



LOADING: NEW MINDSET

Dear CEO: Selling is not marketing.

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I had an introductory meeting recently with a prospective client. I asked about their current marketing efforts and what they were doing that was delivering the best results. The prospect started talking about how they had updated their sales presentation and were having some great Zoom meetings. I responded positively but asked again about how well their marketing plan was supporting their sales activity. After what seemed like an hour-long pause, the prospect replied, “Our marketing plan is our sales plan!”

This story is not all that uncommon. As the CEO of a marketing communications firm, I often find myself explaining that selling is not marketing, and marketing is not selling. Quite often, these two concepts are used interchangeably. And while they are not the same, they are two business functions within an organization that have a direct impact on lead generation and revenue growth.

What marketing does.

Marketing informs potential customers and attracts them to the business, or at the very least, makes them aware of the products or services being offered.

Selling, on the other hand, refers to the various activities that convince the customer to purchase products or services. A more simplistic way to think about it is this: marketing seeks to draw the customer towards the business while selling pursues or reaches out to the customer. One reaches out to the consumer and the other asks the consumer to reach out to the business. Inbound versus outbound.

**“Our marketing plan
IS our sales plan!”**

Once there is a clear understanding of the difference between each function, the next challenge is to demonstrate how

important the marketing function is to the selling process. In most basic terms, if selling is X, then selling combined with effective marketing is X+1 (or 2, or 3+). Sales and selling are fundamental to the growth of the business. Certainly, all business leaders and managers agree with that. But how many of those same leaders and managers view marketing as a “cost” as opposed to an “investment” and consider it an expendable line item in the financial statement that can be quickly eliminated? In fact, quite the opposite is true. If the economic conditions worsen, companies should invest more in their marketing program. And if sales goals are suffering, maybe that is an indication that the sales process needs improvement.

Marketing ROI can be determined if the plan is structured with measurement in mind.

What marketing can do.

Strategic marketing plans, when properly developed and executed, contribute significantly to the effectiveness of the company's sales team:

- **Deliver more sales leads, not only in quantity but those that are more predisposed to the product or service being offered.**
- **Differentiate your offering in the marketplace so that you stand out among the competition.**
- **Find more qualified leads in terms of how close they are to making a purchase.**
- **Deliver a consistent message to the market and eliminate confusion about the offering(s).**
- **Enhance the perception of the quality of the product or service.**
- **Increase demand for the product or service through emotional appeal, memorability, solving a problem and an effective call to action.**

Measuring Marketing ROI

The final and equally important factor that brings these two distinct yet linked functions together is how they can and should be measured in terms of effectiveness. Sales is rather easy to measure as far as results. How many new sales were made in the period? How many new customers were acquired? Those metrics are recorded and reviewed by nearly every organization in every industry. But what about marketing? How do you evaluate the return on your marketing program?

For specific marketing campaigns, detailed tracking mechanisms are typically built into the campaign. For more generic marketing tactics, surveys and research studies can provide feedback on marketing results. Asking consumers about their perceptions and awareness of particular offerings or brands prior to executing a marketing strategy (and again during/after) can provide for useful feedback on the firm's marketing efforts.

While it may be more challenging to measure the ROI on the marketing function, if the plan is structured properly at the onset with measurement in mind, both selling and marketing functions can be assessed for effectiveness and required ROI.

The Destination

Marketing requires a view to the long-term and a commitment to pursue all parts of the plan over a period of time. Whether it's selling or marketing, the emphasis is on influencing the potential buyer to move from awareness, to interest, to desire and then action. When the two functions are properly aligned, that journey not only takes less time but there will be many more people who want to make that journey.