

## Three Fresh Rules for Sales and Marketing in the Age of Analytics

by **Mindy Charski** | December 31, 2013 5:28 am

There has always been a need for marketing and sales to work well together, but the amorphous buying journeys business-to-business customers are taking today are necessitating even greater collaboration.

“It’s no longer the old world of ‘Marketing generates leads and hands them to sales and sales closes them and hands them to support and support manages them. End of story,’” says Peter Chase, executive vice president, business development at [Scribe Software](#), which integrates customer data from CRM and business management software with sources like social listening platforms and email marketing tools. “Customers may go in and out of those different areas and they may come in at different places and revert back quickly to other places,” he says.



In response, roles that in the past followed well-defined sales and support processes now must bend and flex according to specific customer needs—and according to what data about customer interactions indicate. Sales may return leads to marketing for more nurturing through marketing automation efforts, for instance. And even after a sale, marketing may be brought in to help build loyalty with the new customer. “It’s about personalized engagement,” Chase says. “That old ‘throw it over the wall’ [approach] doesn’t work anymore.”

This shifting paradigm requires marketers and sales reps to have not only new data sources and tools, but also new ways of thinking. Here are new takes on three traditional rules.

Peter Chase of Scribe Software

### **New Rule No. 1: Some Sales Leads Are More Equal Than Others**

Not all leads have the same likelihood of converting, and salespeople can get frustrated chasing cold leads from marketers. “When sales starts to miss their targets and goals, the normal answer is, ‘We need more leads,’” says Tom Lee, senior director of product and growth strategy at [Fliptop](#), which sells a customer intelligence platform for sales and marketing. “What then happens is your sales guys, who were already busy and panicking, now are even more busy and have less attention to spare on the leads because they now have more.”

Analytics applications can make the process more efficient by scoring leads. For example, Fliptop’s predictive analytics platform can help clients figure out which leads are valuable enough to go straight to sales and which need to be nurtured more by marketing. That decision is based on a score from Fliptop’s model.

A client can take a lead garnered through its website – like when someone fills out a form for a whitepaper – and pass it to Fliptop, which finds more information about the individual and her company through the client’s internal CRM data and external sources like the public Web. Included in Fliptop’s model, for instance, is information from job websites that can provide tips about demand for skills, goods and services.

“We find a great signal to whether someone’s going to buy your product is whether they’re hiring in that specialty area,” Lee says. “If companies are hiring for customer service reps, it’s a very high likelihood they’re going to buy customer service software.”

Fliptop then runs its gathered information against the client’s historical data to see how closely the lead resembles an ideal customer and produces a score.

This kind of technology isn’t entirely new, Lee says, but he argues that companies like his are making lead scoring with predictive analytics affordable even to small businesses by serving as what he calls “data scientists on demand.”

### **New Rule No. 2: Social Media Is For Salespeople, Not Just Marketers**

A 2013 report from Social Centered Selling and A Sales Guy Consulting found that of 511 B2B salespeople surveyed, 21.7 percent said they were not using social media as part of their sales process. Of those, 45 percent said it was because they did not understand it; 18.9 percent said they didn’t see the value; and 17.1 percent said it doesn’t work for their particular business.

But yet the study also found that 72.6 percent of salespeople using social media as part of their sales process in 2012 said they outperformed their sales peers. Many are using social media for networking, prospecting and research, according to the report.

Engaging in social media – sans the hard sell – can be a powerful way to participate in a buyer’s purchasing journey. That is key because many buyers are doing the bulk of their research before reaching out to a company. An oft-cited 2012 [statistic](#) from the advisory company Corporate Executive Board (CEB), for instance, states that 57 percent of a typical purchasing decision is done before a B2B customer talks with a supplier.

Despite the potential benefits of social selling, many companies have shied away from letting their sales team get involved with social media out of fear their messages won’t be appropriate and could damage the brand, according to John McGee, president of [OptifiNow](#), a sales and marketing automation platform.

His company has attempted to address this challenge by introducing a tool into its platform that enables its clients’ sales reps to post content on social media that has been created by sales and marketing managers. OptifiNow can track which content the sales reps chose to post and the kinds of responses they generated, like retweets.

### **New Rule No. 3: Dig Into Both Traditional and New Data Sources**

Gathering basic information about a lead like its industry, employee count, revenue and competitors is by all means still necessary. But enriching that kind of data with real-time sources like news feeds and social media can shine a light on fresh opportunities that both sales and marketing can exploit.

For instance, the 14-person firm [Exakt Marketing](#) in Tampa, Fla., uses the business information and sales platform of OneSource to understand “who to engage, but most importantly, when and why,” says Derek Lee, Exakt’s chief executive officer. The agency, for instance, can set triggers about revenue or real estate changes pertaining to restaurant and health and fitness companies.

“Because of the types of services that we provide, knowing about these types of changes with potential clients gives us an opportunity to approach with an offer that is appropriate and timely,” he says.



James Rogers of OneSource

Timing is essential, and firms like Exakt can engage when they see potential customers broadcasting their needs. “[Businesses] are giving you signals that say, ‘There are different changes that are occurring here,’ and they have different problems they need help solving,” says James Rogers, [OneSource](#)’s chief marketing officer.

Rogers says suppliers can interpret those signals, use data to understand the prospect’s company and its challenges, and determine if they can sell the right products and services to address the need. That means suppliers “can be proactive in engaging with [buyers] to try to get a foot in the door to help them solve those problems,” he says. “If you can do that, you can endear yourself, and if you endear yourself, then you have a better chance of winning the deal.”

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