



## HIGH-DEFINITION NEWS

# Marketing vs. Sales: In-fighting No Longer an Option

By Clark Crowdus

Marketing professionals and sales teams are joined at the hip, and now, more than ever, keeping the relationship harmonious and productive is crucial to success.

Whether in the financial services, telecommunications, healthcare, consumer packaged goods, or business products industries, customer consolidation—driven by efficiencies and economies of scale—is, if nothing else, driving marketers to go to market in much smarter ways. Losing *any part* of a customer's business can no longer be a casualty of marketing-sales infighting.

While the mentalities and motivations of the sales and marketing teams are very different, their aims are the same: to move product and to receive compensation and praise for jobs well done. Teamwork and team building are also fairly universal techniques; are not easy to create; and are crucial if these two disciplines are to collaborate to make an enterprise successful.

A recent survey by a customer and channel management consulting firm indicates that up to three-quarters of North American consumer goods manufacturers have reorganized their sales forces since 2002, yet only a few of them have gained market share without incurring higher selling costs. The study noted that:

- A number of more sophisticated and increasingly demanding retailers are applying pressure on manufacturers to provide more service in the sales process
- The talent-management approaches of many manufacturers are inadequate and are not achieving success
- Industry consolidation has caused savvy manufacturers to focus on fewer, but larger accounts and to apply more human talent to each client

The winners in the survey group brought more talent to bear on the most important accounts; created cross-functional teams to better serve retailers; and actively and responsively customized their offerings to specific retailer needs.

And this phenomenon is not limited to packaged goods marketers.

In the financial services marketplace, the major payments companies—American Express, MasterCard, and Visa—apply similar team approaches to selling and servicing their products (payment card issuance and acceptance) to banks and merchants, respectively. While relationship managers are still the 'point persons' on key accounts, direct marketing, retail marketing, research, finance, and technology experts populate account teams.

Companies need to know how to support sales and corporate objectives in this new environment that is driven by higher concentrations of power among customers. They also need to know how to team build, a task that typically falls to marketing, human resources, and others because the sales force alone will not likely have the resources to apply to the effort.

There are a number of well-known points of potential conflict between marketing and sales. But as a professional, you need to get a sense of the spirit of the marketing/sales team. Is the atmosphere adversarial or collegial? Collaborative or siloed? Open or secretive? How much communication takes place?

Following are some suggestions on how to build a first-rate marketing/sales team:

**Understand the environment** - Besides industry consolidation, what else is changing the sales environment? What is happening in the economy? What technologies are changing the way the sales force operates? What are the dynamics and forces at work in the sales community? How can marketing bring value to that situation?

**Know and value the roles, incentives, and motivations of everyone on the team** - Each team member has a role that adds value to the marketing and sales process. For example, sales managers ensure that the sales force is equipped to sell properly and professionally. A product manager designs a product that is attractive to its target buyers or consumers. Finance works to determine a competitive price for the product. Sourcing is tasked with keeping costs low—but consistent with marketing requirements. Fulfillment managers process orders quickly so customers don't lose patience.

**Value the contributions of each team member** - A corporate culture that recognizes and values all contributions to the sales process will sell more. If your culture is deeply divided into silos, or is overtly political, there is remedial work to be done at *all* levels.

**Build your team in stages** - Start by clarifying team goals. Then identify the issues that block the team from reaching those goals and work to remove them. Take a consultative approach and emphasize developing the skills of individuals to be effective team members.

**Pull from other parts of the organization** - Be sure you have input from other parts of the enterprise. Finance, human resources, legal, public relations, and other areas of administration influence your agenda and can provide powerful support

when included in the process.

**Reward and recognize** - Everyone has an ego and everyone likes to be recognized. Savvy marketing managers recognize sales 'wins' and efforts on a regular basis within their company and/or team. This communicates to the sales team that you are paying attention.

These are some of the basics of team building, and are *only a few* of the ways that winning marketing/sales teams that work with major customers can build an internal ability to collaborate, cooperate, and flourish in a world where power is concentrated among a shrinking number of distribution points.

These days, it's marketing *and* sales—not marketing vs. sales.

***Your feedback is welcomed and should be directed to Clark Crowdus, Principal, High-Definition Consulting Group at [clark@high-def.biz](mailto:clark@high-def.biz).***

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### **Resources:**

The following resources are recommended by High-Definition Consulting Group:

**Article: "[Twelve Tips for Team Building: How to Build Successful Work Teams](#)" by Susan M. Heathfield**

**Article: "[Head Out: A Sense of Adventure](#)," By Angela Perisi, Lifetime Fitness Magazine**

**Blog: [Marketing Roadmaps \(Blog recommendations for sales people\)](#) by Susan Getgood**

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