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A MARKETING GEEK'S GUIDE TO:

LEAD MANAGEMENT





ABOUT THIS SERIES

There is a lot that goes into your marketing strategy, and it's not something you should go at alone. Lucky for you, our experts have you covered. At Relationship One, our mission is to "Inspire Success." We hope that reading through this eBook will inspire you to try something new, solve a problem you've been dealing with, or invent something that will take your marketing efforts to the next level.

Let our experts help you dive into an area of modern marketing that you're curious about and let the inspiration flood in.

A MARKETING GEEKS GUIDE: LEAD MANAGEMENT

Lead management is a set of methodologies, systems, and practices designed to generate new business through a variety of sales and marketing campaigns, programs, and processes. Given its breadth, successful lead management can be tough to tackle. Where do you start, how can you get the most value, and what approaches can wait for another day?

If you ask yourself these questions, then this is the e-book for you. It's loaded with information for modern marketers who want to, very practically, enhance their lead management systems and processes. Read on for advice from our Relationship One experts on how you can transform your process into a lean, mean, lead management machine! Ready? Let's get started!





CHAPTER 1: BEGINNING THE SALES AND MARKETING ALIGNMENT JOURNEY

Sales & Marketing alignment. We've heard it a hundred times, but what exactly does it mean and how do we achieve it?

WHAT IS ALIGNMENT?

The [oxford](#) dictionary defines alignment as “a position of agreement or alliance.” Let's take the first part: “Agreement”. Well, in order to agree on something, we must first understand what we are agreeing to. We should be sharing our goals, strategies and tactics with each other, and we should agree that these are the right ones to focus on!

Now let's take the second part (and personally my favorite): “Alliance”. Wow! What a great word to describe the relationship between a sales and marketing team. An alliance implies that you're working together towards shared goals and for mutual benefit. I don't know about you, but I don't see “finger pointing” in that definition at all!

How do we get there?

So now what? How do we get started on achieving alignment and start working together? Below are four steps you can take to begin the journey to sales and marketing alignment.

STEP 1: DEFINE SUCCESS. TOGETHER.

Great! Your marketing and sales teams have decided to form an alliance and work together. But what are you trying to achieve? What are the common goals that bring you together and what does success look like?

I recommend getting your marketing and sales leadership teams in a room and brainstorming. Even if you think you already know the answer, it's important to include your teammates in every step to ensure buy in and confirm shared beliefs across the teams. Here are a few strategies to discussing your common goals, and defining success:

1. Ask “why?” and keep asking. Why does marketing exist? To generate leads? Okay, and why does marketing need to generate leads?

You get the idea. Do the same things for sales, and I bet you'll find some common themes.

2. Start with your company goals and work backwards. List out the company's goals and break down the departmental goals needed to achieve them. For example, if the company wants to achieve 50% growth in the next year, then what does marketing and sales need to do to support that goal?
3. Switch teams. Have your marketing team pretend they are sales and vice versa. Have each team create a presentation around their goals and a plan to get there. This is a great way for the team to get outside of their box. It also creates empathy as each team member has to put on the shoes of another team and work through their challenges.

After spending some time brainstorming common goals together, you may end up with a long list of ideas. It's important to focus on “SMART” goals (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic & timely) and pick the 2-3 that will make the most impact.

The best part about these brainstorms is that they can be repeated as often as needed. They can be used for anything from big vision goals such as “increase revenue in the EMEA market by x% year-over-year” to very specific goal planning such as “generate \$x in sales at event ABC.”

STEP 2: CREATE A CUSTOMER JOURNEY. TOGETHER.

The old way of doing business goes something like this: marketing would develop the company's messaging and key differentiators, launch advertising campaigns, and deliver leads into the hands of sales reps. Sales would then pick up the phone and call, call again, and again until they had any luck reaching a human on the other side. But, buyers are changing. They're spending more time researching their purchase long before they even get on a call with a sales rep.

This means sales reps are looking beyond the phone for new ways to connect with their prospects earlier in the funnel. The good news is that marketing can help.

A customer journey isn't always linear and many customers will follow different paths. However, every interaction a customer has with your brand should be tied together in a cohesive way. Sales and marketing should also be sending the same message, at different but intentional moments throughout the journey. Each team member knows when it's their responsibility to reach out to the customer and is confident the message they are sending is timely and relevant.

Note to the Marketing Tech Nerds: Once you have the customer journey outlined, then you get to use all those fancy tools to make that journey a reality. Nurture programs, lead scoring, machine learning, web personalization, you name it! This is where we start to have fun!

STEP 3: MEASURE AND REVIEW THE DATA. TOGETHER.

You created the goals together (you didn't already forget step 1 did you?). So why not measure them together as well! It's important that sales and marketing are analyzing their results together so that they come to the same conclusions. This allows us to take corrective action when needed, or to high five each other when the alignment is producing the results we hoped for!

To make sure this step doesn't get forgotten, I recommend agreeing on a handful of metrics to review together as a

team and also choose an appropriate meeting cadence. On a weekly basis look at the performance indicators that show whether or not the teams are tracking towards their larger monthly or quarterly goals as expected. If the data shows we're not on track, there is still time for a mid-month course correction. Then, meet again at the end of the month and quarter to reflect on past performance and make necessary changes for the coming months.

Don't just stop at reviewing the data together. Take it a step further and find opportunities for the teams to present their results together. Sharing the same story in front of your teams or the rest of the organization shows everyone that you are united and "aligned." It will increase morale and build trust within the organization.

STEP 4: BUY EACH OTHER DONUTS.

It doesn't have to be donuts, but you get the idea. Say "Thank You" to your partners in sales or marketing by buying them lunch or heading to happy hour after work to celebrate the wins! When teams spend more time together, relationships are built, lines of communication open, and team performance increases.

Starting the sales and marketing alignment journey can be difficult at first, but it's worth it! These four steps can be repeated as many times as needed. Achieving (and maintaining) alignment is always a work in progress.





CHAPTER 2:

4 CHARACTERISTICS ALL GREAT LEAD FLOW HANDOFFS HAVE IN COMMON

Similar to a relay race, the lead handoff is when marketing passes the lead (or baton) to sales. The first runner, marketing in this case, has given it their all and is probably exhausted, but their job isn't done until the handoff is complete. This final step requires focus and precision. And just like in a relay race, fumbling the baton would cause seconds to be lost in a race where every second counts.

An efficient and effective lead handoff can look different depending on your marketing and sales team size & makeup, the tech stack used to facilitate the process, or even the characteristics and preferences of your target market. That being said, there are a set of characteristics that all good lead handoffs have in common. They need to be timely and informative. They must be a joint effort and must end with a good feedback loop that kicks off the next action. Let's explore each of these in more detail.

Characteristics of an efficient and effective lead handoff:

1. TIMELY – OCCURRING AT THE RIGHT TIME.

Successful handoffs need to happen at the most opportune time in order to avoid fumbles. This means marketing doesn't send leads over too early or too late.

Premature handoffs often end up with a sales rep failing to get a hold of the prospect, or worse, leaves the prospect with the perception that your company or brand is "pushy" or too "aggressive." Instead, marketing needs to listen for both implicit and explicit cues from the prospect that signal that they're ready for a sales rep to reach out. Then, it's "go time."

On the opposite side of sending a lead over too early, there's the error of taking too long to pass the lead to sales. "Sales Conversions are 391% Higher in the First Minute." Yes, you read that right. This doesn't mean we revert to sending leads over prematurely, but it does mean that if and when a prospect raises their hand and is looking for more

information, there needs to be a process in place to get that lead to the right person and fast. The quicker you can get that lead to sales, the higher the likelihood of sales getting a hold of the prospect while their intent and interest is high! If 391% higher conversion rate wasn't convincing enough, how about this stat. According to a study by Lead Connect, "78% of customers buy from the company that responds to their inquiry first." And in sales, if you're not first, you're last.

Stop & Reflect: Stop for a minute and ask yourself these questions. Does your team understand when a lead is ready to talk to sales? If so, what are those actions, behaviors or sets of criteria that would qualify a lead to be passed to a sales rep? How long does it take from the moment a prospect raises their hand to speak with sales to the time a sales rep picks up the phone and calls them? Is it less than 1 minute? 5 minutes? If not, then what are the roadblocks to making it happen?

2. INFORMATIVE – PROVIDING USEFUL AND INTERESTING INFORMATION

Immediately prior to a handoff, there's a signal that communicates the handoff is about to begin. In a relay race, this is often the passer giving a short verbal queue of "up." One word is all it takes for the receiver to understand where the passer is and what is needed in order to prepare for the handoff. In marketing and sales, when a new lead is passed to sales, the sales rep must also be notified that the handoff is imminent and should be given all the information required for them to be prepared and make successful contact with the prospect. The rep will need a little more than just the single word "up," but it's important to keep the communication succinct. Adding too much information will only create more noise and the arena is already noisy enough. Include the prospect's contact information, what they're inquiring about, and relevant marketing engagements so that the rep can have a meaningful conversation with them.

Stop & Reflect: Are reps being notified when they're given new leads? Is the notification proactive or passive? How are they notified—email, sms, pop-up, excel spreadsheet? Is sales given enough information to have a meaningful conversation with the prospect? Is there extra noise and unnecessary information included? If you're not sure, go ask a sales rep or shadow them for an hour and see for yourself.

3. A JOINT EFFORT – SUPPORTING EACH OTHER AS TEAMMATES TO THE FINISH LINE.

When a baton is successfully passed, the first runner doesn't go to the locker room and call it a day. The first runner watches intently and cheers on as their partner races to the finish line. The same should be with marketing and sales. Marketing can support sales to the finish line by providing additional content, messaging guidelines, market insights, competitor intelligence, references and testimonials, and more. The challenge for marketing is usually less about creating the content and resources for sales, but more about effectively delivering the content and having a system in place for sales to easily access and utilize it. This requires effective communication channels between the teams, alignment on roles and responsibilities, and most importantly, a healthy relationship built on trust and empathy. Supporting your teammates should not feel like a chore, but should be something that comes naturally and gets you excited because you know it's helping to reach a common goal.

Stop & Reflect: Are your marketing and sales teams aligned and working towards common goals? Do they even talk or know each others' names? Is sales communicating what kind of resources they need from marketing post handoff? Does the content exist and is there a process to share out to the sales org?

If you're starting from scratch with marketing and sales alignment, then I recommend taking a step back and beginning the sales and marketing alignment journey first. Then you can focus on improving the communication channels between the teams to ensure sales has the resources and support needed to seal the deal!

4. ENDING WITH A FEEDBACK LOOP – GENERATING OUTPUTS THAT BECOME THE INPUTS FOR A FUTURE PROCESS.

Let's be clear here. In order for feedback to be effective, the feedback (or outputs) must be Actionable. As with any sport, after a race, smart athletes spend time along with their

coaches discussing what went well and what could have gone better. Great partners don't just say whether it was a "good" or "bad" race—they spend time together reflecting on what made the race good or bad so that they can take those lessons learned and apply them in their next race. The same is true with sales and marketing. Marketing needs to be telling sales what the prospect is looking for when a lead is delivered to sales. This is actionable and enables the sales rep to follow up with the right pitch and messaging. On the other side, sales reps need to send back messages to marketing regarding their interactions with the prospect—was the lead qualified or not and why. This means no more disqualifying leads with a reason code of "bad." What was bad about it? Was it bad timing? If so, marketing can learn from that and can continue to nurture them up until they are ready again and the timing is right. If the prospect is qualified, then let marketing know so they can do more of whatever it is they did to acquire that lead. Each reason code should have an action tied to it as the next step—whether that's to put in a nurture campaign or remove from a marketable database.

Stop & Reflect: Is there a process in place to provide feedback between the teams? Does marketing know what ends up happening with the leads they send to sales? Does every reason code have an action assigned to it? Are there any dead-ends in your process post handoff?

The lead handoff is just one small element of the entire marketing and sales process. However, it is the one process teams cannot afford to get wrong. Organizations spend too much of their time, money and talent on acquiring leads to ignore this critical step. Not only does an efficient and effective handoff process lead to happier employees, it also leads to a better customer experience and higher conversion rates!



CHAPTER 3: 3 WAYS TECHNOLOGY IS IMPACTING MARKETING OPERATIONS

With over 7,040 marketing technology options to choose from ([graphic](#)), and 120 or so deployed in your organization for marketing functions, the conversation around marketing technology is changing. It's no longer about getting the "right" tools, it's more about figuring out how to use them to their full capacity, and more importantly, how to connect them in creative ways to create great experiences for your customers while ensuring efficiencies for your internal teams. Here are a few ways we see technology impacting marketing operations and how we need to respond in order to take advantage of them.

SALES JOINS MARKETING IN UNPRECEDENTED WAYS

The traditional lines between sales and marketing are now blurred. Sales Development Reps tend to split their time between sales and marketing, and often switch teams every time there's a new organizational change (am I right?!). The reason we're seeing this is because SDRs are performing both a marketing and a sales function. I'm not going to tell you where they should sit, but what's important is that you consider your SDRs as part of your marketing family. And it doesn't stop with the SDRs— the rest of sales is starting to do more and more marketing activities as sales technologies continue to grow and mature. Here's some examples:

EMAIL, SMS AND PHONE CAMPAIGNS

Sales is using tools like [Outreach](#) and [Salesloft](#) to automate their email, SMS, and voice messages to prospects. These tools are creating huge efficiencies in lead management and follow up. With so many tools at our fingertips, marketing should no longer need to relay this information manually. Instead, use technology and collaborate with sales to create triggers that will choose the correct follow up messaging and cadence for you—and even better, you can track performance to understand which sales messages are working best!

CHAT

Buyers are changing. They're spending more time researching their purchase long before they get on a call with a sales rep, and when they have a question, they want it answered real-time. Enter the rapid growth of platforms like Drift, a chat platform that sits on your website enabling prospects to chat with a company representative in real-time. Customers get answers and sales reps get deeper into the funnel to connect with buyers who are still researching.

Now you may say that chat as a channel has been around for a long time, and you're right. But the technology is advancing and new trends are emerging. We're seeing better targeting so prospective buyers can ask questions in context of where they are on the website without leaving. We're seeing AI being deployed to automate responses and actually make sense (no more "I'm sorry. I don't understand." repeated over and over again). We're seeing "contact us" webforms being replaced with bot chats who are collecting the same information but with a better user experience. We're seeing sales reps providing "chat now" links in their communication to prospects. We're seeing better analytics and data, with platforms being able to pick up and append lead sources, geo location information, UMTs, query strings, and more. And lastly, we're seeing more advanced and tighter integrations with marketing automation platforms and CRMs allowing you to keep the conversation going after the chat window closes, and track it all to get your ROI.

A lot of exciting things are happening with chat, but this can present itself as a challenge when it doesn't fit into your current lead management model. Marketing & Sales Operations teams need to work together and look at their lead management and funnel stages with a new set of eyes. If sales reps aren't responsible for engaging with prospects at the top of the funnel, can you add an exception for chat? An "exception" doesn't mean you don't track it or define it. You'll still need to clearly define when those exceptions are

allowed, who's responsible for what, the rules of engagement, and rules to ensure you're passing the right data between systems to be able to track the activities, assign "credit" to the marketing campaigns and sales reps involved, and move prospects through the stages based on these new changes. It may sound like a lot, but the good news is that once you define it, you can automate it by connecting your technologies. This creates an amazing experience for your customers and sees higher marketing-generated and influenced deals!

"{{FIRST.NAME}}" JUST ISN'T ENOUGH

Marketers have been talking about the importance of personalization in campaigns since the beginning of time. But what we mean by "personalization" is changing and getting more sophisticated. By connecting your Marketing Automation Platforms to tools like Infinity or Tealium, which capture, process, and store virtually unlimited attributes and touchpoints across their audience, marketers are finally able to take their Big Data and transform it into meaningful and actionable data points. This means we need to start pushing the envelope on personalization—adding a first name is great, but can we go deeper? Can you dynamically promote the last product they viewed on your website? Can you include imagery that resonates with where they are geographically located? With today's technology these examples and more can be done in an automated fashion—and at scale.

This means marketers are now expected to launch large campaigns while providing a personalized experience and 1:1 communication. In order to do this, marketers need to think about what data points are most important for their customers, where those data points are being collected, and how the data needs to integrate in order to create cohesive cross-channel experiences that are unique to each customer.

AI AND PREDICTIVE MARKETING

When marketing automation platforms first hit the market, marketers everywhere were ecstatic to be able to use "if.. then..." statements in their campaigns and automate multiple journeys or "drip campaigns" based on a set of criteria. While this was a huge win for marketers, we were still limited by fixed assumptions—input, output. But now, Artificial Intelligence Marketing is exploding, and we have the tools to collect and process massive amounts of data in order to make connections, at scale. Companies like Netflix and Amazon are using AI and machine learning to recommend what you may be most interested in watching or purchasing

next. Uberlip relies on Bombora buyer intent signals and AI to be able to successfully recommend content that the visitor is most likely interested in.

For marketers, this changes how we approach lead management strategy. Traditional lead management is about knowing where the lead is in the funnel, and pushing them to the next step. But with AI, we're not pushing them to their next step, but rather we are predicting their next move and are waiting for them with the content and experience they're looking for.

With over 7,000 marketing technologies on the market today, it's hard to not get distracted by all the shiny objects. If there's a business need or a new capability you're looking to unlock that one of your current technologies can't fulfill, then it's okay to start looking elsewhere. Otherwise, take a look at your current stack and start identifying how you can maximize them. More importantly, think about how to connect your technologies to create cohesive experiences and delight your customers.



WRAPPING THINGS UP



Now it's time for action! Apply what you've learned in this e-book to maximize meaningful personalization of your customer experience across the full spectrum of lead management possibilities.

As you develop your efforts, remember the ultimate goal—empowered sales and marketing teams, consistent and unified systems, and connected customer experiences..

Please visit Relationship One online for [more content like this e-book](#) or [to request hands-on help](#) from our experts.

