



Don't Make These Sales and Marketing Mistakes



By Colleen Stanley

The word misalign is defined as "positioning or arranging something improperly in relation to something else." That sounds like too many sales and marketing departments in corporate America. Even though the two departments share the same corporate office, the approach to engaging prospects and clients is often disjointed. Here are six key areas of misalignment that cost companies lots of money each year:

The marketing message doesn't match the client's need.

Sales managers need to ask the marketing department to join their sales teams on daily calls and meetings. Marketing surveys and focus groups are good for research, but meeting with prospects and clients at their place of business is better. "Ride-a-longs," as we call them in sales, are the best for identifying needs and gaps in a firm's service offering. It's the day-to-day interaction with prospects and clients that provide real-world data for identifying opportunities, challenges, and trends in the industry.

2. There is a call to action but no training for the sales team.

The marketing program is working—leads are being generated, the right prospects are calling, and the new product launch looks like a success ... until the phone is picked up by an untrained salesperson. The salesperson has received no education in building rapport on the telephone and has no well-crafted value proposition about the new product. The result is a beautiful marketing campaign with less-than-desirable sales results. Lots of money has been invested on the front end of the marketing campaign to create opportunities, and zero money has been invested on the back end to make sure sales can close the opportunity.

3. The marketing message doesn't reach the real decision maker.

Business changed after 9/11 and the Dot Com Bust. Changes included more people, different people, and a shift in the power of each buying influence. Companies continue to market to old buying influences because the sales team is too busy selling to sit down with marketing to discuss:

- Who is buying
- Why they are buying
- New pain points
- Decision criteria

The company is aggressively marketing but to the wrong people. Imagine going duck hunting in New York City.

4. The marketing message doesn't match the follow-up by the salesperson.

How many of you have received literature on an exclusive resort or high-end product? The marketing program worked until you called to place your order. The salesperson on the telephone line doesn't sound exclusive, can't answer basic questions, and frankly, isn't that enthused about their own product/service. Enthusiasm and

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confidence is contagious, and in this case, the salesperson has driven you to think you better keep looking.

Have you ever experienced this one? Your marketing message promises that your consultants are "professional and knowledgeable," but marketing and sales have not met to determine what "professional and knowledgeable" looks like on a sales call. For example:

- Professional—if the sales meeting requires a leave behind, does the marketing piece coincide with the prices you charge? If your salesperson is a professional, do they show up for the appointment five minutes early and in a suit that fits? Yes, I am tired of seeing too short, too tight, or too big in the conference room.
- Knowledgeable—has the organization figured out the FAQ's in your industry? Does the sales team know the answers? What about competitive analysis? Does the salesperson know the gaps in the competition's service offering so he can better position the call?

5. **Ineffective follow-up plan.**

Email is an inexpensive way to drip market to prospects. Prospects responding to email versus other types of marketing require a different type of follow-up. Traditionally, salespeople immediately pick up the phone to follow up on a lead. However, email prospects don't want a phone call and are often turned off by this type of follow-up. The marketing is generating a response, but the effectiveness of the campaign is diminished because of an ineffective follow-up plan.

6. **Good repeat clients are ignored, and the focus is on new business development only.**

Everyone in business knows it's more profitable to grow an existing account than to prospect for new business. When working with sales teams on strategic account management, I often hear, "I'm not sure if my clients know about our full-service offerings." That is a sales problem *and* a marketing problem. Marketing can assist sales by making sure customers are aware of the depth and breadth offered by the organization through articles, special events, newsletters, direct mail, email, etc. Sales can follow up by setting up business review meetings to discuss other products and services the firm offers.

Align your sales and marketing organization. Togetherness is not just for romance – it's a very good way to make money.

Colleen Stanley is president of [SalesLeadership Inc.](#), a business development consulting firm specializing in sales and sales management training. The company provides programs in prospecting, referral strategies, consultative sales training, sales management training, and hiring/selection. She is also the author of *Growing Great Sales Teams: Lessons from the Cornfield*.

Reader Feedback

Bravo! You obviously have "lived the life" you write about. Well-stated. Great points! Having worked with some of the "best and brightest," your salient recommendations are strongly endorsed!

—David Zahn

President, ZAHN Consulting LLC

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