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Ask SCORE

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MARKETING AND SALES?

There's a big distinction between marketing and sales, but a smart business strategy aligns both to drive revenue. Learn the differences, so you can create a strong strategy and grow your small business.

Entrepreneurs without direct marketing or sales experience often lump the two together as a single effort. Other owners see marketing and sales as completely separate initiatives. This can create so much separation between the two that marketing and sales end up working in silos, completely separate from one another.

Both of these approaches fail to maximize the ability of a business's marketing and sales efforts to drive revenue.

It's important to the success of your business that you take the time to understand the difference between marketing and sales, as well as how they work best together.

In the Race for Revenue, Marketing Passes the Baton to Sales

Think of marketing and sales like runners in a relay race. Marketing is the first runner out of the gate. It runs Lap

One, which includes finding, reaching and engaging prospective customers. Once marketing completes the first lap, it hands the baton to the second runner, sales. Sales takes off and builds a relationship with those prospects to make the sale and finish the race.

This analogy of 'passing the baton' is what's known in the marketing and sales world as passing through the 'sales funnel.' A sales funnel represents the way a business moves a prospect through its sales process. Marketing efforts get prospects into the funnel and sales efforts work to turn those prospects into customers when they come out of the funnel.

You can read more about marketing and sales funnels and how to create one for your business by listening to this SCORE recorded webinar, "Creating a Sales Funnel to Increase Revenue" (<https://www.score.org/event/creating-sales-funnel-increase-revenue>).

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Excavating & Construction Company Liquidation Auction

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How Does Marketing Get Prospects into the Funnel?

Marketing can include a lot of activities and tactics. Any effort taken to understand the needs of your potential customers, find them, and make them aware of your business and how it can provide a solution to a problem falls under the role of marketing.

Marketing activities can include:

- Market research to understand your customers' needs.
- Public relations efforts that create awareness of your company.
- Advertising to promote your business and products.
- Content creation for blogs, newsletters, and articles.
- Building and maintaining a website.
- Digital marketing to reach your audience online.
- Social media posting and engaging with your social community.
- Designing and printing collateral to support sales efforts.

The list goes on. . .

What Does Sales Do Once Prospects Enter Their Part of the Funnel?

Once marketing has done its job and identified potential customers and their needs, it's time for sales to take over. Sales activities work to create human-to-human connections, build trust and close the sale.

Sales activities can include:

- Meetings with prospects and customers.

- Evaluations of a customers' needs.
- Writing and submitting proposals of solutions and pricing.
- Proposing special pricing for specific prospect or customer situations.
- Following up with prospects and customers via phone and email.
- Meeting prospects at a tradeshow or conference.
- Asking for the sale.
- Getting a contract signed.

Create a Strategy That Allows Marketing and Sales to Work Together

Whether you oversee an entire sales and marketing department, are focused on just the marketing or sales side of the business or do it all as a team of one, create a business strategy that aligns marketing and sales efforts so they can work together.

When you're ready to develop your marketing and sales strategy, consult a seasoned professional who understands both — like a SCORE mentor. A SCORE mentor will bring marketing and sales strategy experience to the table and, if needed, connect you with specialists who can handle sales and marketing activities for your small business. Contact a SCORE mentor today.

SCORE is funded in part through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration. All opinions, conclusions, and/or recommendations expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the SBA.



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