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## Top Producer

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### Sales Enablement – Bridging the Divide Between Sales and Marketing

By Chetan Saiya, CEO of Assetlink

Marketing can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of sales reps, leading to shorter sales cycles, larger deal size and higher win rate. How else can marketing help sales?

Marketing organizations typically invest a lot of money in creating the right tools needed by the sales force to move prospects forward in a sales cycle and close them. Despite this investment, salespeople still spend an average of 40% of their time preparing client-facing deliverables, while leveraging less than 50% of the materials created by marketing.

By bridging this divide, marketing can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of sales reps, leading to shorter sales cycles, larger deal size and higher win rate. How can marketing address this issue?

After creating sales tools, the marketing organization often uploads them on an intranet or a shared file server, so a sales representative can go there, search through the various documents, select the one they need and download them to their desktop/laptop. However, a number of issues exist with such a homegrown solution:

- Sales force spends too much of their productive selling time trying to find the right materials. Over time, the intranet or shared file directory begins to contain hundreds of marketing documents such as brochures, data sheets, sales tools, email templates, customer success stories etc. The names of the files may not be descriptive enough – as a result one cannot clearly discern the content from its file name. There is often no search available on this homegrown solution – when such a capability will allow sales representatives to find the right marketing content by entering certain attributes in the search field. Even when the search capability exists, the marketing documents may not be tagged well enough – so either the search returns with nothing or too many documents. Besides, some of the material may be outdated and no longer relevant. As a result, sales representatives then take it upon themselves to create the documents during their productive selling time instead of using it to meet other prospects.
- There is very low awareness among the sales force of available marketing resources & tools. Sales representatives often ignore the emails they get from marketing about notification of new sales tools. However, when they need that content, they have no way of searching through old emails to find the right sales tool.
- Inconsistent use of branded marketing materials at the local level. Often corporate marketing assets have to be localized or regionalized – such as replacing the corporate contact information in a document with local address/contact information. Assets created by marketing often cannot be easily localized by the local sales organization – as a result, regional sales organizations often end up creating their own material. However, the messaging on such locally created material may be 'off' or the branding elements often used incorrectly or look-and-feel consistency not maintained across documents. Such problems dilute the brand equity of the company.

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- There is lack of tracking and measurement capability on the homegrown solutions. With no usage metrics, marketing is not equipped to answer simple questions such as which content is performing well or which content is hardly being used. Clear visibility into such metrics may point to problems such as marketing not creating relevant material or inability of the sales organization to find potentially high impact material. Without good usage metrics, such problems remain hidden.

As a result of such issues, the ROI on sales and marketing tools tends to be lower than expected. Marketing often complains that sales representatives do not use the tools they have created and sales force complains that marketing does not create the content that is useful for them. Such finger pointing often leads to a divide between the two organizations. Simple technology investments such as Marketing Asset Management can break this logjam. Leading marketing organizations have significantly increased the usage of the content created by them and have enabled the local sales organizations to easily localize the content while preserving messaging and branding elements by using such technology.

Marketing Asset Management solution enables marketing managers to organize the marketing content (such as brochures, data sheets, sales tools, email templates, customer success stories, logo treatments, advertisements etc) in a multi-level hierarchy of their choice. Once organized, such solutions offer intuitive navigation over the intranet, making it easy for the sales force and field marketing organizations to find and use the marketing content. It can also convert graphic files into thumbnails to enable easy viewing and referencing by the sales force. In addition, such a technology provides the ability to add multiple tags on the asset (called Metadata). These tags later enable the sales rep to find and retrieve an asset by searching for all assets that carry a certain tag. As a result, finding the right content among hundreds of marketing documents becomes very easy.

Marketing Asset Management solutions typically support multiple media formats, including multiple formats of raster graphics and streaming video. Marketing managers can store different formats of marketing assets in a single repository, instead of maintaining separate repositories for different formats – making it easy for sales force to find and leverage the marketing content.

In addition, marketing organization can create certain content as a template and allow the sales rep to localize certain textual and graphical elements by simply supplying textual information and selecting predefined images. Such templates and predefined images can also be stored in the Digital Asset library. The solutions also enable the marketing teams to build an internal brand, product or service websites without requiring any knowledge of HTML or Internet technologies. As a result, any marketing user can quickly set up a comprehensive and informative site that is packed with important and relevant information and downloadable digital assets that can be searched and accessed globally. Finally, the technology can provide usage metrics, which can be used by marketing to either identify assets that are not used and either purge them or make them more relevant or ensure that sales is aware of them.

Marketing Asset Management has been used successfully by large and mid-sized marketing organizations to eliminate the traditional divide between sales and marketing and better enable the sales force to sell more efficiently and effectively. I invite you to take a closer look at it.

---Source: Chetan Saiya is the Founder, Chairman and CEO of Assetlink, a powerful marketing operations management (MOM) solution that serves Global 2000 companies worldwide <http://www.assetlink.com/>. He can be reached at [chetan.saiya@assetlink.com](mailto:chetan.saiya@assetlink.com).

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