

Marketing Interaction Tracks for the B2B Marketer

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Welcome to crunch-time. Marketing executives across the country are being hard pressed to demonstrate marketing ROI in a manner that other executives within their organization can understand. This can be especially challenging in B2B organizations with complex products and extended sales cycles. So how does a marketer increase transparency and accountability while simultaneously driving Marketing and Sales alignment?

In a recent CIO Insight study, B2B marketers spoke to the importance of measuring their campaigns and increasing the perceived value of Marketing within the organizations, while simultaneously speaking to the challenges of reaching those goals using traditional marketing practices. Demand generation and lead nurturing that can be linked to profitable top-line growth has become one of the key demands of marketing executives in today's most progressive organizations.

The study also reinforces the importance of enabling technologies, which help companies move beyond creativity and brand building, into the realm of improving efficiencies and coordinating multiple complex campaigns. This is often the case in companies with numerous product lines, complex products and lengthy sales cycles.

Perhaps the most important step in achieving these goals is the realization of the complexities related with aligning Sales and Marketing. Each has a distinct and unique role within the customer buying process, and both have to work in harmony to optimize the sales process. The marketplace clearly indicates that buying patterns are evolving, with prospects now wanting a "pull" relationship, where they can educate themselves until they are ready to enter into the latter stages of the buying cycle and are receptive to being contacted by Sales. How do you simultaneously and effectively educate the financial, technical and end-user evaluators in a "pull" fashion until they are ready to be contacted by a sales person?



Figure One: Sample - Customer Buying Process

The first three phases of the buying process are best addressed via cost effective Marketing resources...not by Sales. History has taught us that utilizing your Sales resources during the early stages of the buying process is both expensive, inefficient and can potentially jeopardize the evaluation process. Compounding matters, Sales can only manage a limited number of relationships, whereas Marketing is capable of building and sustaining thousands of relationships simultaneously. This goal becomes even more important when dealing with multiple decision makers and key influencers across numerous product lines.

By now you are probably wondering, how do we build and cultivate relationships with all of our prospects, especially considering that their criteria for a successful research/evaluation phase can differ wildly in complexity, content and duration? We at Rubicon believe the answer begins with developing prospect interaction tracks that maps the behavior of ideal prospects. So what exactly is a Marketing Interaction Track?

A marketing interaction track is the planned optimal progression of prospects through your marketing offerings until the point of purchase. This path can vary wildly based on criteria such as product type, product cost, product complexity, prospect demographics, geography, market type, prospect need or intended application and average length of the sales cycle. Rubicon firmly believes that all product lines and prospect types (economic buyer versus technical evaluator, etc) should have unique ideal tracks, which have been designed exclusively to quickly move prospects forward in their buying cycle.

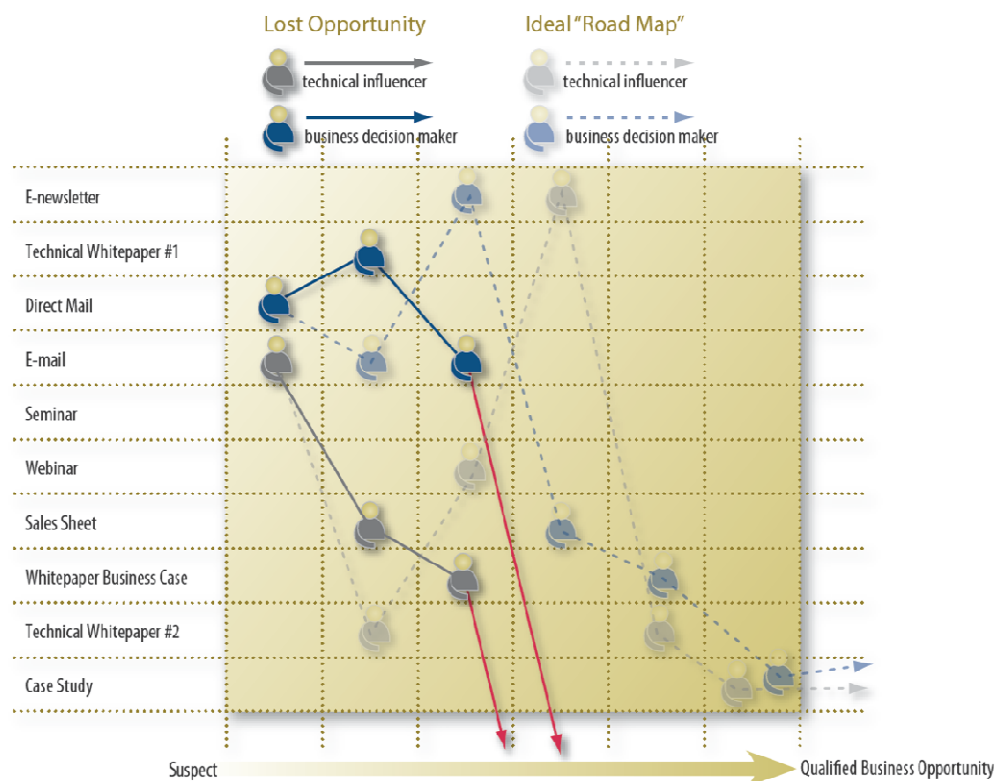


Figure Two: Sample – Marketing Interaction Track

The correct development and use of these tracks takes into account multiple factors that are unique to your company. The customer buying process is the first and foremost area you must study, with additional considerations being given to content (sales sheets, whitepapers, web pages, case studies, etc), the lead management process, roles and responsibilities of decision makers within accounts, the sales cycle, available technology, marketing resources, and in many cases the communications plan.

Benefits:

- Delivering the right content at the right time to the right people
- Educating prospects the way they want to be educated
- Increased conversion rates
- Sales engagement at the right time (neither too early nor too late)
- 360 sales pipeline visibility
- Stronger sales forecast
- Increased transaction sizes
- Clear accountability
- Demonstrable marketing programs ROI

In the next issue of *The LeadGeneration* (Rubicon's quarterly e-newsletter), Rubicon will explore how the introduction of marketing automation solutions can help marketers quickly and efficiently deploy their marketing interaction tracks, using it as a tool to gain market share, increase profitability and separate themselves from their competition.

Have a great quarter!

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