

Marketing’s Role at the Executive Table

You’ve heard our mantra before – marketing drives sales; it’s not the other way around. Unfortunately, most corporate structures aren’t set up with this in mind and many marketing professionals find themselves answering to sales executives, which can create contentious relationships at best. This month’s newsletter will hopefully shed some light on how to navigate those waters without diluting marketing’s role in the whole mix.

Before we get too far, let’s be sure we’re all on the same page with our terminology. In recent years, “marketing” and “sales” have become interchangeable terms in some circles. While the two are very closely related, they are not the same. Marketing should be considered an umbrella under which all activities that aid in leading a consumer to purchase your product or service fall. Some of these activities include advertising, promotions, public relations, and yes, sales. Sales is the process of turning a prospect into a lead, a lead into a buyer, and a buyer into a repeat customer.

For demonstration’s sake, we’ve included the following diagram to show what the preferred corporate structure would look like.



Now, we all know that most marketing directors don't work in this kind of structure. Yours probably looks more like this:



So, if we all agree that marketing is what drives sales, then how did we arrive at such a backward corporate set up? Well, money talks. Historically, when a big contract is signed, or a benchmark achieved, it's the sales staff that gets the glory...right? We're not trying to throw a pity party here, but this fact demonstrates that since sales is usually the last stop before the deal is closed, more priority has been given to these positions because it appears that sales is the sole source of revenue. Those of us on the marketing side of the fence sometimes get defensive, saying "hey, what about all our advertising and PR efforts that lead to favorable brand perceptions? Didn't that play a part in why Joe Sales was able to close the deal?" We would have to agree with your frustration, as most of us here have felt it too. Regardless, the above described scenario is how many of us found ourselves working under sales executives who really don't understand the role of marketing.

Specifically in our niche, real estate and hospitality, it's more than common for the first staff hired to be sales staff. Why? Because sales = money. Unfortunately this sets many new projects up against difficult odds because sales people aren't necessarily marketing people. While we know we aren't going to convince many people to hire their marketing director before they consider a sales director, you should at least consider getting professional marketing help from an outside source (like a freelancer or marketing firm) and acknowledge that you hired your sales staff to make sales, not do marketing. This will likely be refreshing for your sales staff, as they will be able to focus on what they were hired to do and what they're good at.

Now that we've given you the best case scenario and the realistic scenario, is there a way for sales and marketing to co-exist without demanding that the accepted corporate structure be completely abandoned (because let's face it, that's not likely to happen)? There is.

The first hurdle is a big one, but not insurmountable. The case must be made for marketing driving sales. This means that all you marketing executives must become extra diligent in tracking and reporting ROI; managing conversion rates (i.e. leads to sales) so that when the big deal is struck, marketing can get a piece of the credit; and educating sales teams on the wealth of tools marketing provides them – if we do our job right, we make their job easier.

Once you've convinced the powers-that-be, you should expect to become a part of the conversation when sales goals and budgets are set. After all, you and your team are driving sales, so why shouldn't you be consulted when those goals and budgets are determined?

Finally, this will hopefully bring you to a place where an equalized relationship between sales and marketing can be achieved. Your corporate structure might look like this:



Sales and marketing are symbiotic elements – you can't have one without the other. That's right marketing people, you need your sales team to close the deal, just as they need you to fill their toolbox with all the things that get them from prospect to lead to buyer.

Fresh Creative is a communications and design firm that specializes in marketing real estate development and hospitality properties. We use strategic process and experience to develop comprehensive solutions that create distinctive impressions.

Contact Fresh
For more information about Fresh Creative and how we can help you, please contact Sam Berens: sam@visitfreshcreative.com or call 850.244.5549

Next Month:
If It's Not Broke, Don't Fix It.

[To sign up for our newsletter click here](#)