



**COLLABORATIVE ABM:
BEYOND SALES & MARKETING ALIGNMENT**

Is a Toxic Sales- Marketing Relationship Hindering Your ABM Program?

As we asserted in our recent white paper, *Humanizing the Account Based Marketing Experience*, marketing/sales duo that don't respect each other can torpedo even the best Account Based Marketing (ABM) program. While many of today's account based marketing and sales strategies are powered by technology and AI, the human element (knowing who your customers and prospects are at a deep level) is critical.

Similarly, as you build and evolve your marketing and sales team to embark on a sophisticated ABM program, you need to focus on the people who lead and manage this initiative -- at both a strategic and tactical level. Something as simple as a CEO or CFO who doesn't "get" ABM, or a marketing/sales duo that don't respect each other can torpedo even the best Account Based Marketing program.

Sales and Marketing Friction – Why Does it Exist?

We know it well – the constant struggle between sales and marketing. Satirical videos and memes abound poking fun at their discord, as familiar complaints are heard echoing through the halls.

"These leads suck."

"Our sales reps are lazy."

"Does marketing even understand what our customers need?"

"Does sales even understand what our product does?"

"Put it in the CRM, for goodness sake."

"I don't have time to document everything I do in the CRM. I have to sell."

Ironically, in today's business landscape, both marketing and sales have the same purpose – to increase revenue while building strong, profitable, and long-term customer relationships. The accountability around this goal varies, but at the end of the day, both teams are focused on engaging and retaining targeted customers. So why is it so hard for these groups to work together?

Keep in mind that historically these teams have often operated in separate silos, only coming together at company gatherings. While sales pros have always been responsible for closing new business, not until recently has marketing been expected to be accountable for revenue. While marketing's role has changed drastically, little emphasis has been placed on helping these groups develop a collaborative approach to reaching their shared objectives.

Additionally, the personalities of people who choose marketing careers may differ from those who pursue sales roles. Fractl recently published a study¹, based on IBM Watson Personality Insights, profiling today's marketing leaders. Adventurous, energetic, and assertive rose to the top as shared qualities. The Harvard Business Review² proposes that target fixation, command instinct, and hiring ability are the top attributes of sales leaders. One cannot generalize about an entire profession, but as in any relationship, understanding similarities and differences is key to building and sustaining trust and collaboration.

According to a study by Accenture³, 90 percent of CEOs and CMOs believe that the skills that senior marketers used to have are not the ones they need to compete in today's business environment. Only 54 percent⁴ of salespeople make quota. Clearly, we are at a stage in the marketing/sales disruption when something (or many things) need to change in order to improve long-term performance.

Some organizations have made organizational changes to ensure collaboration -- having sales and marketing report up to the same member of the leadership team. Although that structure has its benefits, most organizations have separate reporting structures. How do they dance smoothly towards that revenue goal with both parties leading the moves?

¹ <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/personality-traits-of-top-marketing-leaders>

² <https://hbr.org/2015/09/the-7-attributes-of-the-most-effective-sales-leaders>

³ <https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insights/consulting/cmo>

⁴ <https://www.sellingpower.com/2019/03/13/15932/the-3-traits-shared-by-successful-sales-organizations>

ABM Requires Collaboration

Although the sales-marketing disconnect and rivalry has certainly kept life, business, and company gossip interesting, organizations must evolve. Companies that fail to do so will be outpaced by those that rise to the occasion. According to Marketing Profs ⁵, businesses that are tightly aligned achieve a 208% increase in marketing-driven revenue, 36% better customer retention and 38% higher sales-win rates.

Surprisingly though, only 36%⁶ of companies executing account based marketing programs consider their sales and marketing teams to be tightly aligned. If companies want to reap the rewards of ABM, it is critical that their marketing and sales teams get on the same page and focus on developing pipelines filled with quality leads and the right opportunities.

“If you don’t have marketing and sales aligned and using the same set of data, then you’re not really doing ABM.” – Liam Doyle, SVP of Product Management, Salesforce

⁵ <http://www.marketingprofs.com/charts/2015/28555/2016-b2b-content-marketing-benchmarks-budgets-and-trends>

⁶ <https://www.siriusdecisions.com/blog/sales-and-marketing-alignment-in-abm-are-you-in-the-36-percent>



Fundamentals of Healthy Sales-Marketing Partnerships

Like any relationship, at its finest, the sale and marketing connection is more of a partnership. Creating a thriving partnership relies on many of the same principles people leverage when building personal relationships.

“To break down walls between sales and marketing, ABM is pretty close to a silver bullet in that it aligns programs’ dollars and focus behind the accounts that the sales teams cares about. So there’s inherent buy-in.” ~Dave Karel, CMO, Zenput

Empathy is key

Both sides must come to the table with have empathy for one another. Each player needs to understand the other’s responsibilities, objectives, challenges and motivations. By understanding your counterpart’s point of view, you are better able to tackle the collective challenge that lies ahead.

Empathy goes beyond the sales-marketing relationship. It starts with understanding your customer. Once you make an organizational commitment to fully grasp the needs of your customers, you now have a guiding force to direct your strategy.

See your partner’s value

Developing an appreciation for your sales or marketing partners is essential. Recognize that you’re in this together and see the value that your teammates bring to the table.

- Sales pros – realize that the market has changed. Prospects are no longer sitting idly by just waiting for someone to come along and solve their problems. They are actively researching solutions. Remember that buyers are now more in control of their customer journey than ever before. Your marketing counterparts know how to reach your target audiences with experiences that will engage and convert them; they’ve become very good at filling the pipeline with qualified leads.
- Marketers – remember that no amount of technology, data and creativity can replace personal connection. Your sales partners specialize in building relationships. They’re experts at identifying people’s needs and helping them understand why and how your company can solve their challenges. Plus, sales pros have intimate knowledge of the contacts within your top accounts. They can give you the intelligence you need to create truly compelling programs that will have similar prospects leaning in.

⁷ <https://www.cmswire.com/cms/customer-experience/forrester-marketing-orchestration-instead-of-big-gun-campaigns-022944.php>

Fundamentals of Healthy Sales-Marketing Partnerships

Agree on the fundamentals.

Developing an ABM strategy that drives results requires sales and marketing to be in complete agreement on some foundational elements.

- Goals & business objectives – Start by documenting the business objectives set at the corporate level. Identify the revenue number that sales and marketing are collectively responsible for reaching. If marketing hasn't been assigned a revenue number, the sales target ultimately becomes the goal for all.

Reaching this revenue target will typically be your primary focus, but there may be other business objectives to consider. For instance, if there's a corporate initiative to reduce customer attrition – even if your customer success team is solely in charge of renewals – marketing and sales may need to set a goal around improving customer experience to support this objective.

- Ideal customer profile (ICP), target accounts, key decision-makers – Identifying your target accounts is about more than just a wish list of the logos you want to land. Sales and marketing need to look at the company's best customers to find trends and shared characteristics. These factors include things like firmographic and technographic data points,

It can also be insightful to evaluate which decision-makers were involved in the sales process. This exercise may yield surprising insights. For example, if 70% of your highest value contracts all involved the CIO during the consideration stage, sales and marketing may want to make a concentrated effort to engage the CIO early and more frequently in the customer lifecycle.

- Lead/lifecycle stages – For marketing and sales to move prospects through the buyer's journey together, they need a clear definition of when to pass the baton from one to the other. In most cases, marketing will start the conversation and handoff to sales, so start by understanding what criteria indicates that prospects are ready for a conversation with sales. Is it visiting the pricing page on your website? Or downloading a key piece of content?

Once a prospect is passed to sales, that does not necessarily mean that marketing is no longer involved. Be sure to discuss how marketing can best support the journey once an opportunity is opened. You may also want to define when sales should pass the prospect back to marketing. Sometimes contacts may not be ready to make a purchase, but there is value in continuing to nurture a relationship with them.

Communicate often.

Once the fundamentals are agreed upon, it is important to recognize that this is a world of constant change and learning. The assumptions made at the beginning may not be validated once your ABM plan is in market.

Sales and marketing need a process for ongoing communication. There are a few tools to consider that can help support this collaboration:

- Shared reporting dashboard
- Real-time group and individual messaging channel
- Automatic notifications of key activities by top prospects
- Weekly or monthly review calls
- Quarterly planning sessions

Don't be afraid to make changes to your strategy or tactics based on the learnings from these regular check-ins. It can often make sense to go back and refine your ICP, update the titles you are targeting, or change the triggers that move prospects from one stage to the next.

Many organizations focus on the frequency of stand-ups and all-hands and the communications media they use. Zoom, Slack, Skype, and Google Drive are no substitute for frank and frequent face-to-face and voice-to-voice verbal interaction.

Fundamentals of Healthy Sales-Marketing Partnerships

Stay objective.

Maintaining an aligned state between sales and marketing is challenging. Data is a powerful equalizer that keeps everyone looking through a unified lens. The more you leverage it in your strategy, the more likely you'll reach your goals.

- Use data to determine your ideal customer profile and customer personas. Anecdotal information can supplement this intelligence, but it can't substitute for it.
- Consider layering in predictive intelligence to identify, out of all the companies that match your ICP, which demonstrate the highest propensity to buy.
- Develop shared reports that assess collective performance, not just sales or marketing.
- Analyze results at the account, contact and campaign levels, but not for the purpose of attribution or giving credit. Do this so you can learn from performance, and fine tune your efforts together.
- When you measure wins and losses, attribute those results to all the players involved, not just the sales rep who carried it across the finish line, or to the piece of marketing content that first created the lead.

Share responsibilities.

Creating a new customer, or even cross-selling, up-selling and renewals, is not solely a sales or marketing job. It takes both sides to make it work. When planning an ABM strategy, you need to determine the best way to share communications and responsibilities across teams.

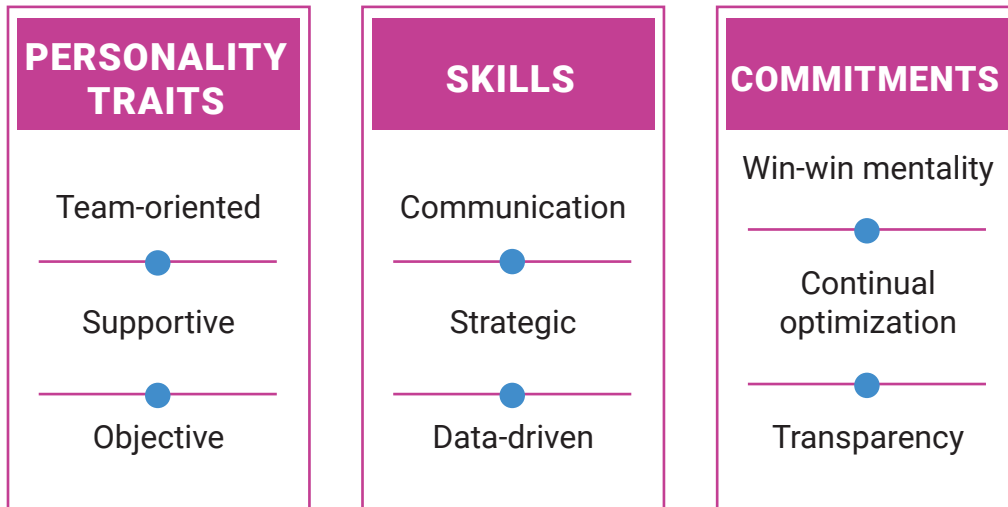
Think about the prospects' needs at each stage of the customer lifecycle, as well as your organization's needs. Often in early stages like awareness and discovery, it makes sense to let marketing handle the bulk of the activity. Whereas in mid-cycle stages, like consideration, you may want to alternate touchpoints between sales and marketing.

Typically once a prospect reaches the decision stage of their journey, sales pros are the ones who get them across the finish line. However, marketing can still provide some soft support – even if it's an always on personalized display campaign that's serving ads specific for the solutions that prospect is evaluating.

How to Build a Collaborative ABM Organization

A new code of conduct alone does not ensure a collaborative ABM organization. Companies may need to think about skills training or even team building exercises to help team members master these skills.

The skills that organizations foster and the commitments they make often look radically different in a collaborative ABM organization when compared to the siloed cultures of the past.



Defining new traits, skills and commitments will not only help current team members adapt to this new culture, but it will also be useful in future recruiting efforts as you seek to grow your teams.

The Roles of the Executive Team

Making the shift to a sales-marketing partnership requires support at the executive level. For a breakdown of the individual responsibilities of each member of the executive team, reference MRP's "Humanizing the Account-Based Marketing Experience" whitepaper. Get your copy here.

While every member of the executive team has a unique commitment to support inter-departmental alignment, there are some shared responsibilities that all should get behind.

- Implement a collaborative culture across all teams. Partnership should not end with sales and marketing. Lead by example and seek input from others outside your function.
- Clearly define business targets and then empower your team to develop a strategy to reach those targets. Trust them to get the job done.
- Make sure sales and marketing have the resources they need – people, data and technology – to execute their plan and accomplish their goals.
- Be available for regular check-ins. Celebrate milestone wins and offer guidance to refine course when necessary.
- Think beyond attribution. It is about driving collective growth, not giving individual credit. Live by a "win (and lose) as a team" mentality.

The Toxic Versus Healthy Sales-Marketing Culture

Above all, remember that building and maintaining a healthy ABM culture is a company-wide effort. It takes time, commitment, and cooperation from the CEO.

If you have a problem within your own organization, be transparent and positive in surfacing it. You may need to bring in an HR professional, executive coach, or other third party to “referee” a truly toxic culture, but only by committing survive and success **TOGETHER** can your organization begin to build that cohesive and collaborative ABM

“force field.” You’ll be well on your way to creating an organization that’s focused on winning deals and beating goals rather than sniping and competing. Ultimately, your shared objective is profitable new business.



The Role Of ABM In Scaling Collaboration: The \$32 Million Pipeline Case Study

One of the greatest values derived from an ABM strategy is tighter alignment and coordination between marketing and sales. Best-in-class sales and marketing builds and optimizes aligned demand management processes to increase marketing's contribution to pipeline and growth. Supporting both functions in their efforts by focusing on buying groups, their needs, and solution match, providing this framework is critical in understanding how effective our clients are at identifying, attracting, engaging and qualifying that demand.

Even as buying circles are growing, one enterprise client's marketing function was feeling more pressure to directly impact revenue growth. Typically struggling to gain (or keep) budget, buy-in from the sales function, and internal support if they can't definitively quantify what their company gets in exchange for budget dollars that it spends on marketing, the client looked to ABM to provide the right revenue accountable environment, to justify and optimize their marketing investments.

Monitoring intent signals across the United States, MRP Prelytix utilized keywords focused on the client's solution and value proposition, identifying total addressable market (TAM) in real-time; integrating all data points to determine the next best ABM action, addressing over 4,500 accounts in total. Tightly fused

to the client's sales and marketing systems, MRP connected real-time streaming intent and predictive analytics directly to triggered media selection and robust, cross-channel orchestrations.

For marketing teams to demonstrate ROI and budget responsibility, the response actions and tracking of opportunities through the sales cycle is a top priority, but a persistent challenge for many organizations. MRP solved this issue by combining proprietary technology with operational specialists, to ensure that each qualified opportunity not only makes its way to the right salesperson or partner, but also that each follow up action occurs, is recorded and tracked properly in client's CRM. The result – **A \$32 million sales qualified pipeline.**



CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS

DISPLAY

Tasked with increasing display impressions served to opportunities, while maintaining viewability at benchmark, MRP's custom built DSP served a total

2,203,560

impressions to

3,100

unique to accounts, delivering a viewability rate

6%

above the industry average.

Opportunities touched by MRP display ads were also found to have an average contract value that was

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when compared against opportunities that had not been engaged.

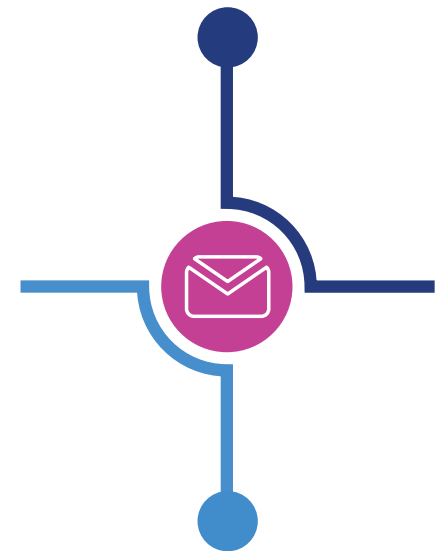
IMPRESSIONS AND VIEWABILITY

Tasked with increasing display impressions served to opportunities, while maintaining viewability at benchmark, MRP's custom built DSP served a total of **2,203,560 impressions to 3,100 unique to accounts**, delivering a viewability rate **6% above the industry average**.

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DIRECT MAIL

Based upon the needs, timing and buying roles of each target account, MRP deployed personalized direct mail to gather engagement from even the hardest to reach senior buyers. The result - **profile rates of 7.1% with 80%** converting to BANT qualification.



Opportunities touched by MRP's direct mail campaign were found have an average contract value that was **91% larger** when compared against opportunities that had not been engaged.

MRP Prelytix, the Only Enterprise Class Predictive ABM Platform.

For enterprise organizations that serve multiple geographies, lines of business or industries, Prelytix is the only ABM platform designed to give you control of your data, visibility into your target market and scale in the delivery of the highest impact engagement strategy.

Leading B2B sales and marketing organizations choose MRP for our ability to deliver and measure revenue impact across a half-dozen online and offline channels, our global workforce with expertise across 100 countries and 20 languages and our ability to simplify connections between insight and action using the industry's first application of real-time AI and Machine Learning. Powered by Kx, Prelytix sits on top of the fastest streaming analytics database in the world.

Schedule a demo today to learn more about how MRP Prelytix can help your team revolutionize your marketing goals.

For more information visit: www.mrpf.com