



skout

THE BIG DIVIDE

HOW TO SOLVE THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN SALES AND MARKETING – AND WHY IT'S WORTH YOUR WHILE

New research reveals the depth of the disconnect between sales and marketing teams. It's robbing UK companies of revenues and opportunity. Yet several sure-fire-fixes are available – all of which are relatively low cost.

Nowhere else in the world of business should two functions be so closely aligned as sales and marketing. They are interdependent. One cannot succeed without the other. Yet, for all the shared responsibility, the relationship is often fractious.

All too often, sales teams complain that marketing is not generating enough quality content or leads. And marketing teams grumble that sales is unrealistic in its expectations and squandering the hard-won opportunities passed its way.

NEW-FOUND URGENCY TO AN AGE-OLD ISSUE

The disconnect probably dates as far back in history as business itself. But, in recent years it has become more apparent – and has a bigger impact on business success.

That's because the buyer journey has become so complex. According to Forrester, 70-90% of this journey is complete before the buyer even engages with a salesperson. And, before they make their purchasing decision, they will typically engage with more than 11 pieces of marketing content.

As a result, sales teams lean more heavily than ever before on their marketing colleagues to produce content that attracts attention, tells a story, communicates value, and nudges the lead down the funnel – from being a prospect to becoming a paying customer.

THREE REASONS WHY SALES AND MARKETING NEED TO BE MORE CLOSELY ALIGNED THAN EVER BEFORE



A SILENT REVENUE KILLER WITH A DEEP BUSINESS IMPACT

The disconnect between sales and marketing is not simply a source of exasperation for the people in the respective teams. It has a direct impact on overall business performance – which is why it has been called the silent revenue killer.

Research suggests that, with increased alignment comes increased revenue growth, higher conversion rates, improved customer retention, and faster profit growth.

That is because, when the two functions work together, goals can be better aligned, prospects can be better targeted, messages can be better framed, content can be better crafted, objections can be better countered, and leads can be better qualified.

BUSINESSES WITH TIGHTLY ALIGNED SALES AND MARKETING TEAMS ENJOY SIGNIFICANT BOTTOM-LINE BENEFITS

- ✔ **Aligned companies achieve an average of 32% annual revenue growth – while less aligned companies report an average 7% decline in revenue.**
Forrester
- ✔ **Companies with tightly-aligned sales and marketing had 36% higher customer retention rates and achieved 38% higher sales win rates.**
MarketingProfs
- ✔ **Companies with tightly-aligned sales and marketing achieved 24% faster growth and 27% faster profit growth over three years.**
Sirius Decisions

A PREVALENT ISSUE FOR UK PLC – WITH A WILLINGNESS ON BOTH SIDES TO CLOSE THE GAP



The depth and breadth of the divide varies by company. But the fault lines are almost always there (with the potential to open up). And research commissioned by Skout reveals the prevalence of the issue within UK marketing professionals.

Only 40% of the 100 senior B2B marketing professionals surveyed, have managed to align their marketing plans with the company's sales strategy and targets. And even less, 27%, claim to have done so successfully. Also, content marketing strategies often fail to excite sales teams. 56% of marketers surveyed believe that sales don't value the content they create at all, suggesting this content is often not used to help nurture and close deals.

But, at the same time, there's a real openness to change. Some 40% of B2B marketing professionals agree that alignment is important – suggesting a latent opportunity for more businesses to boost their performance.

ACROSS THE GREAT DIVIDE – THE POTENTIAL FOR SALES AND MARKETING TEAMS TO SOLVE THE DISCONNECT

40%

of businesses agree that aligning sales & marketing is important

BUT...

73%

have not succeeded in aligning their sales and marketing

28%

say that sales wants them to produce more content

BUT...

56%

feel that sales don't value their content

54%

Have a good working relationship with sales

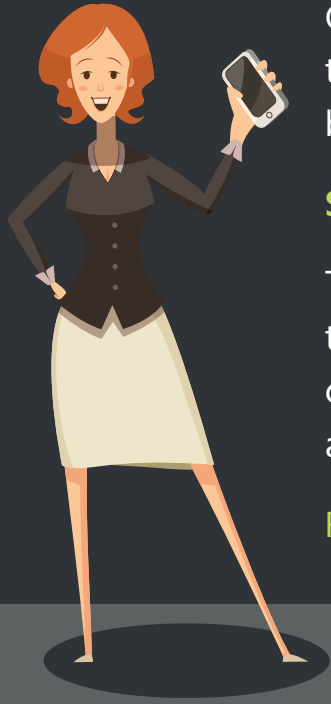
BUT...

27%

Don't think sales understands the impact of marketing



IS THERE A MORE COST-EFFECTIVE WAY TO BOOST BUSINESS PERFORMANCE?



Given the impact on business performance, bringing greater alignment to sales and marketing teams is a clear way for companies to boost the bottom-line. And any changes made are likely to be relatively low-cost.

So, where do you focus your efforts?

To get real-world insights, Skout spoke directly to existing clients about their own experiences and solutions. Members of the Skout team also considered the most aligned organisations they had ever worked with and identified the common characteristics.

From this analysis, four 'smarketing' strategies emerged.

4X SMARKETING STRATEGIES

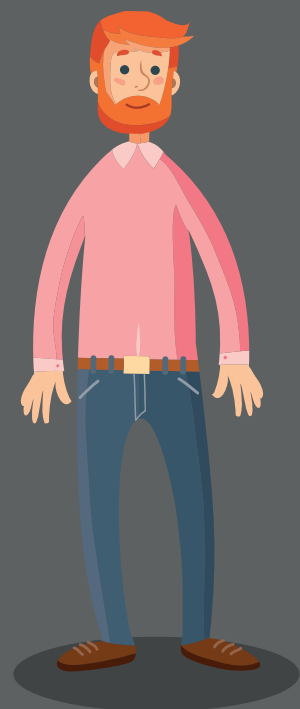
1. More Face-time

Regular, face-to-face meetings between sales and marketing teams

- Learn about the needs of the sales team, and understand the direction they're heading. Ensure the marketing strategy is aligned with the sales opportunities and priorities.
- Opening up discussions with the front-line salespeople will give marketing teams insight into the thoughts and priorities of customers, the objections they may voice, the information gaps that can be filled, and the market environment – all of which can be fed into marketing and PR programmes.

2. More Flows of Information

- Regular, relevant information flows between the teams
- Provide bulletins and internal communications to keep the sales team informed and engaged with forthcoming PR and marketing activities, which they can use in discussions with customers.
- Make it easy to communicate and share information, for example using cloud-based systems and shared filing systems to share content and provide regular updates.



3. More Formal Involvement

Actively and formally involve sales teams in marketing programmes, making optimum use of their market knowledge and customer insights, for example:

- Get them to author blogs and articles.
- Interview them on industry and future trends.
- Encourage them to contribute to and engage in social media activity.
- Attend industry events and sales initiatives together.

4. More Focus on the Sales Funnel

All businesses should be delivering against a fully-optimised sales funnel.

- By ensuring that the sales funnel is fully understood internally, marketing teams are able to respond strategically – by creating relevant content in line with the lifecycle of the company’s leads.
- Content can be created that nudges the lead through the funnel – from prospect to a paying customer.



5X GREAT RESOURCES FOR YOU TO DRAW ON

If you’re looking to bring more alignment, there’s a wealth of easily available information and analysis open to you. Here are the five most useful resources uncovered by Skout (And don’t worry, there’s nothing too dry in there. We deliberately selected articles and reports that are easy-to-read, full of insights, and packed with actionable advice):

1. Sales and Marketing Alignment: 45 Experts Explain How to Connect the Dots

25 minute read

This one is particularly useful. Published by SnapApp, the lead qualification platform, it offers actionable advice from 45 senior sales and marketing professionals. Don’t let the length of the article put you off. It’s quite a long read, but a really easy one. And you’re bound to pick up some useful tips and insights.

2. Put the “and” Back in “Sales and Marketing”

5 minute read

Written by three McKinsey consultants, and published in the Harvard Business Review, this is exactly what you would expect of that combination: incisive, insightful, perhaps a little prescriptive, and aimed primarily at larger organisations. But it includes some great analysis and is well-worth the 5-minutes it will take you to read it.

3. When Sales and Marketing Aren't Aligned, Both Suffer

4 minute read

Another piece from the Harvard Business Review, this is a case study of a company struggling with misaligned goals (the marketing team was looking for market share growth, whereas the sales team was looking for profit margin optimisation). Again, it's a quick, easy read, and it focusses on goal alignment between the two teams.

4. Why Sales and Marketing Alignment is Critical to Organizational Success

10 minute read

This one is published by SuperOffice, a CRM platform. And, as you'd suspect, it gives you a CRM-centric analysis of the issue, as well as some CRM-centric solutions. So, you get some practical advice on how to use technology to bring the teams closer together. And, if you want to put a business case together, you also get some good analysis on the business impact of poor alignment.

5. Ending the War Between Sales and Marketing

16 minute read

Published way back in 2006, this one is perhaps a little long-in-the-tooth (for example, it doesn't properly anticipate the emergence of content marketing). But, hey, it's from the Harvard Business Review, so its quality content nonetheless. And it's strong on how to gauge the relationship between sales and marketing in your business, with practical operational steps on how to bridge the gap.

WE HOPE YOU'VE FOUND THIS E-GUIDE USEFUL. FEEL FREE TO PASS IT ON!

If you want to learn more about SMARKETING or have any questions about your PR or Marketing programmes, feel free to contact us on smarketing@skoutpr.com.

You can get more information and tips from Skout by:



Reading our blogs



Subscribing to our newsletter



Connecting with us in LinkedIn



Following us on Twitter

