

What Sales Really Needs From Marketing

Seven Strategies to Get More & Better Prospects into Your Sales Pipeline

eBook by Jill Konrath
Selling to Big Companies

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Different Worlds, Different Realities

Back in the days when I sold computers, marketing people used to hate me. I worked in a regional sales office that was located in the same city as the corporate headquarters. Whenever a new product was introduced, marketing kicked off their road shows with us. Eager to show off their hot new stuff, they'd send an entire entourage to our facility. As salespeople, we were excited to learn about anything that could give us a competitive edge.

We'd spend hours listening to talking heads cover every excruciating detail of how the system worked, the multiple configurations available, its connectivity, how to demonstrate its capabilities and comparisons to the competition. Then the focus would switch to the marketing campaign that was being implemented. Finally they trotted out the sales collateral. There was always an impressive display of brochures, fact sheets, tech specs and more.

As the meeting would draw to a close, they'd always ask, *"Does anyone have a question we haven't addressed yet?"* My hand was always the first in the air. I could see the shudder run through their bodies. They looked around the room, hoping to call on someone else. But, with both hands waving wildly, I was hard to ignore.

With deep resignation, they'd say, *"Yes, Jill. What do you want to know?"*

"Well," I'd answer. *"Actually, I have quite a few questions. I think this new SureFire! system sounds really cool. It's clearly on the leading edge and a big step for the company."*

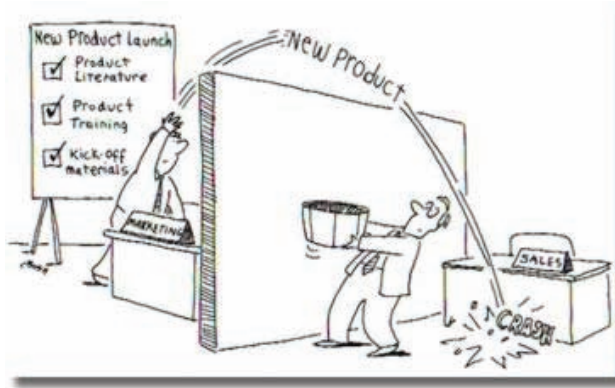
Their heads were nodding as they listened politely, but you could see that they were waiting for the shoe to drop. It always did when I raised my hand. As marketers, you're probably wondering why they dreaded what was coming.

Marketing is from Mars

and Sales is from Venus

But the reality of the situation is this: Marketing is from Mars and Sales is from Venus. The organizations live in totally different worlds and have completely different perspectives on what's needed for success. In way too many companies, communications between the two groups is minimal and alignment is non-existent.

So what was I asking about? I had a litany of questions on a wide range of topics. I was trying to put everything I'd learnt into the context of what it would take to sell this new offering. Marketing had given me a huge data dump, but shared virtually nothing to help me speed up the sales velocity. They'd left all that up to me.



I'd been given all the details, but not one thing to help me drive sales. Virtually every question I asked Marketing was answered with, "That's your job to figure out, Jill. You're in sales." Or they'd say, "Just show the prospects. They'll understand its value." Those poor marketers had labored furiously to get the product out on time, so my demands for more info frustrated them to no end.

Ultimately I was able to put the puzzle pieces together, but it usually took a couple extra months. During my learning curve, I always lost a few good prospects – mostly to indecision, but sometimes to competition. Unfortunately not all my colleagues were quite as quick on the uptake and their sales results (or lack thereof) showed it.

Failure of Marketing to give Sales what they needed hurt the company big time

To make a long story short, the failure of Marketing to give Sales what they needed hurt the company big time as sales results failed to materialize in the projected timeframe. Each group pointed fingers at the other, claiming it was their fault. Sales screamed that the pricing was too high and the new offering was missing important capabilities. Marketing shouted back that product was perfectly fine, but the darn sales force couldn't sell value.

Even when Marketing asked how they could help, the feedback from the sales organization was often next to worthless. Salespeople couldn't articulate what was missing because they'd never seen anything different. So they always reverted to what they knew and asked for better brochures (which only exacerbated the problem) or more advertising (which was money down the drain).

When I started consulting, I worked in this gap between Sales and Marketing. I made sure the salespeople had what they needed to jumpstart new products/services in the marketplace. As a result, my clients were able to shorten time to revenue, improve the lifetime profitability of their offering, and keep major competitors out of key accounts.

But in the past few years, I've been working on another critical sales challenge that incorporates all my product launch expertise — and more.

Today I help sellers crack into corporate accounts. As marketers, your role in this is lead generation.

Again I see this huge gap between Marketing & Sales that's causing this finger pointing and blame. Marketing, busy creating programs to bring in new prospects, is furious that the salespeople don't even bother to follow up on them. But if you talk to the sales force, they'll tell you that the leads are worthless.

Hmmm. **What's going on here?** Now I'm not going to tell you how to run your lead generation program, because lots of people are a whole lot smarter than me in that arena. My expertise is with the sales organization. What I'm going to talk about in the remainder of this ebook is:

- What salespeople really need you to know about today's sales environment.
- What you can do to help them crack into corporate accounts.

So with that, let's begin.

The Ultimate Challenge

Much is happening in the business community these days that's having a huge impact on selling. A convergence of multiple factors makes it increasingly difficult for sellers to crack into corporate accounts and win big contracts:

- Corporations are in a continual state of flux. Companies keep getting bigger and more global. Reorganizations, rightsizing and restructuring are everyday occurrences. Finding and keeping up-to-date on who's in charge of what has become a nightmare.
- Companies are running lean-and-mean. Everyone has way too much to do and way too little time to do it. Many decision makers are overworked and stressed out. They spend an inordinate amount of time in meetings or putting out fires.
- Decision makers literally "haven't got time for the pain." Time is their most precious commodity; they protect it at all costs. Even if the status quo is less than desirable, they'll stick with it as long as they can.
- If they're interested in changing, they prefer to do research online versus talking to what they perceive to be self-serving salespeople.

Sellers need you to know this! Why? Because it's really tough these days to set up meetings with corporate decision makers. Virtually every call they make rolls into voicemail. They leave messages, but seldom (if ever) get a return call. In fact, they may leave a dozen messages and still never talk to a human being. If they do happen to catch a decision maker on the phone, it's only because he/she was expecting a call from someone else at that exact moment in time.

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That's the world they live in. If you stop to think about it for just one moment, you'll realize it's the same in your office too. My guess is that you also barricade yourselves from salespeople.

Sellers also want you to know that corporate decision makers expect them to be experts — and that isn't limited to in-depth knowledge of their product or service. Unless they sound like they really understand their prospect's business and industry needs, they'll never get their foot in the door. Becoming a trusted advisor is an imperative in today's market, but few sellers have the luxury of taking years to develop the requisite expertise. They need it now. Or better yet, yesterday.

Now that you have a better idea regarding this exceedingly difficult challenge, we'll talk about how you can help sellers get more and better prospects in their pipeline. The first two suggestions tie in with lead generation programs developed by Marketing. The remainder of the recommendations support sellers in their own prospecting efforts — which should be targeted at specific corporations they'd like to land as customers.

1. High quality, well nurtured leads

More than ever before, salespeople want Marketing to focus on lead generation. But their definition of a quality lead is often very different from what they're typically handed by Marketing. From the seller's perspective, being handed a list of 217 people who expressed interest at a recent trade show is a nightmare in the making. On the other hand, Marketing is pleased as punch to have collected all those names.

The sales organization really needs to be involved in defining what a high quality lead looks like. This definition may include demographic factors such as industry type, size of company and revenues. But it also needs to include much more. One of my clients is very specific about the best prospects for their service offering. They only work with firms that have 5000+ employees.

"Businesses that put in place measurable and repeatable demand generation processes see these investments pay significant dividends in the field. Higher revenue, shorter sales cycles, better communication and increased scale are only some of the benefits"

- Mark Organ,
CEO, Eloqua

Plus they have the greatest success with "progressive firms" which have the following characteristics:

- They're keenly aware of their market position.
- Much of their growth has come through acquisition.
- Attracting and retaining top talent is a business imperative.
- They're focused on streamlining operations and consolidating functions.
- They use online services in every aspect of their business.

Clearly this puts an additional burden on Marketing, but Sales doesn't want to spend its time trying to connect with impossible-to-reach decision makers only to find out that the company is too small, has been shrinking in recent years or is a slow adopter of new technology.

Sales needs Marketing to put together a long-term program that nurtures prospects at the very early stages of the sales cycle. They need marketers to identify potential decision makers, to send out white papers, to invite people who've shown interest to a webinar. Then, they need to work with Marketing to define when the lead should officially be passed over to the sales organization for follow-up. So if you're getting complaints about your lead generation program, sit down with the sales force right now and reach agreement on these critical definitions.

2. Strong value propositions

The lack of powerful, compelling value propositions hurt more sales efforts than any other factor. It continually amazes me how few salespeople can clearly articulate the business results that customers get from using their products or services.

The lack of powerful, compelling value propositions hurt more sales efforts than any other factor

The responsibility for this failure lies in the hands of both Marketing and Sales. When new offerings are introduced, Marketing touts leading-edge capabilities, state-of-the-art technology or unique methodologies. Expensive collateral glorifies the multitude of new features. Detailed charts point out the differences between competitors. Salespeople, armed with all this wonderful knowledge, race out to their top prospects, eager to land a big deal.

Unfortunately, they usually fail. Most corporate decision makers don't want to waste time meeting with sellers just to learn about their products or services. Nor are they one bit interested in how great your offering is compared to the competition. Their only concern is how it impacts their business when compared to the status quo.

So what's the solution? Both Marketing and Sales need to realize that their offerings are simply tools to help customers achieve specific business objectives. No one wakes up one day and says, "*I'd like to spend a ton of money on new software.*" Nor do they say, "*Let's spend a ton of money on a management consulting firm.*" Instead, corporate decision makers talk business, using terms like shortening time to market or reducing supply chain costs.

When salespeople start talking about their offering from this perspective, it captures the attention of prospective buyers. They're always interested in hearing about:

- How to achieve quantifiable, measurable business outcomes.
- How they can reach their ever-increasing objectives.
- How other companies have achieved significant breakthroughs.

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Here's an example of how one company changed how they talked about themselves:

Before: We offer a full-range of web-based marketing services.

After: We help online retailers increase their key operating metrics. One of our recent clients increased conversion rates by 27%, at the same time their average order size jumped 38.4% .

Sales needs Marketing to take the lead in this area

Make sure that your salespeople can clearly articulate the business value of your product or service. Then, make sure to integrate it into your collateral, website, presentation materials, prospecting tools and more. When Marketing changes how they talk about their offering, Sales follows suit.

More importantly, sellers need to personalize their value propositions when interacting with their various constituencies in accounts. What interests CFOs is fundamentally different from what the VP of Sales is interested in. There is "no one size fits all" value proposition. When sellers are armed with the right messaging, their ability to be successful increases significantly.

3. Understanding of the status quo

In today's market, the status quo is a seller's most formidable competitor. As stated earlier, overwhelmed, stressed out decision makers would much rather stay with their current products, systems or methodologies than switch. Decisions are painful. They're an additional workload requiring the involvement of numerous people who all have their own opinions of the best way to go. Implementation is a pain in the neck too; it seems like things always get worse before they get better.

Without a solid understanding of how companies operate today, prospective buyers can quickly dismiss a "pesky" salesperson. While Sales may not be asking Marketing for support in this area, they still need it in order to be successful. Specifically, they need:

- Status quo scenarios:
If you sell products, this may include old competitive systems, earlier versions of your own company's products or even home-built solutions. For a service, it could cover the various service options available to your customers. Select 3 primary options.
- Issue analysis:
This involves a description of the likely problems customers face with their status quo scenarios. Plus it contains a discussion of the business impact of continuing "as is" and the pay-off for making a change.
- Decision maker overview:
Sellers need to know who's typically involved in making these decisions, what else these people are responsible for, and how they're evaluated. Any information that would be valuable in creating a personalized approach to these various decision makers is also greatly appreciated.

Make sure your salespeople understand the likely situations and decision makers they'll encounter

Marketing needs to ensure that salespeople have access to this invaluable information. Some companies make it available in online sales portals; others use workbooks. The format doesn't matter. Just make sure your salespeople understand the likely situations and decision makers they'll encounter in their sales efforts.

"... companies that have optimized lead generation have more sales reps meeting quotas, higher conversion and win rates and faster ramp-up for new sales people ..."
CSO Insights, June 2006

4. Triggering event awareness

Because salespeople have to develop their own prospects, Marketing also needs to make sure they're aware of triggering events — those occurrences that create an immediate need for your company's products or services. Typically these can be readily ascertained by reviewing the firm's existing customer base and asking, "What was it that precipitated this company's decision to make a change?"

What constitutes a triggering event? It could be something internal to the organization such as:

- Changes in leadership
- New management directions
- Bad 3rd quarter earnings
- Mergers or acquisitions
- Major downsizings or reorganizations

Or it could be something external to the organization that affects its ability to be successful in the market such as:

- New or pending legislation
- Competitive moves
- Customer trends
- Natural disasters

"Sales cycles in complex selling environments have increased 30% from 2001 to 2004."

Sirius Decisions,
2005

Usually a pattern emerges as certain triggering events **seem to be behind a number of your company's sales**

Your sales force needs to know this information so they can be watching for it. Point them in the right direction. Show them how other sellers have capitalized on these triggering events to get their foot in the door of an account, talking to the right people at the right time.

5. Enticing voicemail strategies awareness

Most sellers don't have a clue what to do with voicemail. They've resigned themselves to the fact that it's nearly impossible to talk to a human being. They're shocked if anyone calls them back. And they don't have a clue what they can do differently.

Most sellers don't have a clue what to do with voicemail

Here's how a typical voicemail message sounds today: BAD EXAMPLE

"Hi John. This is Terry Smith calling. I'm the account executive with Generic Systems. We specialize in working with companies in the area of marketing communications. We offer a wide range of services to handle all your advertising, direct mail and graphics needs.

I'd like to set up a time to find out how you're handling Marcom in your company and show you some of the really neat things we're doing for some of our customers. I'd be glad to meet with you at your earliest convenience. It would only take about ½ hour. My number is 541-xxx-xxx. I look forward to talking with you soon. Have a great day!"

This message is so boring that it's deleted before the end of the first paragraph. Marketing needs to show Sales how to create customer-focused messages that get listened to by decision makers. Show them how to integrate their value propositions into their voicemail. Show them how to leverage their ideas and insights to pique a decision maker's curiosity.

Marketing needs to test the voicemail strategies before handing them off to the sales force

For example, salespeople will be much more successful with a message like this:

"John. Terry Smith from Generic Systems calling. In researching your company, I noticed that a key business initiative in the upcoming six months is to expand into the medical devices market. I have some ideas about how you can leverage technology to penetrate that market segment much more quickly. One of our recent customers achieved their 6-month's projections in just 4 months and is well on their way to a banner year. Let's get together and talk. My number is 541-xxx-xxx. (repeat) I look forward to meeting with you."

To ensure effectiveness, Marketing needs to test the voicemail strategies before handing them off to the sales force. As a marketer, you're probably thinking, "*That's not my job.*" (See we're back to where we started.) Well, it is if you want to help your salespeople get more prospects in the door. They're stymied. In fact, you probably have a whole crew of sellers who are struggling in this area. Day-after-day they keep beating their heads against the wall, hoping against hope that they'll finally manage to talk to someone. That's a lousy use of their time.

Since you're already running a lead generation program – and hopefully a successful one – you've been experimenting with different ways of catching the decision maker's attention. Share what you've learned with the sales force. Cut their learning curve and raise the entire sales organization's proficiency level. Every time you introduce a new product, give the sales force the words they need to crack into corporate accounts.

6. Addressing common obstacles

Once again I'm going to tell you that you can really help the sales force by pre-thinking about the usual, run-of-the-mill obstacles and objections they'll encounter in trying to set up meetings with corporate decision makers. Salespeople need your insight on this. But they don't want the same tired responses that are no longer effective.

Instead Marketing needs to give them fresh new ways of dealing with comments such as:

- We don't have any needs in this area.
- We're already working with xxx.
- If you're not on the approved vendor list, we can't talk.
- We're too busy right now.
- Your company is too ...

Marketing also needs to show Sales how to address the "Tell me more" statement without getting caught in a detailed company history or falling back into a product/service dump. Now Marketing can let salespeople figure this out on their own, but I guarantee you that it will result in major delays as well as lost opportunities.

Marketing also needs to experiment with ways to eliminate these obstacles and objections entirely. When they discover what works, they need to share it with the sales force.

7. Sales tools & a campaign plan

“Given the volume of prospects a sales rep is expected to manage, approximately 2/3 of his week is spent creating, searching for, editing and assembling information in support of a customer's buying process – instead of directly interacting with the customer.”

Brian Zanghi
President & CEO
Pragmatech Software, Inc.

“Creating collateral, presentations and tools that can be tailored for specific opportunities – while still maintaining baseline message consistency -- should be a goal for all sales and marketing organizations.”

- Sirius Decisions, 2006

Finally, Sales needs Marketing to realize that they have to put together a campaign to crack into corporate accounts these days. It can easily take seven, ten or even a dozen contacts before a seller is able to connect with a corporate decision maker. Although the phone is still the salesperson's primary prospecting vehicle, in today's business environment they need to incorporate many other "touches" into their campaign plan.

Marketing needs to create a multitude of items to put in the seller's account entry campaign tool kit. Examples of effective tools could include:

- Letter templates
- Email templates
- Case studies
- Special reports
- White papers
- Seminar invites
- Newsletters
- Relevant articles
- Top 10 questions
- Initial presentation template

Not only do salespeople want templates, but they also **want to be able to quickly and easily customize them**

Not only do salespeople want templates, but they also want to be able to quickly and easily customize them. When Marketing can create messages and sales materials that can be pulled together for specific buyers within specific industries, then they've really created a winner!

These sales enablement tools are a godsend to busy sellers. Certainly salespeople are capable of creating their own, but then you're taking the whole crew out of the field again – not a good use of their time. Sales needs Marketing to take charge of this process to assure the quality as well as the consistency of the message.

Do It Together!

I realize that I may have shaken some cages in this ebook. But the strategies covered in here are all things that consistently fall through the cracks. Marketing thinks that the sales organization should handle them – which they ultimately do if nothing is given to them or if it's obvious that Marketing doesn't have a clue what it's like in the field.

But when you leave the sales organization to its own devices, everyone reinvents the wheel. What a colossal waste of time. And from my experience, the quality is all over the board. A few reps do a good job, but mostly there's widespread mediocrity. The message gets all mucked up, key points are totally missed, value propositions are inaccurate and so on.

As marketers, you don't want to leave this to chance. But you also don't want to create strategies and tools in a vacuum. Get your top sellers involved immediately. Select those who are able to explain their thinking processes, not unconscious competents. Have your seasoned professionals give you insights into what's working. Bounce your value propositions off them. Engage them in developing effective voicemail scripts, techniques for eliminating objections and more.

Get your top sellers involved immediately

Join together with your sales force to make this happen. Not only will you get more and better prospects in the pipeline, but you'll also:

- Reduce the cost of customer acquisition.
- Save salespeople's time and keep them out selling where they belong.
- Ensure consistency across the sales organization.
- Improve the performance of average sellers with well-designed tools.
- Achieve your sales growth goals.

I strongly encourage you to create a repeatable process that can consistently be leveraged to generate high quality prospects – whether from your own lead generation efforts or from the targeted prospecting done by your sales force.

When you do, everyone wins!

The Author



Jill Konrath

Jill Konrath, author of *Selling to Big Companies*, is a recognized sales strategist in the highly competitive B2B market. She helps her clients crack into corporate accounts, speed up their sales cycle and create demand for their offering.

Konrath publishes online newsletter with subscribers from more than 88 countries plus an industry-leading blog. She's developed the *Winning More Sales* manual, *Getting Into Big Companies* audio program and multiple teleseminars on critical sales topics. Most recently, Konrath has been featured in *Selling Power*, *Entrepreneur*, *New York Times*, *The Business Journal*, *Sales & Marketing Management*, *WSJ's Start-Up Journal*, *Sales & Marketing Excellence*, *Journal of Marketing*, *Business Advisor* and countless online publications.

Speaking

Jill Konrath is a popular speaker at sales meetings and industry events. She wakes your sales force up to the new realities and shares a wealth of strategies to help them be successful. Her approachable style combined with her depth of knowledge make her a winner with even the toughest sales groups.

New Book

Stop struggling to get into big companies. Learn practical strategies to crack into corporate accounts, shrink your sales cycle and close more business in Jill Konrath's new book.

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