

Strike Up the Band

Creating Harmony Between Sales and Marketing



10815 SIKES PLACE | SUITE 200 | CHARLOTTE, NC | 28277 | 704.246.2400

www.forcemanagement.com

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Sales and Marketing: *Off-Key and Out of Tune*

Great jazz musicians make collaboration seem effortless. The rhythm, the timing, the chord progression, it all comes together with seemingly little effort. Good musicians possess an innate ability to blend together various instruments and unique musical perspectives to create a harmonious groove.

Most companies are a lot bigger than your average jazz band, so bringing diverse corporate teams into harmonious alignment can be a much harder challenge. Sales and marketing teams need to act in concert; yet sometimes they seem to be playing entirely different songs. If you ask them, they probably all believe they are working toward a common goal, driving revenue and creating a sustainable competitive advantage for their company. If that's true, why aren't they getting better results?

Like a jazz performance, you'll know if your sales and marketing organizations are out of tune. Eventually, your sales cycles will lag, the cost of sales will rise, winnable deals will be lost and corporate performance will suffer. When this happens, sales and marketing will likely begin to point the finger at each other, and the war of attrition will escalate.

Still, harmony between sales and marketing organizations can be achieved. Success will require both sales and marketing teams to rally around a shared perspective on customer value. Couple this shared perspective with a common language to communicate value, and you'll create a synergy of powerful communications and improved sales performance.

Once alignment is in place, those same messaging concepts can shift into overdrive and expand into other parts of the organization, ultimately increasing customer loyalty and creating new levels of shareholder value.

The Alignment Challenge

Within most companies, corporate marketing, product marketing and field sales typically share responsibility for creating and delivering customer-facing messages. Each of these areas has a unique perspective which influences their messages:

- **Corporate Marketing** generally focuses on *value comprehension* through broad-based messages that appeal to the entire industry and marketplace.

- **Product Marketing** usually incorporates *value delivery* through product-focused messages that address specific customer problems.
- **Field Sales** tends to emphasize *value engagement* through tailored conversations with targeted buying audiences.

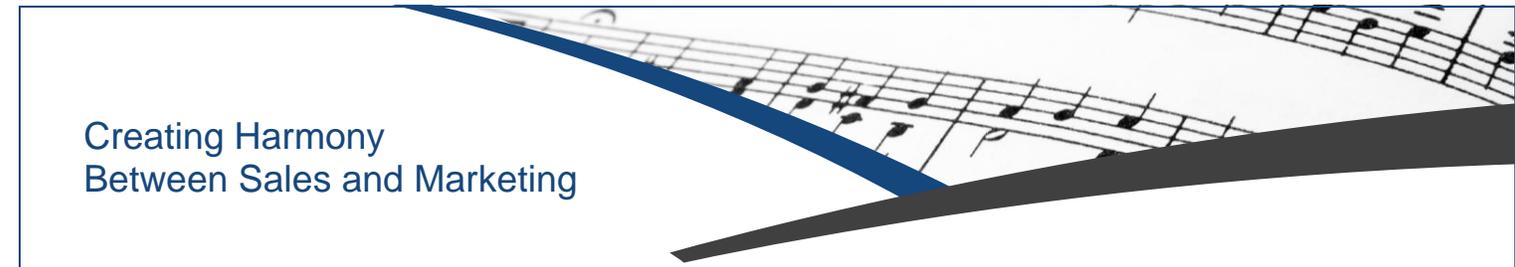
All three functions share the common goal of communicating their company's value, but their differing focus can sometimes hinder collaboration and result in mixed messages that can sap sales effectiveness.

In small or startup companies, where relationships are informal and there are fewer conflicts between sales and marketing, alignment may not be an issue. But, in larger or more mature organizations where there is duplicate effort or competition for funding, it might be time for a change. How do you know if it's time for a change? The chart below indicates how companies in various circumstances should reflect on the current relationship between sales and marketing and evaluate whether a tighter alliance is needed.

Figure 1: Evaluating Alliances Between Sales and Marketing

		Current Sales and Marketing Relationship		
		Undefined	Defined	Aligned
There's no need to change if:	Company is small	Company's products and services are fairly cut and dried	Company lacks a culture of shared responsibility	
	Company has good informal relationships	Traditional sales and marketing roles work in your market	Sales and Marketing report separately	
	Marketing is primarily a sales support function	There's no clear and compelling reason to change	The sales cycle is fairly short	
It's time to tighten the relationship between Sales and Marketing if:	Conflicts are evident between the sales and marketing functions	Even with careful definition of roles, there's duplication of effort and important tasks fall through the cracks	A common process or business funnel can be created for managing and measuring revenue generating activities	
	There's duplication of effort between the two functions or important tasks fall through the cracks	The market is commoditized, making a traditional field sales force costly		
	Sales and Marketing must compete for funding	Products are developed, prototyped or extensively commoditized during the sales process		
		Product lifecycles are shortening and technology turnover is accelerating		

Source: adapted from "Ending the War Between Sales and Marketing," Kotler, Rackham and Krishnaswamy, *Harvard Business Review*, July-August 2006



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Lack of Alignment - Mixed Messages Mean Mixed Results

Lack of alignment between sales and marketing can lead to significant business challenges that threaten a company's long term success. Messaging misalignment leads to poor communication, lost opportunities and higher costs. Within the larger enterprise, misalignment threatens return on investment (ROI) and competitive advantage. Here's why:

- **Shrinking Revenue and Margins** – The inability of sales and marketing to deliver consistent value-oriented messages creates a chain reaction. Marketing can't deliver sales-ready content, and their campaigns tend to generate unqualified leads. Without sales ready content, the sales team can't articulate value to customers, leading to longer sales cycles, discounts that eat up margins and deals lost to the competition.
- **Poor Customer Experience** – Conflicting sales and marketing messages make it difficult for prospective customers to understand how a product delivers value and solves their problems. Mixed messages also cause customers to lose trust. From a product development perspective, relying on internal drivers to define development models means that real, articulated customer needs may be ignored and customers will go elsewhere.
- **Ineffective Sales Force** – Prospects and customers can't be expected to discern value from conflicting sales and marketing messages. Messages that focus on features and functionality essentially deny the customer a meaningful dialogue that could lead to purchase of a value-added solution. When products and services are introduced by features and functions, rather than tying them directly to a customer need, sales conversations simply devolve to the lowest common denominator – price.

Getting sales and marketing to play the same tune begins with giving them the tools to translate messages into a common language that communicates value to all audiences. The foundational tool for this alignment is the Value Messaging Framework®, a proven model for conveying the value of product and service offerings in a way that differentiates a company from its competitors. The framework not only aligns sales and marketing, but also expands opportunities to leverage product development, improve hiring practices and influence corporate culture.

The Value Messaging Framework® Maturity Model

At its simplest level, a consistent messaging framework clarifies marketing messages and elevates sales conversations beyond the rudiments of feature, function and price. It provides sales professionals with a value-oriented sales language that resonates with customers and motivates them to buy. Marketing has on-target messages that introduce and reinforce what the field is selling. With sales and marketing in alignment, the organization can leverage consistent messages to communicate value, generate better leads, convert leads to customers and realize revenue goals.

The Value Messaging Framework Maturity Model (Figure 2) emerged from observing businesses that implemented a Value Messaging Framework for their sales organizations. While companies initially seek consistent messaging to improve sales performance, the creation process requires participation from corporate and product marketing, as well as key members of the executive team. Bringing sales, marketing and product development executives together to create a customized Value Messaging Framework makes all parties equal stakeholders in the performance outcomes. As the players become emotionally invested, the environment becomes conducive to alignment. The seed of improved sales performance takes root, with the additional dividend of dissemination of these concepts throughout the company.

Throughout the process of building a well-aligned messaging framework, an organizing principle emerges that guides the actions of sales, marketing and product development. This framework functions as a leveler, keeping their work in tune. As alignment continues, the organization naturally begins to expand the framework throughout the enterprise as a tool for positive organizational change.



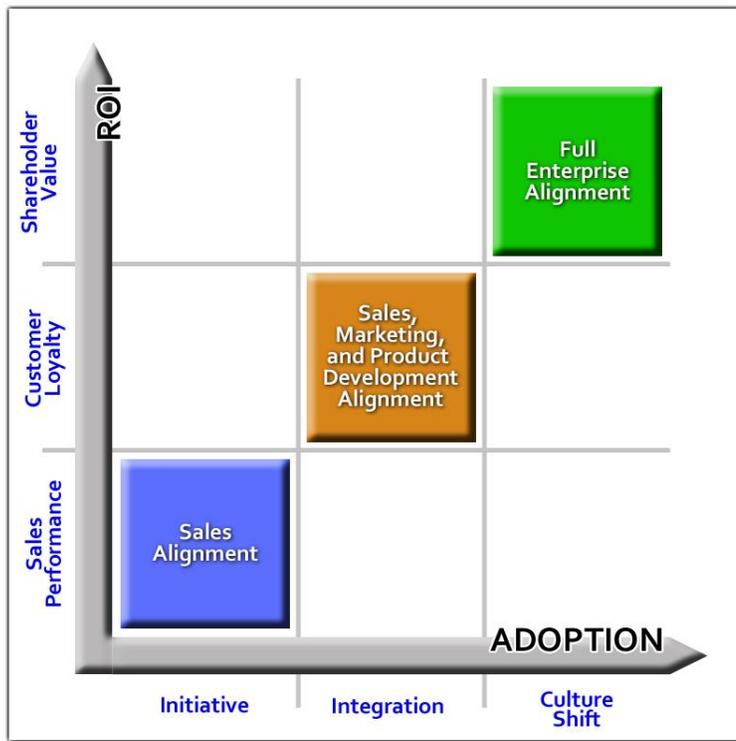
By rallying the sales and marketing teams around a shared perspective on customer value, organizations can create leverage to rise above their most difficult business challenges.



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Figure 2: The Value Messaging Framework Maturity Model

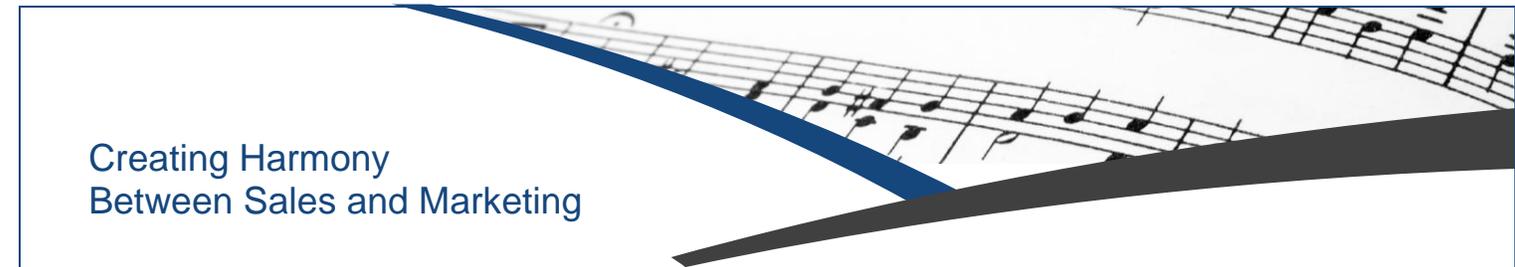
As sales and marketing align through the creation of the Value Messaging Framework, the enterprise starts to reap tangible ROI. Sales results continue to improve as the sales, marketing and product organizations become better integrated. Value Messaging concepts begin to virally disseminate throughout the enterprise, and a customer-focused, value-oriented culture emerges.



Elevating Business Results Through a Value-Oriented Culture

Customers who leverage a consistent messaging framework not only improve sales performance, but also have the potential to solve more pervasive business performance issues. When the enterprise becomes totally focused on solving customer problems, it fosters a value-oriented culture and creates a sustainable competitive advantage. Alignment of sales and marketing creates opportunities for:

- Higher Revenue and Margins** – By engaging in value-focused conversations with customers and prospects, sales professionals not only avoid margin-consuming discounting, but also create greater opportunities for cross-selling and up-selling. Average deal sizes increase; sales cycles get shorter and win rates improve. Marketing, aligned with sales, delivers messages and materials that demonstrate differentiation in the marketplace and marketing campaigns begin to yield sales-ready leads. With product and service marketing focused on real customer needs, offerings will reflect actual required capabilities that the customer has articulated. Eventually unprofitable products and services can be eliminated.
- Positive Customer Experience** – When sales and marketing are aligned, value is consistently articulated throughout customer-facing communications. Buyers understand why the company’s solutions are worth their investment. Demonstrating a true understanding of customers’ problems increases credibility, provides a proven track record of solving customer-specific problems and minimizes risk. Customers acknowledge, “You do what you promise, and I know what to expect from you.” As a result, customer loyalty improves.
- Recruitment and Retention of a More Effective Sales Force** – To attract top talent, companies must assure prospective employees that they will have the support they need to succeed. That means articulating that the business truly understands their customers’ problems, has a solution that is different from the competition and has a successful track record of implementing those solutions. Demonstrating energetic alignment between sales and marketing shows that the enterprise is seriously invested in long-term success. A top sales professional who feels your team will deliver quality leads and provide appropriate sales support will put you at the top of his short list.



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Case Study: Bladelogic Leverages the Value Messaging Framework for Dramatic Growth

Bladelogic, Inc. (Bladelogic) is an industry-leading data center automation solutions provider serving enterprises, professional service organizations and government institutions. Bladelogic solutions help IT organizations address the escalating costs, complexities and risks associated with managing the data center in areas such as provisioning, configuration, patching, auditing and remediation of physical/virtual servers and enterprise applications. As the result of rapid and successful business growth, Bladelogic was acquired in 2008 by leading enterprise software and services provider, BMC Software.

The Business Challenge:

In early 2006, Bladelogic faced three challenges that had a direct impact on their sales and marketing effectiveness. First, their existing sales and marketing materials contained inconsistent and often highly technical solution messages, which their customers found difficult to understand. Second, these materials did not contain a standardized vocabulary that effectively communicated their value-oriented solution messages. As a result, Bladelogic was delivering inconsistent messages worldwide. Finally, customers did not view Bladelogic sales reps as trusted advisors. This made it difficult for Bladelogic to earn customer trust and help customers solve their specific business problems. These three challenges diminished Bladelogic's ability to grow their business.

Force Management's Solutions:

Force Management began working with Bladelogic to design, develop, and implement a customized Value Messaging Framework® to align Bladelogic's sales and marketing deliverables around consistent and unified value-oriented messages. Within four months of implementation, Bladelogic had developed, modified and integrated custom Value Messaging Sales Tools that reinforced their company's six key differentiators. The improved sales tools systematically applied a common sales language to Bladelogic's existing solutions, which allowed sales reps to match customer problems

to their unique solution advantages. By the end of the year, Bladelogic had integrated these new tools and value-oriented messages into every aspect of their sales and marketing operations.

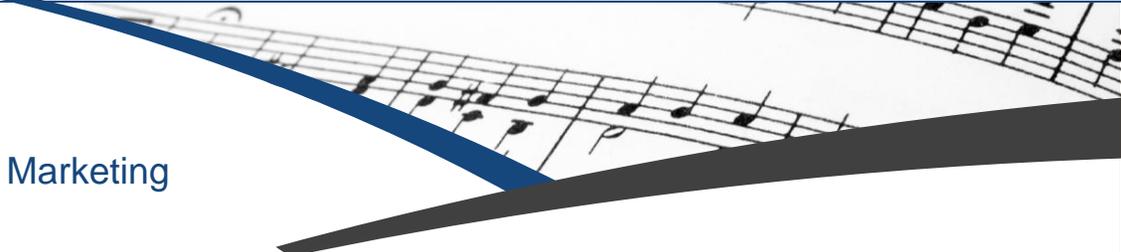


“It became very easy for both our sales reps and the customer to see this information and say, ‘Yes, we get it. We see the value in your solutions.’ Force Management did that for us.”

Vick Vaishnavi,
VP Marketing
Bladelogic, Inc.
Division of BMC Software

Measurable Results:

Supported by a value-based framework, Bladelogic revenues increased from \$7 million to approximately \$100 million within 18 months. The effectiveness of the Value Message Framework® attracted the attention of BMC Software CEO Bob Beauchamp, who noticed “the intensity of the Bladelogic sales force and their ability to deliver key solution messages.” As a result of their impressive sales and market growth, BMC acquired Bladelogic in March 2008.



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Concluding Summary:

One of the fastest ways for a company to lose credibility is for sales and marketing to deliver messages that are out of tune with the marketplace. An inability to effectively articulate value can be addressed by aligning sales and marketing with a common language and consistent, value-focused messages.

Working within a Value Messaging Framework, sales and marketing will consistently create and disseminate messages that resonate with their buyers' most pressing goals, needs and problems. Most importantly, a messaging framework is customer-focused, not product-focused, which clearly conveys to customers and prospects that, "It's all about you." It's a subtle cultural shift, centered on the harmonious creation of customer value.



Once a business adopts the Value Messaging Framework for the sales team, it automatically becomes a valuable tool for aligning the sales and marketing functions.



Once a business adopts a solid messaging framework for the sales team, the framework automatically becomes a valuable tool for aligning the sales and marketing functions. As the focus on value cross-pollinates throughout the organization, the framework provides a catalyst for aligning other areas of the organization. Savvy businesses can then expand the Value Messaging Framework throughout their organizations to develop better products, improve hiring practices and create a positive impact on corporate culture. This is the true test of whether a focus on value truly matures throughout the organization.

Implementing a messaging framework focused on value will align sales and marketing and create a more effective selling environment. Just as important, allowing the framework to mature throughout the entire organization can drive organizational growth and bottom line benefits including:

- **Improved Revenues and Margins** through more competitive wins and negotiations focused on value versus pricing discounts.
- **Superior Customer Experiences** that result in more qualified customers with longer retention.
- **Better Use of Business Resources** that generates greater efficiencies, lower costs and better business performance.

About Force Management

Force Management offers customized sales consulting and training services, designed to help customers increase their sales revenue, and improve their sales margins and market share. Through innovative programs, proven evaluation tools, and customized training solutions, Force Management helps B2B leaders maximize their sales organization's profitability and productivity. Staffed by seasoned professionals with real-world experience in sales, sales operations and marketing, Force Management works with clients to solve critical business problems through strategy and execution of high-impact, comprehensive solutions that are highly differentiated in the marketplace and that consistently achieve measurable sales results.

Force Management's Key Areas of Focus include:

Customer Interactions – Providing clients with the framework, tools and curriculum to help sales organizations articulate value and differentiation in a competitive marketplace.

Sales Management and Operations – Creating and implementing processes and practices that help clients manage key areas of sales operations including lead generation, territory and account planning, opportunity management, sales execution and revenue forecasting.

Seller Knowledge, Skills and Abilities – Providing competency models, management tools and best-in-class sales, management and leadership training to help clients recruit, develop and retain successful sales organizations.

