

WHITE PAPER

Why Sales Doesn't Use Your Presentation

*How to connect marketing to sales reality and
drive revenue growth*

Sales thinks your marketing presentations are nice, but they don't use them.

Firebrick Consulting recently conducted a survey of 50 technology industry sales leaders to find out if they use the presentation materials they get from marketing, and what their marketing partners could do to improve the quality and effectiveness of what they produced.

"78% of sales leaders report their teams are creating their own sales presentations"

Not even a quarter of technology sales leaders we surveyed reported that they consistently use the materials they receive from marketing. The other 78% are creating their own sales presentations.

One of the places we frequently find new client strategies stuck in a ditch – new products, entering a new market, shift to solution selling or cloud/recurring revenue model, integration of acquired company – is where that new strategy connects with

revenue and sales and requires selling to a new set of buyers. Marketing is stuck in the success of the past and unable to craft a narrative or positioning story that resonates with the new buyers. This creates two really big problems. First, it means salespeople are spending a lot of their time creating their own presentations rather than selling. Second, it means that everyone in the field is telling a different story. The result is that sales cycles get drawn out, close rates go down, customers get confused and salespeople get frustrated. Then revenue falls short of expectations, and your strategy falls apart.

"...especially an acute problem when a new strategy requires selling to a new buyer or a shift to solutions or recurring revenue model"

But it doesn't have to turn out that way. The sales leaders we surveyed gave very clear advice about what they need and what works. The key is to make sales presentations and materials relevant to the buyers your sales team is calling on. And make it easy for people in the field to use their customer knowledge to fine tune the story for specific opportunities.

I'll Just Do It Myself

The large majority of what marketing produces for sales just sits on the shelf. Fewer than 25% of the sales leaders we surveyed use the presentations they get from marketing. More than 75% say they 'never' or only 'occasionally' use what they get from marketing.



The result is that a mind boggling amount of time and money are being wasted. A ¹CMO Council Study reported that as much as 40% of a sales rep's time is spent creating presentations, customizing messaging and preparing for pitches. If you think about everything a sales rep is responsible for, it's very likely he or she spends more time developing presentations and materials than doing anything else, including selling! You don't have to do a lot of analysis to see that sales performance could increase 50-100% by simply reducing the amount of time sales is spending to create their own materials.

Macro Messages Don't Make Sales

Our research pointed to two main reasons why salespeople don't use marketing materials. They feel the marketing resources they receive are either too generic/me-to (67%) or irrelevant (39%) to a customer's circumstances. Sales leaders know that content that fails to connect with relevant business issue simply doesn't sell. It is a ticket to a very dull, one-sided, thanks-but-no-thanks conversation.

"According to IDG, 58% of a vendor's marketing content is not relevant to buyers"

According to an ²IT buyers survey from **International Data Group**, they're right. They found that 58% of a vendor's marketing content is not relevant to potential buyers, and they estimate this disconnect reduces the vendor's chance of closing a sale by 45%.

Marketing does get credit for keeping things up to date – more than 80% of our respondents think the materials they get from marketing are current. However, 'up to date' doesn't close deals. A relevant value proposition is what sales needs to win business. Over 65% of sales leaders in a ³Miller Heiman study reported they were losing business because they didn't have a compelling value proposition that is tied to relevant market dynamics to sell with.

Perhaps the biggest reason marketing messages fail to connect with customer issues is that they are typically created top down, from a broad corporate or branding point of view. Corporate messages and brand slogans are created first for broad distribution through marketing channels. These are then force-fitted by sales (usually unsuccessfully) into buyer conversations. Sales often engage sales cycles at different

1 CMO Council Study, 2004
 2 IT Buyer Survey, International Data Group, 2008
 3 Miller Heiman, Sales Best Practice Study, 2006

levels and buyers/influencers across of the organization. What makes sense in an ad or corporate marketing campaign very seldom answers the real world questions your potential customers are asking your salespeople.

Make it Relevant to Make Money

Let's be clear. The goal for sales presentations is to sell. In order to sell, messages must connect to relevant buyer issues. The salespeople we surveyed were very clear about what is required:

- 60% of respondents told us presentations must be specific to the industry vertical or market segment they're calling on,
- 58% said material has to be in tune with buyer problems and needs,
- 58% also agreed that presentations should include a business-level conversation about the economic value of the solution.

Business conversations, not techie talk 60%

Compelling stories – not product features 58%

Why now? What buyer problem do we solve? 58%

Clear differentiation – no "me-too" 50%

Our research shows there is a wide gap between what sales needs and what marketing currently provides. This isn't an indictment of marketing, just evidence that the purpose of marketing messages is different from the purpose of sales messages. Marketing is trying to drive long-term market demand and brand preference. Sales is trying to drive short-term performance.

Close the Gap Between Marketing and Sales

Marketing can close the gap to boost sales performance and eliminate perhaps the biggest point of failure for new strategies. In order to drive new strategies all the way to the point of revenue, here is what marketers must do:

- **It's not about you and your product!** Effective positioning and high-impact sales presentations are about your customer – their problems and answers to these challenges – and NOT about pushing your company, product and cool features
- **Answer the question "Why your product, NOW."** The **best sales presentations lead the buyer down a path.** The narrative articulates the big hairy problem facing your buyer, show how existing solutions don't solve this problem and demonstrate why your product is built to solve this pressing issue.

- **Take your marketing messages to your sales team** for their input. Do your high level marketing messages make sense to their customers? Do they connect to pressing problems they're trying to solve?
- “ Effective sales presentation are provocative and invite a buyer conversation. They are about a problem your buyer cares deeply about – They don't push product”*
- **It's a conversation, not a monologue.** Create presentations that facilitate interaction. Customers typically don't care how many offices you have, or the number of employees. Lead instead with the issues your customer wants to talk about, and drive the conversation to requirements and solutions.
 - **Build your story around relevant market dynamics that create urgency.** The business world is in constant change. It is hit frequently with inflection points that affect your buyers. Successful sales pitches are based on your customers' aspirations and headaches, not your latest feature set. Create a “hair on fire” conversation. The buyer must believe that if they don't solve the issue your product addresses, they will be out of a job.
 - **Structure your presentations to allow for adaptation.** No sales presentation works in every situation. Your sales partners are going to pick the slides that work, and adapt things as necessary to suit their needs. Expect this and create sales stories that are modular so sales can consistently deliver key messages, but also tailor content for specific sales situations.
 - **Connect marketing messages to buyer conversations.** Work with sales to understand the driving issues in their most important customer categories. Use sales playbooks or other techniques to document how high level benefit ideas connect to top-of-mind customer problems your salespeople will encounter.
 - **Know the buyer.** ‘SMB’ is not a market’, and ‘Fortune 500 CIO’ is not a buyer. Learn what makes your buyer tick beyond catch-all labels. Spend the time to really understand who you're selling to.
 - **Focus on revenue.** Your buyers want to know the business benefit, ultimately the impact on revenue or other key measures of business success. Connect your story to what matters. Paint a picture. How will your buyers life be fundamentally different 6 months from now with your product.

Conclusion

The companies that are driving revenue or sales growth have one thing in common – they arm their sales people with positioning stories and powerful narratives that resonate with the buyer, “own” a problem this buyer deeply cares about is clearly differentiated. Most sales presentations miss this mark. 78% of sales people don't use the presentations given to them by marketing. But it doesn't have to turn out that way.

About Firebrick Consulting

Firebrick is a consulting firm in San Francisco devoted to helping technology companies drive revenue growth. We are for technology executives making a big bet on a change in strategy. Our consultants focus on the pressing challenge of driving strategy to the point of revenue and have worked with over 250 of the top technology companies and category creators.

For more information, please visit www.firebk.com.

Or contact us: info@firebk.com \ +1-415-314-7579

Sales Doesn't Use Your Presentations

Your salespeople think your marketing presentations look nice, but they don't use them. This means they are wasting time creating presentations, rather than selling. And everyone in the field is telling a different story. Sales cycles lengthen, close rates go down. But it doesn't have to be this way.

Results of a survey asking sales how often they actually use marketing presentations:



NEVER or SOMETIMES →

What's wrong?

Too Generic
67%

Not Relevant
40%

I prefer to create my own
36%

Out of date
20%

What Sales Wants

Business conversations, not techle talk 60%

Compelling stories – not product features 58%

Why now? What buyer problem do we solve? 58%

Clear differentiation – no "me-too" 50%

Better positioning will cut the time sales spends recreating materials and increase sales by

2X

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