



# Marketing and sales don’t have to be enemies

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By [Deborah Daily](#), Co-founder & President, Buckaroo Marketing | New Media



I’ve long found it amusing (and amazingly frustrating) that the two departments focused on driving most companies’ revenues are rarely in sync with one another. Often, their conflicts rise to the level of sworn enemies. Instead of taking a symbiotic approach, both departments avoid and sidestep each other, impairing their success and that of their employers.

Most of the time, the rivalry between sales and marketing is rooted in misunderstanding and internal competition for resources. Marketing types tend to underestimate the challenges of selling the company’s products or services. They’ve rarely had to land an appointment with an elusive buyer or had to sit across from a prospect that’s absolutely convinced they have no reason to buy what the sales pro has to offer.

Salespeople, in turn, often view marketers as either brainless droids whose sole job is to drum up warm leads for the sales team or dreamers with unrealistic fantasies about how the business world really works. So instead of collaborating to ensure their employer sells more widgets, thingamabobs, or whatever, they back away from each other, hurling insults and seeking workarounds.

The key to bridging this vexing gap? Assuming that incentive programs are not causing conflicting goals, in my experience, it comes down to simple communication. Fostering that communication often becomes one of the most important roles we play as strategic marketing partners. I’ve lost track of the number of times I’ve sat in meetings where the marketing honcho and the sales boss nearly came to blows over an issue. When that happens, I do my best to keep the room calm and start to ask simple questions about what each of them is trying to accomplish.

When marketers minimize the value and knowledge of salespeople, they miss out on the valuable insight that can help them fine-tune their own efforts. Conversely, when sales teams treat marketing with contempt, they miss out on the opportunities to influence the many elements such as price and promotion that can make their own work more effective and satisfying.

Often, it simply comes down to listening to one another. I vividly remember sitting in the conference room at a maker of equipment for industrial production. At one point, one of the salespeople was talking about the key advantage that the company’s products were shipped preassembled and ready to install. He remarked, “It’s not like an erector set.” That comment sparked a discussion about positioning the product with the erector set analogy, which would be an easy way for customers to recognize the advantage.

The basic concept got everyone talking about the advantages of preassembly, leading another salesperson to talk about one of his clients who was able to cut the installation time of a new production line by half, with a corresponding savings in labor and materials. Even more important, it helped the client reduce the time to get their product to market. Within an hour, sales and marketing were talking about ways the key messages could be presented.

These conversations don’t have to be limited to product advantages. In another meeting, a sales manager was sharing his frustration with supply chain issues that were making it difficult to get the parts customers needed. I asked the marketing head how the company was communicating how it was addressing those industry-wide issues. They hadn’t done so, but began to develop a strategy to show customers how they were on top of the problem and doing everything they could to get them the needed parts.

The key to discussions such as these is getting past the inherently adversarial relationship between these roles. The CEO may want both sides to play nice with each other, but cooperation can’t be accomplished by dictating it. That’s where the part of the value of an outside marketing partner can come in, by facilitating (and sometimes refereeing) these challenging conversations. An outsider can ask the questions that may be taboo internally, or that nobody in the room is willing to voice. Once those issues are out on the table, everyone can focus on addressing and solving them instead of avoidance.

Most companies are fortunate to have smart people in both the marketing and sales roles. One of the most satisfying aspects of working as a strategic marketing partner is watching both realize what the other has to offer and seeing the new collaboration play out in the form of new ideas that benefit both sides ... and contribute to their employer’s success and their mutual success.

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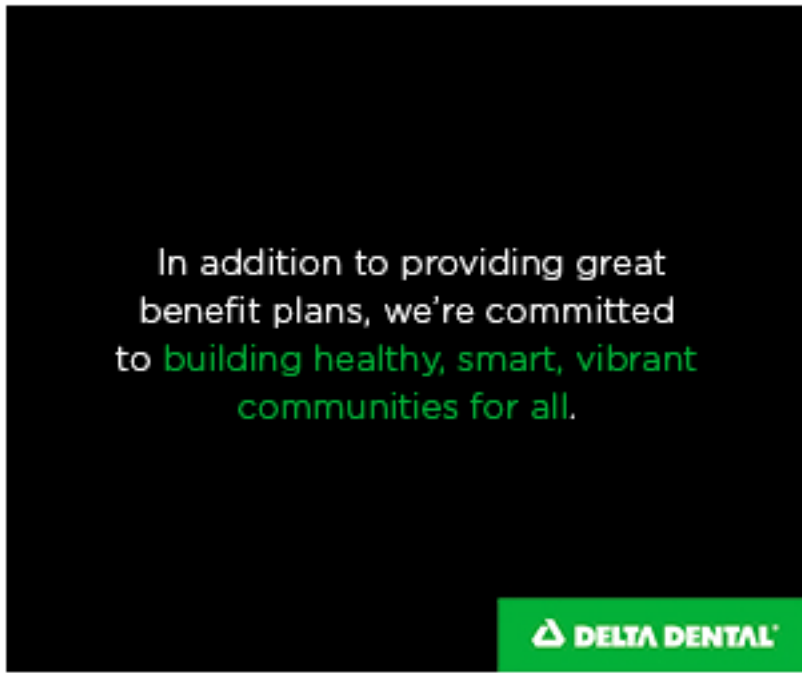


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