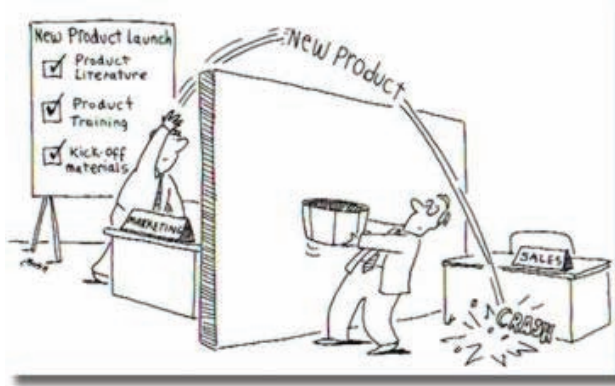


So what was I asking about? I had a litany of questions on a wide range of topics. I was trying to put everything I'd learnt into the context of what it would take to sell this new offering. Marketing had given me a huge data dump, but shared virtually nothing to help me speed up the sales velocity.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

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.

Virtually every call they make rolls into voicemail

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.

