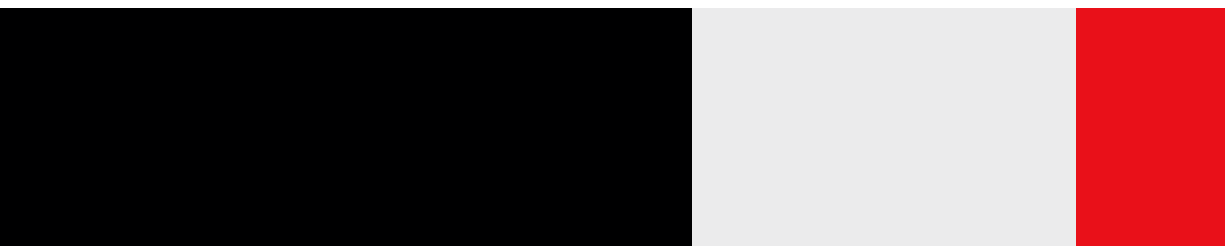


B2B Sales and Marketing Alignment

How to Overcome Communication, Data, and Technology Challenges

Misalignment between B2B marketing and sales is all too common, and notoriously difficult to resolve. But there are ways marketing leaders and their teams can prioritize issues for better, more productive relationships with sales. In fact, 35% of marketers and decision-makers believe that regular communication and a steady flow of leads can help their relationship with sales. This eMarketer report explores how to bridge the relationship gap by tackling issues related to communication, data, and technology.



Presented by



B2B Sales and Marketing Alignment: How to Overcome Communication, Data, and Technology Challenges

Misalignment between B2B marketing and sales is all too common, and notoriously difficult to resolve. But there are ways marketing leaders and their teams can prioritize issues for better, more productive relationships with sales.

KEY QUESTION: What are the steps marketing leaders can take to improve alignment with sales?

KEY STAT: A July 2022 survey from Activate found that 35% of B2B tech marketers and decision-makers in North America believed steady communication and lead generation can help their relationship with sales.

Most Effective Strategy in Optimizing Their Relationship With Sales According to B2B Tech Marketers and Decision-Makers in North America, July 2022

% of respondents



Source: Activate, "State of Demand Gen 2022" in association with MarketingCharts, Oct 14, 2022

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B2B Sales and Marketing Alignment

How to Overcome Relationship, Communication, and Data Challenges

communication, and data challenges are all good first steps.

Tackling issues related to relationship,

Key Stat

35% of marketers and decision-makers felt that steady communication and lead generation helped optimize their relationship with sales.

Most Effective Strategy in Optimizing Their Relationship With Sales According to B2B Tech Marketers and Decision-Makers in North America, July 2022

% of respondents



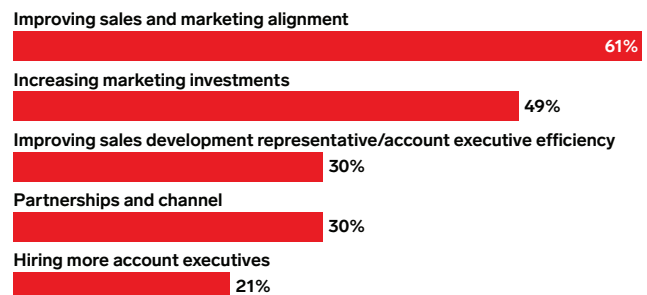
Our Findings

Marketers should work with sales to put their brand, content, and value proposition in front of buyers at target accounts.

- **Strong relationships start with C-suite alignment.** Trust from up top helps create better sales and marketing alignment.
- **Build relationships, establish connections, and communicate.** Encourage in-person interactions and break down any lingering silos.
- **Measurement and attribution are critical for success.** With accurate data and the right tech, teams can align on the measurement of key metrics.

What B2B Marketing and Sales Executives in North America Believe Is Most Critical to Driving Growth, June 2022

% of respondents



Your Opportunity

Laying a firm foundation for alignment will eventually drive revenues.

- **Understand the business.** Know your company's financials, goals, and forecasts, then communicate on how marketing will align with business goals.
- **Prioritize communication.** Establish a regular cadence and ensure that marketing activities are shared with sales. Have empathy.
- **Focus on data, tech, and shared metrics.** Select the right martech for the data. Sync with sales metrics to show marketing's impact on revenues.

Also in this report: [B2B trends](#) | [First-party data](#) | [Today's buyer](#) | [Millennials](#) | [Content marketing](#)

Strong relationships start with C-suite alignment.

A B2B CMO's success depends on good relationships within the C-suite. Those kinds of rapport help when marketing strives to align with sales to hit revenue goals. But marketing also has soft goals, such as for brand awareness, that are more difficult to measure. For marketing, there is no clear line to revenues.

- **Understand that marketing leadership's tenure is tenuous.** A good relationship with sales is simply a matter of self-preservation for marketers. Sales leaders often have more power, especially in a sales-driven company. A bad relationship with sales can spell the end of the CMO's stay.
- **Secure consensus on metrics.** CMOs must be in lockstep with sales leaders on new and existing business metrics, like net recurring revenues and annual recurring revenues. They should monitor customer retention and churn rates together. Poor results can harm marketing's reputation more than that of sales.
- **Get the C-suite to align with, and trust, the CMO.** Trust from the C-suite helps create better sales and marketing alignment. For instance, if the C-suite rejects marketing's requests for investments, that can eventually hurt the relationship between sales and marketing.

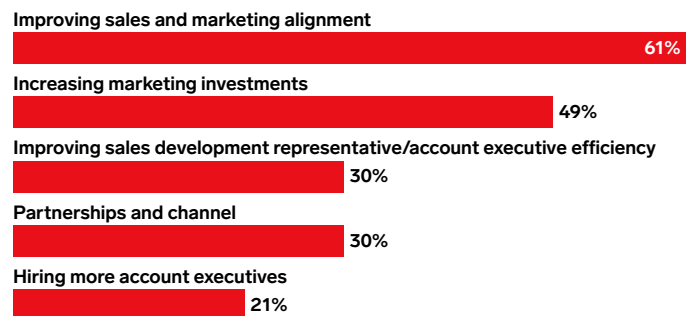
Here's how to bridge the relationship gap with sales.

More than 60% of B2B marketing and sales executives in North America agreed that improving alignment was critical to driving growth, according to Demand Gen Report (DGR) polling from June 2022. Marketing leaders need to take the initiative to build relationships, establish strong connections, and communicate—but this requires hard work.

- **Tackle the lack of in-person interactions that can cause friction.** Sales and marketing teams need to spend time together, something that's harder to do today with the prevalence of remote work. In addition, in-person annual sales kickoffs and other social events are less common than they were in pre-pandemic times.
- **Get sales to understand marketing's timelines.** Sales reps typically zero in on the short term to sell, convert deals, and meet quarterly goals. But marketers also consider long-term goals, such as building brand awareness for a sale that might not close for a year. If there's no communication, reps may fail to understand why marketers must focus time and budget on goals other than immediately creating leads.
- **Break down any lingering silos.** Even when marketing and sales teams are both under the chief revenue officer, they can feel worlds apart, leading to misunderstandings and mistrust. Involve the teams on projects where there is equal authority and responsibility, such as a product launch.

What B2B Marketing and Sales Executives in North America Believe Is Most Critical to Driving Growth, June 2022

% of respondents



Source: Demand Gen Report (DGR), "2022 C-Suite Go-to-Market Benchmark Survey," sponsored by Demandbase, Aug 23, 2022

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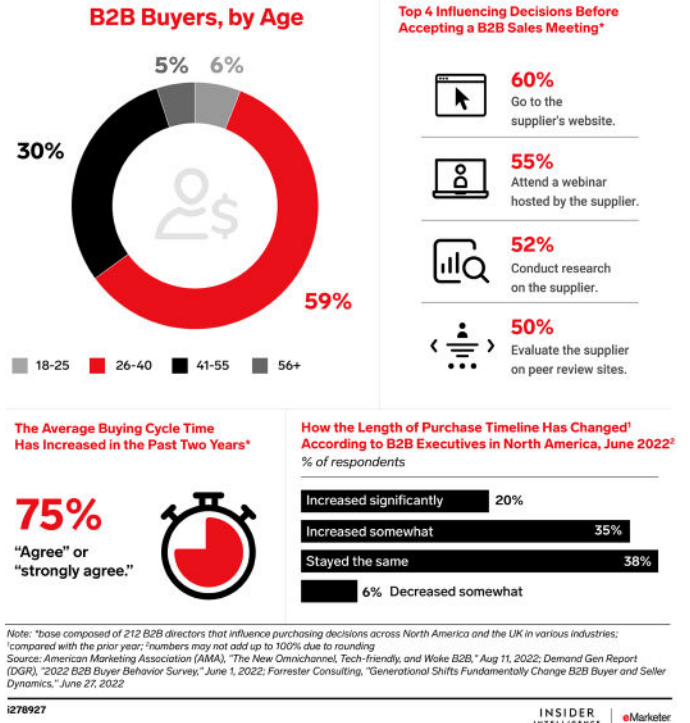
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Both teams must understand today's buyer.

Today's younger and more digitally savvy **B2B buyers** have transformed the whole sales and marketing dynamic. For instance, 65% of B2B buyers are now younger than 40, per the American Marketing Association (AMA). Marketers also face internal challenges like staff and budget reductions and evolving tech (such as new AI tools). That can alter how marketers and sales reps engage with buyers.

- **Provide buyers with a seamless, self-directed experience.** Marketers must offer this upfront, and throughout the buyer's journey. Today's path to purchase isn't linear and has multiple online and offline touchpoints. Most of this journey can happen before sales is involved, giving marketers a strategic role within the buying process to aid sales' success.
- **Alleviate indecision during the buying process.** Buyers are increasingly afraid to make the wrong decision. Meanwhile, marketers and sales reps are trying to find out who's the ultimate decider, and what has stalled the opportunity. This can lead to internal finger-pointing, rather than a strategy that can win over indecisive buyers.
- **Keep in mind that buyers might not engage directly with a B2B firm.** They may interact with content marketing, social media, or a review site, and not the firm's website. Marketers need to connect those activities at the account level so sales reps are aware of it. Treat marketing efforts as a joint pursuit with sales, instead of punting individual marketing qualified leads (MQLs) to reps and calling it a day.
- **Consider the committee, and not just the individual buyer.** Marketers tend to focus on individual leads, some of which may appear to be qualified. But with today's larger committees and longer sales cycles, marketers need to consider the entire account profile to understand engagement and activities in their entirety.

The B2B Buyer in 2023



Alignment on content is key across the entire buyer journey.

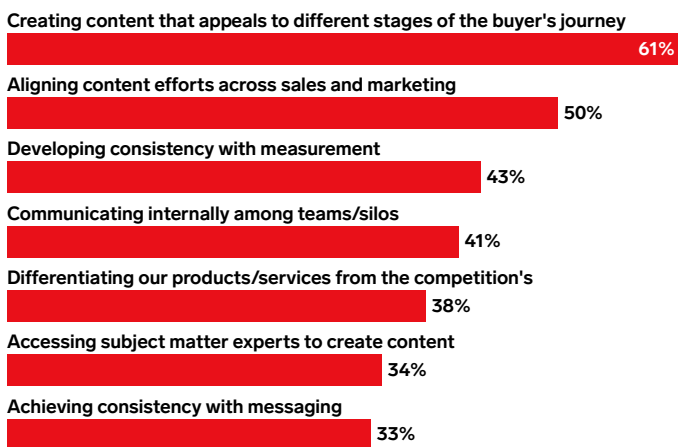
Today's buyer will consume a lot of **marketing content** before talking to sales reps. But reps may not know what buyers have seen, or where they are in their journey. That may be because most B2B marketers struggle to create appealing content across different stages, cited as a challenge by 61% of those surveyed worldwide in July 2022 by the Content Marketing Institute (CMI) and MarketingProfs.

- **Marketers should effectively communicate their content strategy to sales.** The survey also found that 41% of respondents felt this was a challenge. If sales reps don't have a clear and ongoing understanding of content marketing efforts, they're likely to think poorly of marketing's performance and its support for sales.

- **Content should be coordinated across teams.** Sales reps frequently distribute their own content and messaging; they may even use a different system to email prospects at the same time as marketing. The CMI and MarketingProfs survey found that half of respondents felt content alignment was a challenge. If marketers don't communicate their content strategies to sales, brand reputation and deals will be at risk.
- **Avoid "unhealthy" content coordination.** All B2B marketers have likely fielded complaints from reps with long lists of content requests that aren't aligned with the content strategy. Marketers can feel like worker bees for sales, tasked with churning out random, nonstrategic content. This can easily lead to burnout.

Current Content Marketing Challenges Among B2B Marketers Worldwide, July 2022

% of respondents



Note: among those who measure content performance
 Source: Content Marketing Institute (CMI) and MarketingProfs, "13th Annual B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends: Insights for 2023" commissioned by ON24, Oct 19, 2022

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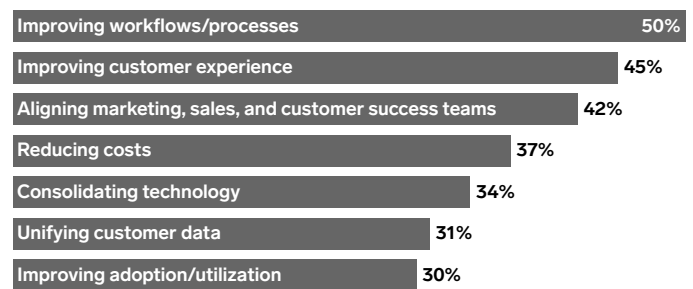
Good data—supported by the right tech—is at the heart of alignment.

Regardless of changes in the market, marketers will always have to build their first-party data around the buyer's information and behavior. Complete and accurate data on prospects and customers is essential to making sound decisions about accounts that sales and marketing should target together.

- **Sales must be in accordance with marketing on data and technology.** But that's a clear challenge: Only 19% of US B2B professionals said their tech and data were aligned across teams, according to an April 2022 Insightly and Ascend2 survey. Without aligned data, firms are unlikely to have aligned buyer experiences. As a result, both teams will miss activities that are important pieces of the buyer's journey.
- **Invest in martech that delivers data that drives revenues.** The same survey found that 42% of respondents were considering a new customer relationship management (CRM) tool to improve alignment across teams. However, marketing technology (martech) only delivers value when used to its full potential. In the CMI and MarketingProfs study, 31% of B2B marketers worldwide said that wasn't happening. This could result in missed revenue targets.

US B2B Professionals' Leading Priorities Driving Consideration of a New Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Tool, April 2022

% of respondents



Source: Insightly and Ascend2, "The State of CRM," June 22, 2022

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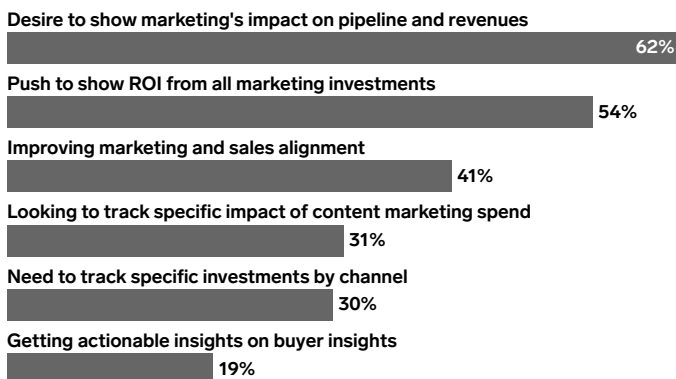
Measurement and attribution are critical for success.

Once data and tech are in alignment, marketers should focus on their ability to continually measure marketing efforts at scale. The June 2022 DGR survey found that **33% of marketing and sales execs in North America felt measuring different metrics was the biggest challenge to alignment between the two teams.**

- **Align on what to measure.** In a May 2022 DGR measurement and attribution survey, 41% of US B2B marketers said improving alignment was a reason for needing deeper metrics. But there are frequently discrepancies between teams on what the top metrics should be, such as closed-won deals versus account engagement. Sometimes, marketers mistakenly lean on website visits or other metrics that are not easily linked to revenues.
- **Ensure both teams are seeing the same metrics.** Teams need to have a single source of truth—such as one shared dashboard—to view metrics and determine attribution. That’s especially helpful if marketing efforts are tied to pipeline and revenues. This source should show the KPIs that the teams already agree are priorities.

Areas That Drive US B2B Marketers' Business Focus and Their Need for Deeper Metrics, May 2022

% of respondents



Source: Demand Gen Report (DGR), "Marketing Measurement & Attribution Survey" sponsored by Align BI, May 26, 2022

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How can sales and marketing teams achieve alignment?

Marketers should work with sales on the strategies that put their brand, content, and a compelling value proposition in front of the buying committees of target accounts.

- **Understand the granular details of your business.** Get a firm grip on the financials, revenue goals, and sales forecast of your firm. Then communicate with leadership on how marketing will align with business goals. Next, coordinate with sales at the top level on message and the one source of truth focused on revenue metrics that both teams will use. Leave out who gets credit.
- **Prioritize communication.** Establish a regular cadence of discussions about alignment issues. Ensure that the marketing and content strategies, assets, and distribution schedule and channels are all explained to sales. But remember to have empathy for them. Buying committees can be difficult and indecisive and can ask challenging questions. Have your marketers regularly listen in on sales calls.
- **Focus on data and technology.** Make sure that martech and other sales technologies are integrated seamlessly for alignment on revenue growth. Select tools and resources to help manage, maintain, and use the data across multiple touchpoints. Be prepared to explain the value-add of a change in investment based on your data.
- **Sync with sales metrics.** Marketers need to measure their contributions throughout the buyer's journey, but they should stay out of the weeds on marketing metrics. Instead, establish a shared view of data among teams to align around sales goals, and demonstrate marketing's impact on pipeline and revenues.



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Insider Intelligence Interviews

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Senior Vice President, Marketing

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Interviewed March 6, 2023

Chip House

CMO

Insightly

Interviewed March 3, 2023

Jon Perera

CMO

Highspot

Interviewed March 9, 2023

Lynn Tornabene

CMO

Anteriad

Interviewed March 10, 2023

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