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## How to Match Marketing with Sales

An interview with LaVon Koerner, founder and chief revenue officer of Revenue Storm

SELLING POWER EDITORS

### TURF WARS

**Selling Power (SP):** How do you know when sales and marketing are aligned?

**LaVon Koerner (LK):** You cannot align sales to marketing nor marketing to sales. What you can do is align sales and marketing to your strategy. If you're successful doing that, they end up aligned to each other. You cut through all the political turf wars and opinions, because it's no longer about marketing and sales, it's about strategy.

### WHO'S IN CHARGE

**SP:** Who should be in charge of the alignment?

**LK:** Usually it's a steering committee or, in smaller companies, the CEO may head the initiative.

**SP:** What does that conversation sound like in a steering-committee meeting?

**LK:** "This is our chosen go-to-market strategy for X revenue stream." You can have different go-to-market strategies for different revenue streams, but every revenue stream has to be anchored with one of four go-to-market strategies.

**SP:** And they are?

**LK:** Strategy number one is selling in a transactional way. That's going to be very price sensitive. Number two is selling a complete process. That's "we don't sell stuff, we sell solutions," which became "we sell integrated solutions" or "complete solutions." Number three is a more



### Rule of Thumb

Remember, in business, it's an immutable rule that **nothing happens until somebody sells something.**

business-consultant approach. You're selling a business-improvement value proposition, and that's what they're buying. Number four is when you're willing to put skin in the game; we simply call it a partnership approach. It's when you partner to go to market together. You both share in the reward upside and the expense downside. To summarize: transactional, process, business consultant, or partnership in going to market.

Once you've identified which of those strategies is in play, then you align marketing and sales to the strategy. That's what your diagnostics do, and so the diagnostics create accountability and progress as you begin to remove the drag wherever there is misalignment.

**SP:** In many companies, there's a dialogue between sales and marketing when marketing says, "We sent you a thousand leads last month, and your salespeople have called on only twenty or thirty. Why is that?" Salespeople then say, "Because your leads suck."

**LK:** The misalignment always occurs in three areas. Area one is what we call the image, or brand, of the company. The second is market development, when marketing is responsible for bringing in high-quality leads and suspects and prospects, etc. The third is support around opportunity. We easily remember it this way: I.M.O., [which stands for] image development, market development, opportunity development. Misalignment is always in one of those three areas.

#### IN SYNC

**SP:** How do you get sales and marketing to speak with one voice?

**LK:** Once you've identified the strategy, then the message has to be aligned to that strategy: "We've got a common strategy that we're writing messaging around." That's job number one. Job number two is [to determine] who writes the actual

“ The challenge of leadership is to be strong but not rude; be kind, but not weak; be bold, but not a bully; be humble, but not timid; be proud, but not arrogant; have humor, but without folly. ”

JIM ROHN,  
ENTREPRENEUR  
AND AUTHOR

message. It's the job of marketing to provide the business development, and sales organization supplies the message that the salespeople can take to the customers.

**SP:** Marketing is historically a more "brainy" activity – more analytic, thoughtful, and long-term focused – and sales is more an action science, about being agile, making things up as you go. So you have two different personalities; how do you get them work in sync?

**LK:** It's both easier and harder than you think. It's easier than you think if you have clearly defined roles. You have to get clarity around the roles,

limits, ends, beginnings, the client-facing, the non-client-facing. But what we have found is this: the best marketers are quieter, more cerebral, and more academic. They are the best wordsmiths. They're often more introverted; they can come up with powerful messages and scripts that salespeople can take into the market. We believe that the messaging coming out of marketing should be in the neighborhood of 50 to 70 percent complete, then sales has the responsibility to put the final customization, the personalization, and the specific things for the particular client they are working with into the message.

**SP:** So it's OK for salespeople to ad-lib within the script?

**LK:** That's the only way it gets personalized. You never mess with a salesperson's style. That's probably one of the biggest problems that a lot of companies have. They try to recreate salespeople in their own image. Sales managers make this mistake; marketing people make this mistake. You have to give salespeople the room to be true to their own styles. ■

*Hear more insight from LaVon Koerner on September 18, 2014, in Las Vegas at the upcoming [Sales 2.0 Conference: Sales & Marketing Convergence](#).*



#### VIDEO: HOW TO ALIGN SALES WITH MARKETING, WITH LAVON KOERNER

