

RETURN ON INVESTMENT - HOW CAN SALES MAKE THE MOST OF THEIR MARKETING SUPPORT?

By Gill Kelley & Clare O'Shea

The relationship between sales and marketing is notoriously fractious, not least so when the financial climate dictates that ROI comes under relentless scrutiny. Clare O'Shea and Gill Kelley of The Chartered Institute of Marketing set out their ideas for achieving a more collaborative and fruitful relationship. Sales awareness and understanding the customer relationship is not simply the focus for those directly involved in selling - it's for employees at every customer touch-point, all working together to affect positive change.

In the current economic climate organisations will be all the more focused on seeing a return on their investment in sales and marketing activities than usual. Much has been written about the relationship between sales and marketing teams and the many reasons why relationships break down. In the article which

follows, Clare O'Shea and Gill Kelley of The Chartered Institute of Marketing put forward a framework of 8 Ps for overcoming some of the friction that exists and some tips for moving forward positively.

When sales and marketing teams work collaboratively then much more can be achieved. Conflicting objectives - short term sales objectives and longer term marketing objectives - are often seen as the reason why relationships between the teams break down.

In a recession, where difficult economic conditions exist across the world, the objectives of both teams converge and those of attracting new customers and maintaining customer relationships are prioritised. There is a need to overcome artificial barriers that exist internally and to take a proactive combined stance to continue to compete and exist in

the face of external factors over which you have no control. Existing plans may be abandoned or amended - however, the focus on acquiring new customers and retaining existing ones should be maintained.

Good communication between the teams can help avoid duplication of effort. Experience shows that organisations that sustain both sales and marketing activities through difficult times will recover more quickly when things improve. Finally, when marketing and sales teams do integrate and talk to each other they often find that they are saying the same things, but using different jargon.

Let's take the '8Ps' marketing talks about and look at what they mean for sales professionals:

Product - sales people always need a thorough knowledge of products and in a recession you also need to be able to

differentiate your proposition to the customer clearly. The marketing team can help to formulate a clear value proposition and keep an eye on what is changing in terms of the competition. Ask for regular focused updates to be sent to your phone or email.

Price - customers are going to be even more eager to ensure that they are receiving value for money. Again, tracking competitor activity can help us present prices positively.

Promotion - marketing can action promotional campaigns that result in leads for the sales team. They can also help by qualifying these leads so that you make the most of sales efforts.

Place - keep prospecting and looking for potential customers that are similar to your current customers. Once again the marketing team can help by carrying out research to boost your knowledge and save you time.

People - get on the phone and ask your best customers to provide referrals to others that

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may have a need for your products and services. Follow up these referrals or ask the marketing team for help to do so.

Process - look after your pipeline business. It is never more important to follow up business which is already in the pipeline than in a changing economic climate. Some business will inevitably fall away - however, you will lose even more if you expect it to happen. Think positively.

Physical evidence - provide the marketing team with a list of 'warm' customers who may be willing to supply information for case studies or testimonials that the sales team can use as proof statements when talking to prospective customers.

And then you can add:

Personal selling - sales people need to be proficient and do what only they can do - build and maintain relationships. Marketing can help to identify decision-makers in target organisations, but only the personal touch will build relationships and present relevant benefits to customers and prospective customers, so building their confidence in your company.

In summary -

- Recognise the reasons for the differences between the two disciplines.
- Deal with any artificial barriers.
- Work with 8 Ps and not 7 Ps.
- Talk the same language.
- Work together to build relationships with the customer.



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Clare O'Shea and Gill Kelley are faculty members from The Chartered Institute of Marketing. As recognised leaders in their fields they regularly deliver training programmes in Sales and Marketing through the CIM Academy.



The R.O.I. Wheel, O'Shea & Kelley, 2008.