



Boost Sales Effectiveness Through Prospect Care

We hear a lot about the importance of sales and marketing alignment as it impacts revenue generation. People refer to alignment in the sense of agreeing on the definition of a qualified lead. But more importantly, sales and marketing should share the same understanding of how to address the market in terms of value proposition, competitive advantages, and overall messaging.

Unfortunately, alignment of marketing and sales is difficult to achieve. Sales and marketing are often separate organizations, managed separately, and have different responsibilities, goals, and measures of success. So how can alignment be better accomplished?

One startup software company that provided enterprise business support systems accomplished sales and marketing alignment in a unique way. The company marketed complex business support systems including billing and order management for communications service providers.

The complexity of the systems and the fact that they had a decade long life-cycle, meant that multiple client organizations, i.e., finance, customer support, engineering, etc., needed to participate in the evaluation process and together agree on system selection. This process often took a year.

The company was growing quickly but it did not want to add a lot more salespeople, nor

sales management for fear of becoming less agile, adding unnecessary costs.

It implemented a team within the marketing function called "Prospect Care." Its mission was to identify leads, research target accounts, and engage with prospects to more thoroughly qualify and advance leads to a point that they could be handed over to sales to win and close the business.

In short, Prospect Care extended the lead qualification process, and took over the front-end of the sales function from the sales team.

"If an opportunity isn't effectively qualified, the sales rep will operate under the mistaken impression that the deal is theirs to win." Dave Stein

Prospect Care's primary objectives were to:

- Improve lead quality and ripeness
- Free salespeople from more basic tasks of caring for and maintaining the interest of clients that were not yet ready to engage in a formal evaluation process, and
- Allow salespeople more time to focus on orchestrating a sales process to compete for and win business.

The collaboration required to implement Prospect Care had the effect of tightly aligning the sales and marketing functions.

Consistency in messaging, shared goals and common success measurements (deals won) resulted. The value proposition, competitive

advantages, relevant company values, such as a stated commitment to customer success, were consistently expressed by everyone in both organization units. The sales and marketing teams collaborated frequently to ensure they had the same messaging and presented a common face to the customer.

Another important aspect that was the handover point. In order to determine when to handover prospects to sales, the teams had to agree on roles. For example, Prospect Care reps could not travel to customer sites, and could not utilize Sales Consulting resources. Consequently they could not conduct product demonstrations. In this way, Prospect Care activities would naturally reach a point that a handover to sales had to occur.



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Guys you will need to at least talk to each other to begin the qualification process for leads.

Prospect Care was very successful; pushing sales conversion rates to extremely high levels. It made the sales function considerably more effective. It improved that relationships and respect of the individuals in both organizational units. And it enhanced the career paths for both groups.

No Shortage of Challenges

The implementation of Prospect Care was not turmoil free. Several challenges had to be overcome.

- The marketing team was not experienced in directly engaging with new prospects
- The handover point was not well defined and caused angst among salespeople who by nature wanted to be involved earlier in the process
- Sales was wary of not controlling the entire customer engagement process

and especially initial relationship building

- Salespeople were, at first, distrustful of the organization and its motives, fearing that their jobs could be in jeopardy

The company was able to overcome these challenges primarily because of the quality of the individuals and through the necessary collaboration and common goals that were required. Although this company managed to implement a new organization structure without the assistance of an outside firm, many companies will look to firms that specialize in this type of organization change management. They can anticipate challenges and manage issues to reduce disruption.

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