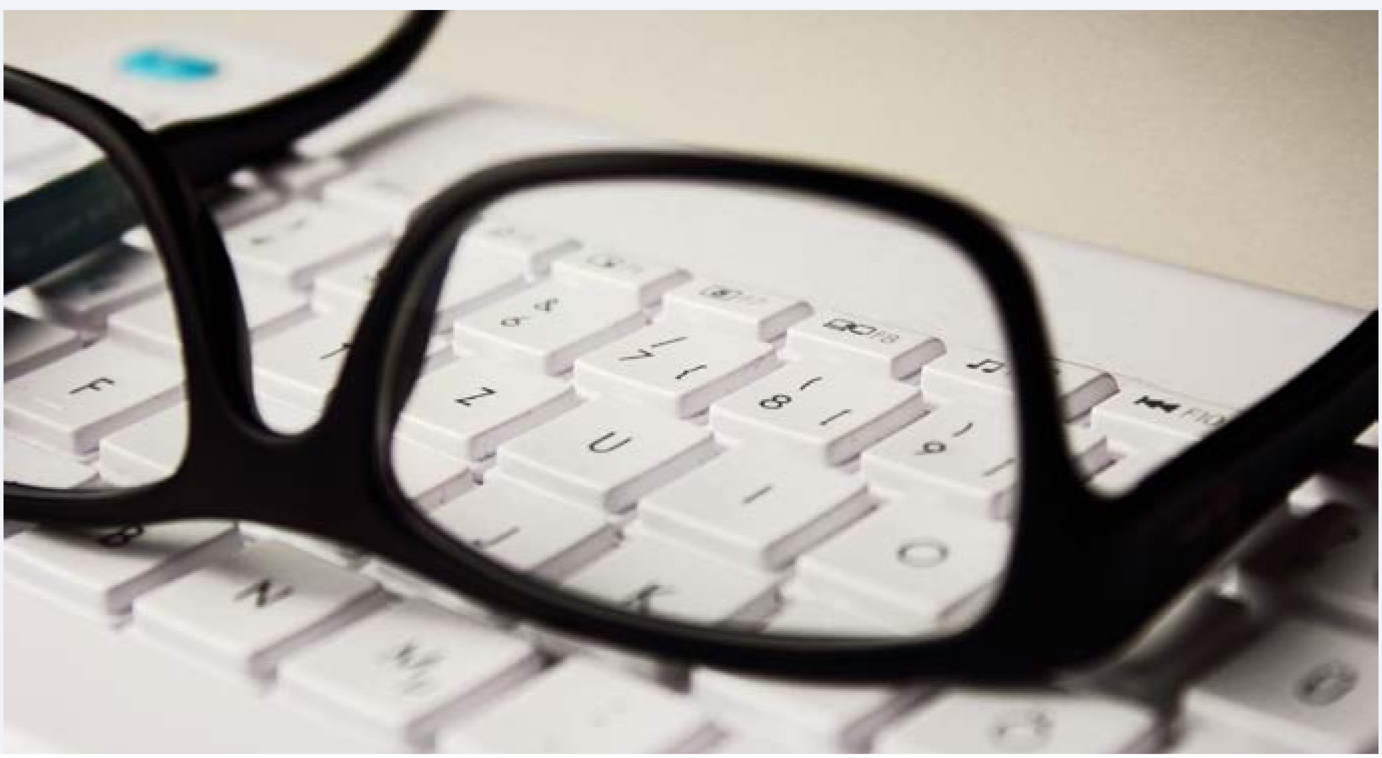
You can create the amazing content that addresses prospects every pain point and spoon feed it to sales all you want. None of that will matter if you don't have buy-in from your sales leadership. Luckily data is on your side. At this point many sales teams are succeeding at leveraging content to attract new prospects and advance current deals. Information and stats are readily available. Before you just throw stats at them, take the information you've learned from sitting in on sales calls and interviewing reps and apply it to the case you make. What are they having trouble with? Speak to THEIR pain points. Tell them what's in it for them and how they can directly benefit. In essence, sell your sales team on content sharing.

3. Develop a System

It's important to have a system in place that clearly shows sales what their role is in content sharing. They need to understand why it's important and what impact it can have on sales. Your system should include a way for your salespeople to find out when new content is available and what they are supposed to do with it. You can use a social media amplification tool (such as GaggleAMP) or an ad-hoc pieced together solution of your own, the specifics of your systems don't matter, you just need to have one in place.

On top of content delivery, you need to have a mechanism for content submission. The best way to learn what content sales likes is to have them submit content to you. Through this you'll learn exactly what they are willing to share and the style they prefer. It will also help your sales force feel like they are more involved in the process and foster more engagement.

Eventually, you can even get to the point where you have a few guest bloggers within the sales department lending their expertise and helping you create content. This is a big win-win. Sales helps you do your job and they get the exact content they are looking for.



4. Training

It is critical that you effectively train your team to properly use your system. Don't just set it up and walk away. Make yourself available to answer any questions that they have about content sharing in general or any questions they have about what actions they need to take. Show that you are invested in helping them and they will invest in sharing content.

Conduct on-boarding sessions to help get them started. Many sales teams have weekly, or at minimum, monthly team meetings. These are perfect for introducing your program. Connect with your sales director and set aside time during one of these meetings to do a hands on training session to get your salesforce started. Work with them to make sure they are ready to act as representatives of your brand by enhancing and optimizing their social profiles.

5. Launch

One reason many marketers fail in their content marketing with their sales team is that they deploy the efforts too early. Coordinate a launch date for your system AFTER the teaching and training stages are complete. Be sure that all the questions have been asked and answered and that everyone is onboard and ready to dive in full-force.

6. Reinforce

Constantly reinforce your efforts and remain in contact with your sales team. Keep in mind that it is going to take time to see an impact, and people on the team may get discouraged if they don't see results immediately. They will be tempted to revert back to old habits. Don't let that happen. Instead, reinforce your plan as a reminder of the path they are taking and where that path will lead them.

Testing is part of success, make sure you build it in to your expectations. You are going to try a lot of things, and a lot of them are going to fail. You need to work together, the marketing and sales departments, to understand that even when actions are based on good intentions or sound research, things will fail. Develop a strong relationship between the sales and marketing teams and plan on testing a lot of different things, then learn from the tests and move on.

"I've seen lots of sales collateral and the focus is 90-95% on the product and doesn't do anything to connect to the people. The best marketing in the world focuses on people and problems. If you can connect with someone based on what they care about, based on what their needs, and objectives, are, then, you're getting somewhere." – **Matt Heinz**

7. Measure & Celebrate

Establish a baseline on your social media influence. Once your content marketing is underway, you measure the lift and see if there has been a shift. Keep in mind, that every company will measure success in a different way, so establish the right way of measuring for your departments, your team and individuals. It's also a good idea to measure the before and after satisfaction levels of your customers to find out if they feel as though they are getting better customer service through your efforts.

It is essential that you share success stories with your team, even if it's just one salesperson's success. Recognition is a huge motivator and by recognizing that one salesperson had success with the system you will help motivate others to get on board as well.

Try to limit the library of content that you have and find a way to measure the usage of that content. If your marketing team is constantly investing time in creating content that's not being used (and it's likely that 90% of the content you create won't be fully utilized)

then content creation is going to be a phenomenal waste of your department's time and money. The key is measuring the actual usage of the content, and then increased the usage of your content and leveraging it to drive the sales velocity.

"Most marketing organizations are spending a tremendous amount of time and resources, putting together really great content - yet they stop on amplifying that content to help get an audience to actually consume that content." – **Glenn Gaudet**

"Know who you are trying to sell to, but also understand who you are selling through." – **Matt Heinz**

Conclusion

Involving sales in your content marketing strategy is more than just distributing posting to social media, there needs to be a deeper interaction and integration between your sales and marketing teams. Make sure that the two departments have the same goals. Don't focus on sales, since you really can't control that, instead focus on the buying process and your target audience. How are your customers going to purchase? What exactly do they care about? Both B2Cs and B2Bs deal directly with people writing checks and making decisions. Focus on creating content that appeals to and will resonate not only with your target but with your sales team. The more your content addresses their needs and their phraseology, the more credibility your marketing efforts will have and better success you will see through your sales.

The best marketing in the world focuses on people and problems. When you connect with someone based on what they care about, their needs and their objectives, then you are getting somewhere.