Refactored

2018 **Sales Enablement**
Benchmark Survey Report

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Introduction and Purpose

Since the birth of modern marketing, friction with sales has been the norm. For more than 100 years—likely since Henry Ford famously quipped that customers could own a car of any color, so long as it was black—business halls have echoed with arguments along these lines:

"All your leads are bad!"

"No they aren't, you just don't follow up with them!"

The lucky companies that manage to harness this friction constructively have gained—and continue to gain—a competitive advantage. Those that cannot typically languish… and frequently fail.

Today, dated evaluation and compensation models are forcing marketing teams to focus on priorities that might not be optimal for driving revenue success. Even the evolution of the marketing tech stack, while making marketing teams more effective in some ways, has enticed too many to take their eyes off the revenue ball. Open rates, click-through rates, Net Promoter Score®, even number of leads generated are all great metrics, but only so long as they culminate in one result: revenue.

Marketing's primary customer is Sales. *Period.*

According to the 2016 CSO Insights Sales Performance Optimization Study, the percentage of responding companies that had a dedicated sales enablement resource rose from 25.5% in 2015 to 32.7% in just one year. Why this dramatic increase in a new cost center? Likely, companies are recognizing that to scale growth, they need to provide sales not only with necessary tools but also with the ability to onboard new reps quickly and effectively. Most of these sales enablement professionals are also being asked to facilitate communication between sales and other functional units within the company, not the least of which is marketing.

That last sentence has a lot of old-school marketing professionals (the writer of this introduction included) scratching their heads. When did effective communication with sales stop being a mandate for marketing?

Regardless, those of us at Refactored see a very real need to facilitate teamwork between marketing and sales. According to SiriusDecisions, B2B organizations with tightly aligned sales and marketing operations achieve 24% faster three-year revenue growth and 27% faster three-year profit growth. (This type of sales enablement is so important for the success of our clients that we've built an entire service offering around the concept.) We hope this report will help you recognize some of that growth potential in your organization.

Of course, the first step in any project that involves change is to benchmark the starting point so that you can accurately measure progress. Our intention is to conduct this survey annually to evaluate positive or negative trends in several critical areas of sales enablement. We hope you will consider participating again next year to show off your progress.

We would like to thank BMA Colorado, BMA Houston, and BMA Kansas City for their insight into the importance of this topic and their support in promoting participation in the survey.

~ **Nick Bettis,** Refactored

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Executive Summary

Sales enablement is in an odd state of flux right now. Everyone is talking about it. People are investing in it. Yet many people are confused about what it actually **is.**

This survey takes a marketing-centric stance to sales enablement. Our goal is less about evaluating onboarding and sales operations and more about getting back to the basics: marketing treating sales as its customer.

Within this dataset, we find that many organizations have an opportunity to harvest low-hanging fruit simply by aligning marketing and sales. Here are our primary observations and suggestions:

- **Communication needs attention.** We found plenty of evidence that many organizations are dubious about the perceived value of marketing. For marketing leadership, taking ownership of building a rock-solid bridge between your team and sales—and ensuring close alignment of goals, strategies, and tactics—can only benefit the department. (A little departmental self-promotion is absolutely acceptable.) If you're in marketing, this is your chance to build credibility. Grab it.

- **The creation of effective content is a challenge.** We weren't surprised to see that marketing teams seldom have the resources they need to do everything they would like. Here's where that bridge with sales can help.

Sit with the sales team and agree on a prioritized list of action items that have the best chance of moving the revenue needle—then get to work. Most important, keep sales informed on your team's progress, successes, and even failures. Thanks to this type of direct insight and correlation with their own success, the sales team will gain an understanding of the bandwidth challenges that marketing faces and an appreciation for what you are able to provide. And remember: Outsourcing is always an option. Content creation can be an overwhelming effort, but a marketing agency that listens to your needs, sets aside ego, and understands the sales value of content can quickly help you catch up on priority projects.

- **Funnel visibility is limited.** Marketing should have the responsibility and opportunity for accountability, but unless both groups are aware of where everyone stands, accountability does not exist. A great starting point: Reverse engineer your funnel. Working with sales, start with your revenue target. Begin applying close rates and conversion rates until you determine how many leads marketing needs to provide, how many opportunities business development needs to provide, and so on. If your tracking can provide results data at each stage of the funnel, review it weekly to see where everyone stands, then adjust expectations and approaches as needed. (For more insights into building an effective funnel, check out the Refactored blog at www.refactoredmedia.com/MarketingFunnelGuide.)

- **Senior leadership can increase involvement.** The survey reveals an opportunity for senior leadership to take a more active role in sales enablement efforts—and revenue generation in general. Depending on your company's circumstances, you might need to overcome significant cultural challenges when it comes to the relationship between marketing and sales. By getting involved and assuring everyone that their voices will be heard and that open, constructive discussion is always welcome, senior leadership can help make that change happen much faster than if only sales and marketing leadership are pushing.

You might want to distribute this survey report to your sales and marketing teams. Get their take on where you stand on these issues. Use this report as a catalyst for discussion within your organization on how these two teams can work better together. Press them for ideas—and follow through. The result of the effort could be a top-class revenue-generation ecosystem.

Survey Sample

The 2018 Sales Enablement Benchmarking Survey drew 156 respondents from 133 companies.

Revenue	Responses
Under $500,000	10.74%
$500,000 – $999,999	4.03%
$1,000,000 – $2,499,999	5.37%
$2,500,000 – $4,999,999	10.07%
$5,000,000 – $9,999,999	10.74%
$10,000,000 – $99,999,999	24.16%
$100,000,000 – $499,999,999	9.40%
$500,000,000 – $999,999,999	6.71%
$1,000,000,000+	18.79%

Role	Responses
Marketing	58.39%
Sales	24.83%
Sales Enablement	6.71%
Executive	10.07%

Number of Employees	Responses
1 – 10	16.11%
11 – 50	16.78%
51 – 200	22.82%
201 – 500	13.42%
501 – 1,000	8.05%
1,001 – 5,000	4.70%
5,001 – 10,000	4.03%
10,001+	14.09%

Industry	Responses
Biotechnology	3.4%
Health Care	6.1%
Manufacturing	8.1%
Mining / Agriculture	3.4%
Nonprofit	1.4%
Professional Services	31.1%
Software / Internet	30.4%
Oil and Gas	2.7%
Insurance	2.0%
Other	11.5%

Survey Findings

We divided the 2018 Sales Enablement Benchmark Survey into **three primary areas:**

- **Sales & Marketing Alignment** determines how well sales and marketing are communicating on goals and strategies.

- **Sales & Channel Empowerment** looks at the tools that marketing provides sales to be effective.

- **Demand Generation** focuses on the size, type, and quality of the marketing funnel and sales pipeline.

Here, we look at the individual questions in each section—as well as a few questions about challenges that both teams face. For each issue, we provide observations and insights from our experts.

Sales & Marketing Alignment

How would you rate your alignment on goals and strategy with your counterpart in sales or marketing?
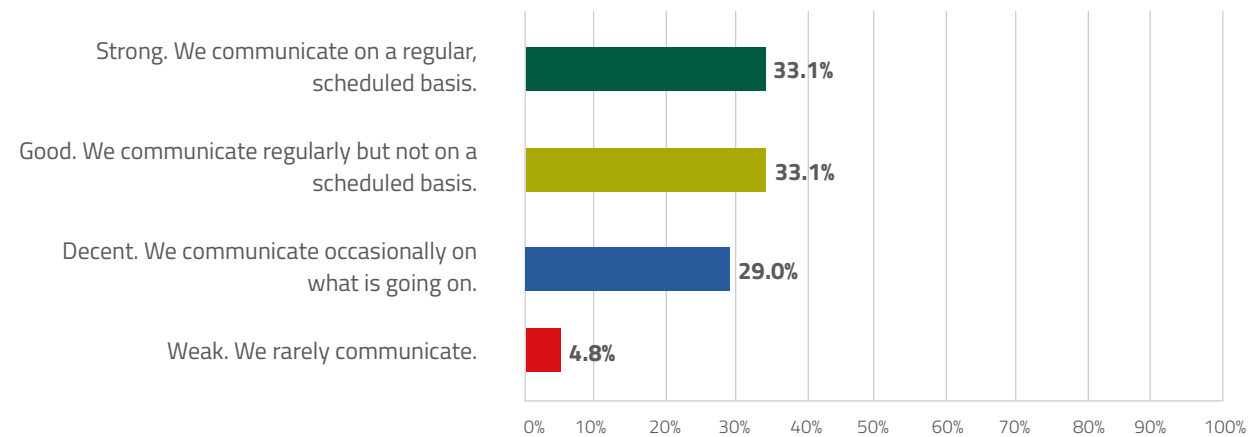

Figure 1. Alignment ratings.

With two-thirds of respondents claiming strong or good alignment between their sales and marketing teams, you might be tempted to wonder whether a problem really exists in this arena. But with 29% noting that they only periodically communicate with their counterparts, and more than a handful stating that they are completely unaligned, we have cause for concern.

We find it interesting that 55% of the "decent" or "weak" respondents identified as sales roles and only 41% were marketing roles, the balance being executive roles.

This discrepancy suggests that sales has a lesser opinion of the alignment between the groups than marketing does—and might be interpreted as a dissatisfaction with marketing's contribution.

Also notable: Only 14% of executive respondents see the alignment between the groups as decent or weak, suggesting a potential disconnect between senior management and marketing and sales leads.

Our take? Marketing teams should have consistent, scheduled meetings with sales to ensure that they are providing what sales needs. If significant conflict is present, use a third-party arbitrator to facilitate alignment.

Do both your sales and marketing teams have real-time access to the state of your marketing funnel and sales pipeline?
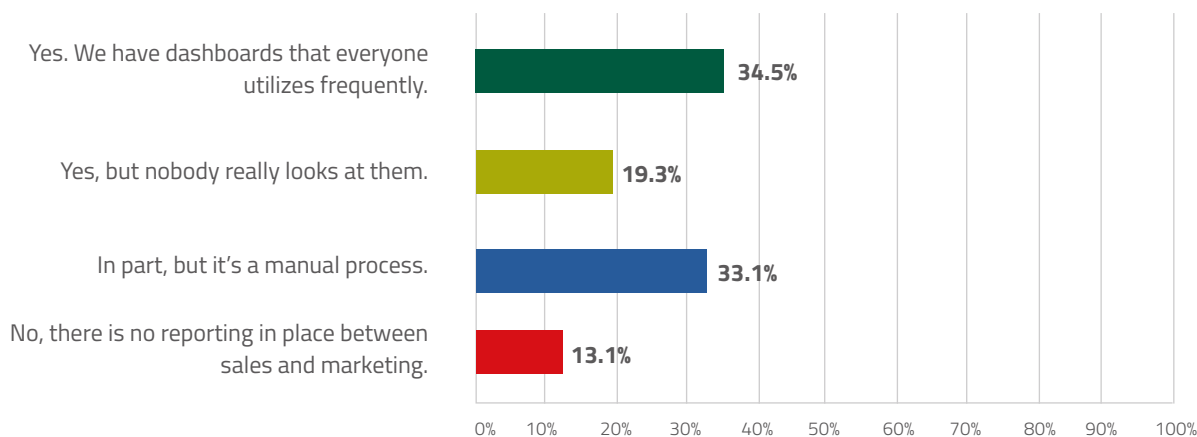

Figure 2. Funnel / pipeline access.

Sixty-five percent of respondents cite challenges with visibility into the marketing funnel and sales pipeline. Forty-five percent of these challenges are based on information availability, and 20% result from a lack of initiative to focus on the information in provided tools.

The findings suggest two issues. First, if you don't already have dashboards that make full funnel-status data available to everyone in sales and marketing, create them. Many organizations use a CRM system for this task, but other tools are available. Companies that lack the skillset or time to create such dashboards and to design an effective funnel-monitoring process can turn to outside resources to expedite these capabilities.

Second—and of more urgent importance—if your team members have access to funnel data but don't frequently review or utilize it, **a cultural shift is vital, and must be driven from the top of the organization.** Sales needs to understand that marketing is a partner in the revenue-generation journey. Sales members must pay attention to the marketing funnel so that they know exactly what they have to work with. Marketing members need to be constantly aware of the status of the marketing funnel, sales pipeline, and revenue achievement against target, and they need to communicate with sales to determine how to further assist in closing business.

In some cases, this cultural shift requires a third-party perspective to facilitate transformation and move everyone to the same page.

Based on your observations and/or experience, what level of value does marketing bring to your company's sales team?

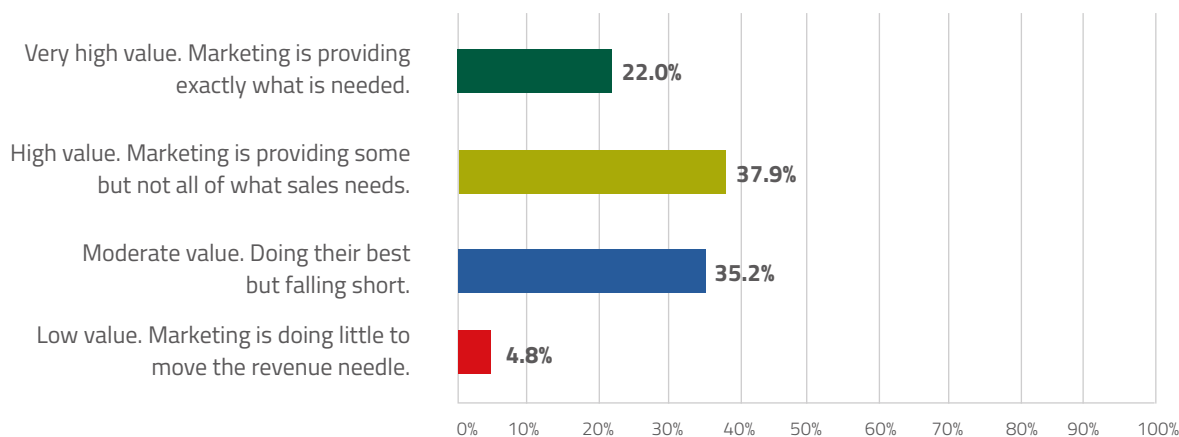| Category	Value
Very high value. Marketing is providing exactly what is needed.	22.0%
High value. Marketing is providing some but not all of what sales needs.	37.9%
Moderate value. Doing their best but falling short.	35.2%
Low value. Marketing is doing little to move the revenue needle.	4.8%

Figure 3. Marketing value for sales.

Sixty percent of respondents think that marketing's contribution to sales' success is high or very high, while 40% feel there is work to be done.

Again, segmenting the results by respondent role provides more insights. Of marketing roles responding, 69% believe they are providing high or very high value to the sales organization—but only 44% of sales team members agree, suggesting a disconnect between how marketing and sales define success. (Roughly half of executive-level respondents feel that marketing provides high or very high value to sales.)

The disconnect that leads to this lack of alignment can be addressed with consistent, candid, and constructive discussions during regularly scheduled meetings between the two teams.

It is important that everyone in these meetings feels free and safe to comment and question activities and results, so long as the goal remains to improve the opportunity for target achievement. If that is not the case, then leadership needs to step in and begin the cultural shift that promotes constructive collaboration.

Aligning sales and marketing also leads to **38% higher sales win rates.**

— *MarketingProfs*

Sales & Channel Empowerment

From your perspective, do you have effective sales support content throughout the buyer's journey?
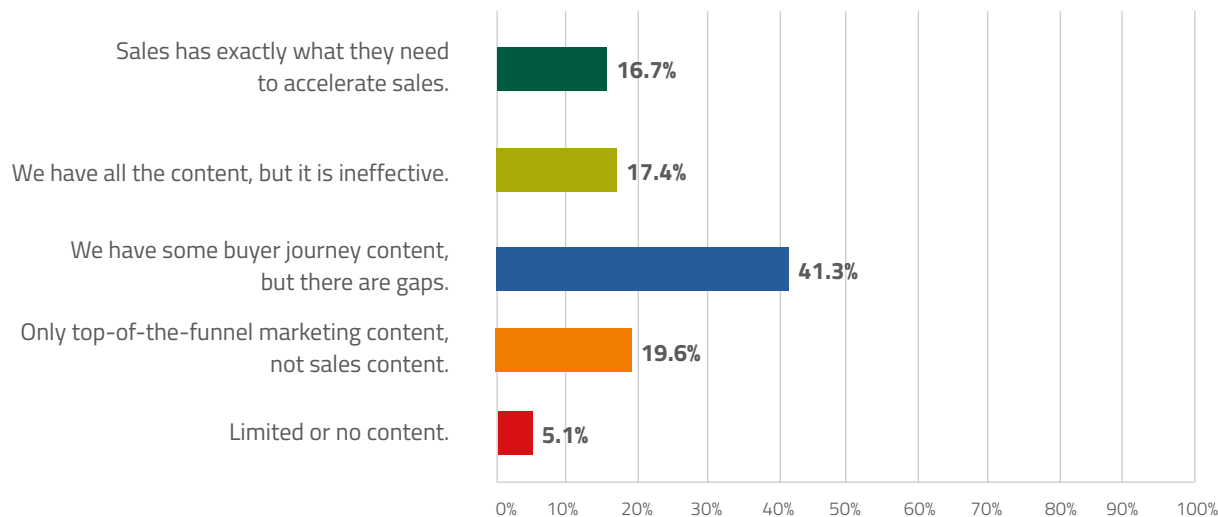

Figure 4. Sales support content.

The consensus (41%) on lifecycle content availability is that sales has access to some buyer-stage content but that gaps exist. Even more concerning, only 16% of respondents comment that sales members have exactly the tools they need to accelerate and close deals. There was no appreciable difference between marketing and sales role responses.

Marketing needs to take ownership of mapping out the content that sales needs by persona and demand type within each buyer's journey stage (i.e., Loosen status quo, Commit to change, Explore solutions, Commit to a solution, Justify decision, and Selection).

Frequently, this level of sustained content creation seems a daunting task. But compelling, high-value content that speaks the language of individual readers, is consumable in a format they prefer, and helps them move to the next stage is crucial to the revenue-generation process.

Granted, many marketing departments don't have enough content writers with unfettered access to subject matter experts (SMEs) to create or maintain the necessary level of content development. Most turn to agencies to accelerate the process.

We suggest that you download a **content map,** such as the one we offer on our website, to gain a full understanding of how well your content supports the buyer's journey.

refactoredmedia.com/ ContentWorksheet

Has marketing provided a centralized location where sales can access and filter the content they need to be effective?
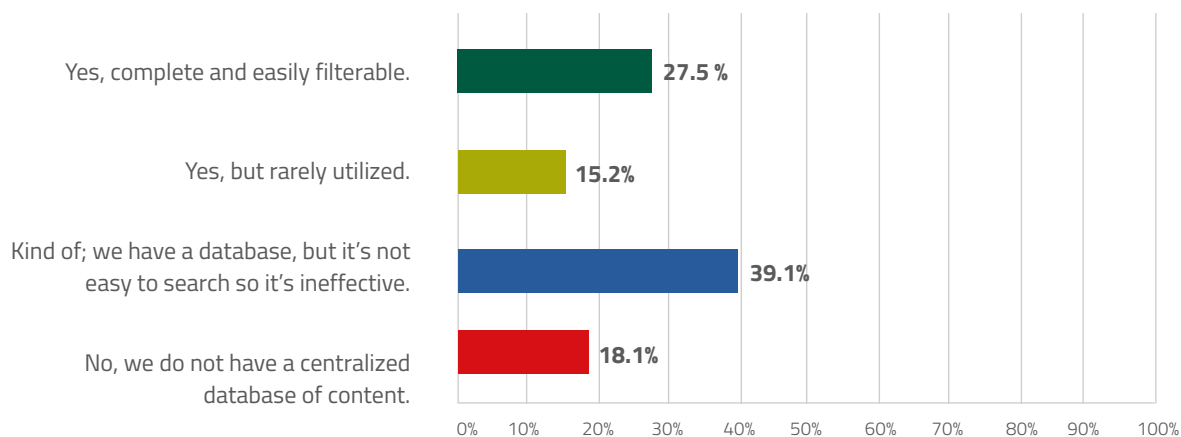

Figure 5. Marketing content access.

Eighty-four percent of respondents have a content repository in place—encouraging news. The problem is that content must be findable to be used, and 40% of respondents do not have the necessary tools to provide easy access to all that valuable content. This issue is likely a big factor in the industry statistics we see stating that 60% to 80% of created content goes unused by sales.

The Refactored team recently experienced the challenge of making content easy to find. During a content project for one of our clients, we learned how time-consuming it can be to develop a globally agreed-upon structure for a content database, then review, categorize, and tag all content assets.

However, if the sales team is provided such a database—and properly trained and incented to utilize it—the work will pay for itself in accelerated sales cycles alone.

Note that several tech stack tools are available to adequately manage marketing and sales content. Review any tool carefully to ensure that it can accomplish your objectives. Evaluate ease of creating, deleting, editing, and organizing files; searchability; remote accessibility; ability to set roles and permissions; and version control.

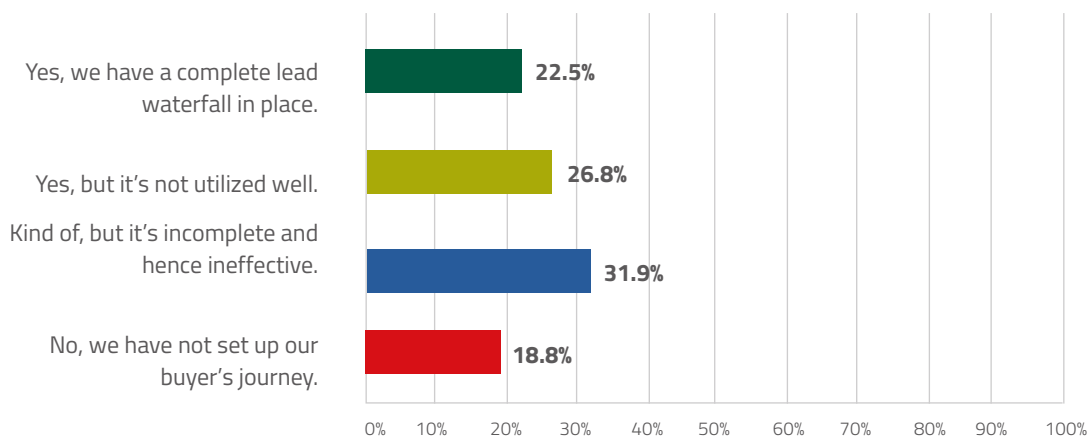# Have you defined the stages of your buyer's journey?

Figure 6. Buyer's journey stage definitions.

Only 23% of respondents have developed and are effectively utilizing a buyer's journey map. Further, 26% respond that the problem is primarily in understanding and leveraging the value of created information. An unfortunate 51% need help with the core effort of building out the map.

Marketing can assist sales by conducting the research needed to completely map out the buyer's journey for your company.

Refactored has created a downloadable Buyer's Journey Map Template that can help you navigate the process of creating your own map.

refactoredmedia.com/ BuyerJourneyTemplate

However, you'll first need to gather the necessary information to complete the template, a chore that requires online customer surveys, sales interviews, focus groups, and client phone interviews.

This work is crucial to understanding which prospects buy your products— and why and how they buy.

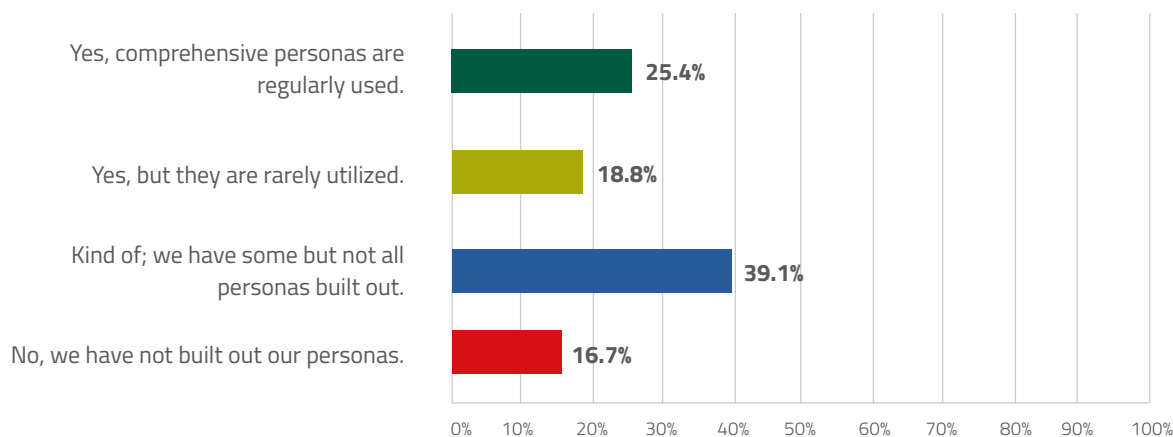## Do you have buyer personas that everyone has agreed on?

Figure 7. Buyer personas.

The responses to this question are similar to those of buyer-lifecycle mapping. Only 25% of respondents feel that they have, and are effectively utilizing, comprehensive personas of the buying team. That percentage is consistent across sales and marketing respondents.

The SiriusDecisions Buying Spectrum clearly defines three types of purchase scenarios: independent, consensus, and committee. Each might have one or more personas involved in the decision-making process across multiple buying centers.

Sales members must be informed as to which scenarios are typically being dealt with and, ideally, which messages, content, and delivery method each persona prefers.

Typically, the product marketing team builds out these personas with the assistance of sales. However, in smaller organizations, other marketing resources might need to step up to complete this important work. The initial research and development of your personas can be conducted by an agency, with the support of internal marketing and SME teams.

Failure to effectively communicate with even one persona in a buying committee might derail or, at best, lengthen the entire sales process.

Demand Generation

How frequently do you include the sales follow-up process in campaign plans?

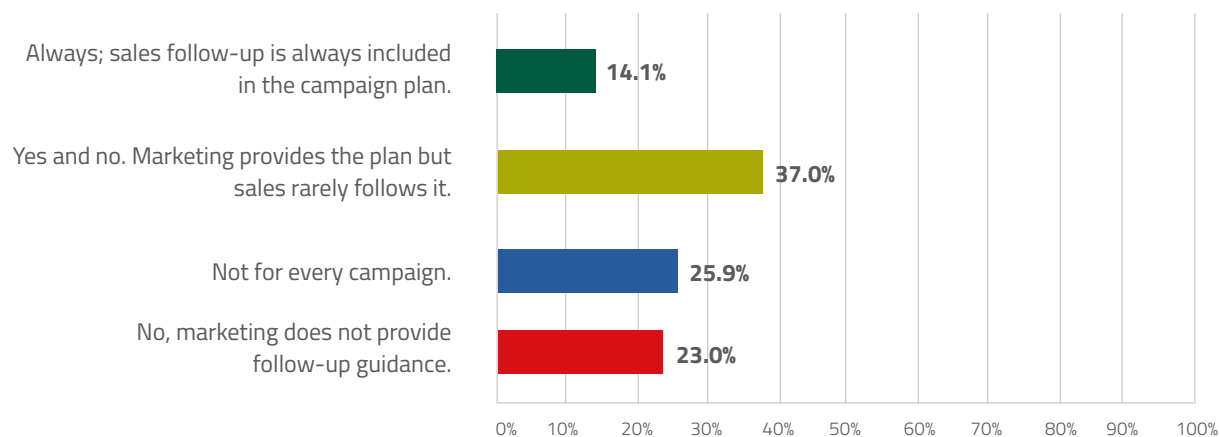|	
Always; sales follow-up is always included in the campaign plan.	14.1%
Yes and no. Marketing provides the plan but sales rarely follows it.	37.0%
Not for every campaign.	25.9%
No, marketing does not provide follow-up guidance.	23.0%

Figure 8. Sales follow-up.

The ah-ha finding in this result is that marketing is putting forth the effort to include and guide sales in the follow-up planning process, but that sales participation is lacking. What's surprising is that 46% of participating sales contacts believe that the follow-up process was not followed, whereas only 30% of marketing roles feel the same. This suggests that sales sees suggested follow-up procedures included in campaign plans but finds the process either too complex or ineffective to follow.

Sales and marketing can avoid this type of misalignment by holding a launch meeting or by providing sales leadership with service level agreements that outline the follow-up process and explain how sales will receive and follow up with leads—and return bad leads to marketing.

Sales reps ingnore **50% of marketing leads.**

— *ReachForce*

Have you set goals **with** your counterparts in sales or marketing for each stage of the funnel?

Yes; we're 100% aligned. **16.3%**

Partially; we've agreed to final goals but not steps along the way. **41.5%**

Marketing and sales goals are not connected. **24.4%**

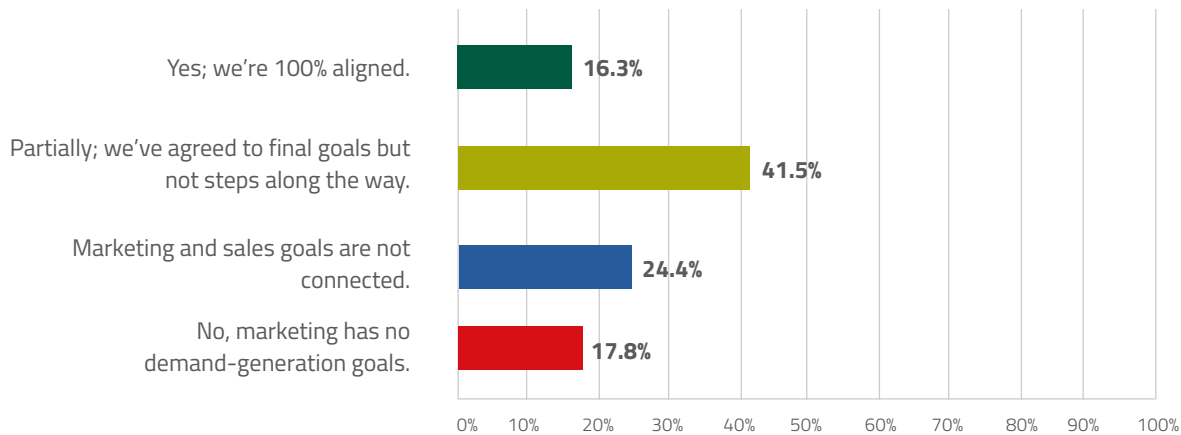No, marketing has no demand-generation goals. **17.8%**

Figure 9. Cross-team goals.

This question is perhaps the most telling and troublesome of the survey. A dangerous lack of communication exists regarding goals for marketing and sales, with 42% of respondents reporting little or no correlated effort to define what sales needs in the pipeline to achieve its goals. Forty-eight percent of sales roles respond that marketing and sales have not discussed or agreed on what the lead flow should be; 44% of marketing contacts agree. Alarmingly, only 8% of executive contacts are aware of a misalignment in this respect.

The single largest key to achieving revenue targets is understanding what needs are on the horizon. It's essential to identify deficiencies in the funnel as soon as possible and take intentional action to correct any issues.

If your sales and marketing teams have not jointly developed a revenue funnel, we strongly suggest that you work with someone who can help you build a clear lead hierarchy that includes qualification stage and stage owner (e.g., marketing, inside sales, direct sales, channel sales).

Maintain a funnel report in real time, and encourage frequent, joint sales-marketing discussions (think weekly). By doing so, you will have taken the largest step possible to achieving your target results.

For your convenience, Refactored has created a snapshot of what such a funnel might look like. You can leverage this concept for your own organization.

refactoredmedia.com/ MarketingFunnelGuide

Do you feel your marketing and sales teams are 100% aligned on the type of demand generation you should be doing to drive revenue (ABM vs. broad lead, customer focused vs. net new, etc.)?
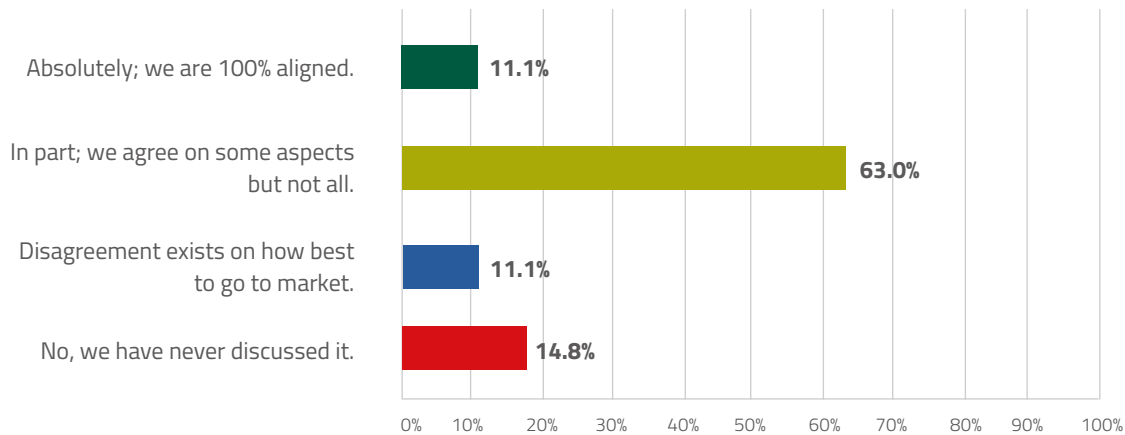

Figure 10. Demand-generation alignment.

A majority of respondents—63%—feel partially aligned on a go-to-market strategy that will yield the best results. Nearly three-quarters of sales and marketing roles agree that they are partially or fully aligned. However, executive level contacts again take a more optimistic view, with nearly all of them reporting partial or full alignment.

These results are encouraging. But we would warn senior management to remain alert to and involved in the company's go-to-market strategy, to ensure that they have an accurate view of how well aligned the teams truly are.

Aligning sales and marketing **leads to 38% higher** sales win rates
— *MarketingProfs*

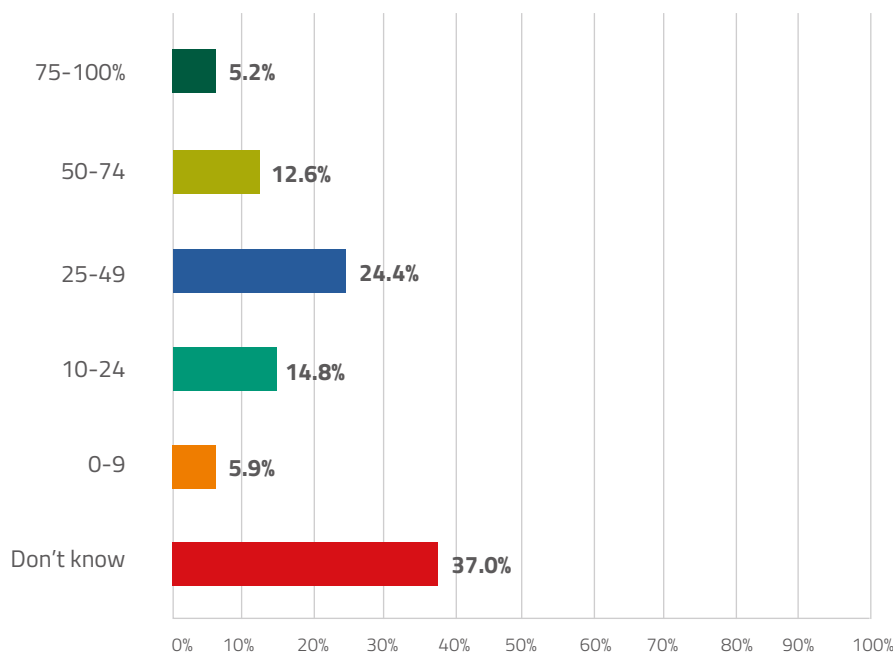## What portion of revenue is expected to come from marketing-generated or marketing-influenced leads?

Figure 11. Marketing-lead revenue.

This question generated another troubling outcome. Our concern relates less to the percent of revenue to which marketing is committed; that figure can vary radically based on industry, sale complexity, go-to-market strategy, and so on. Rather, the red flag here is because the majority of respondents—more than 37%—have not defined marketing's responsibility (or at least are unaware of such a definition).

We observe that 36% of sales respondents are unaware of marketing's commitment to the revenue-generating pipeline. But a surprising 44% of marketing contacts are also unaware of such a commitment.

This issue correlates with the visibility of the marketing funnel and sales pipeline. For a marketing department to be effective, it must have accountability for a number, be it total number of leads (based on conversion rates, close rates, or other measures) or, better yet, a marketing-sourced, closed-revenue target. Again, this visibility can take the form of manual reporting if necessary, but will ideally involve automated reporting out of a CRM system.

Regardless of how visibility is gained, marketing needs to be accountable for revenue generation.

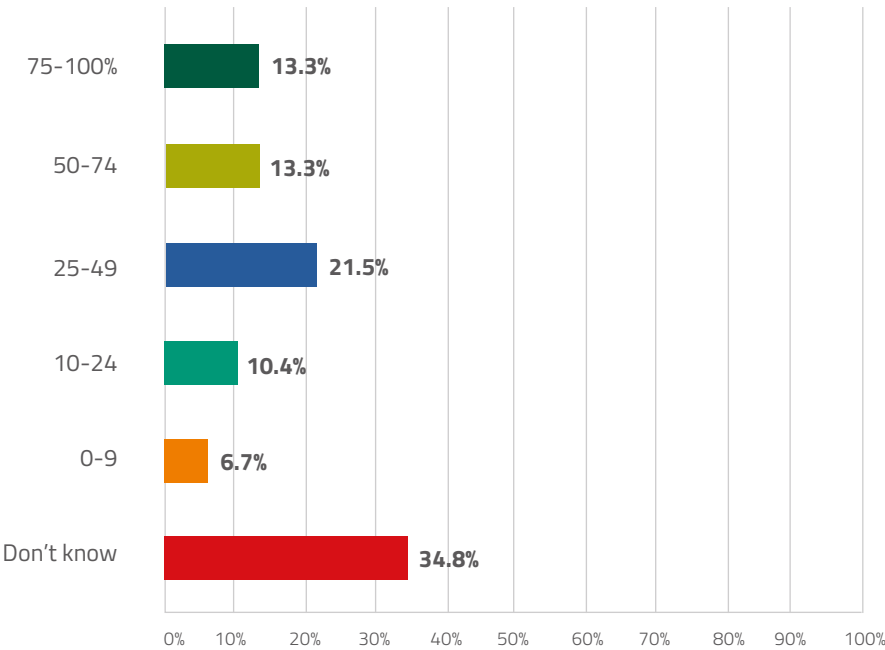# What percentage of leads provided by marketing are accepted by sales?

Figure 12. Sales-accepted leads.

Setting aside for the moment the "I don't know" responses, the remainder of these results are typical—even encouraging. (As in the previous question, expectations vary based on sale complexity, go-to-market strategy, and so on).

The concern, then, rests with how many respondents—a whopping 34.8%—don't know their sales-accepted lead rate. Along with several of the previous responses, this insight builds evidence that companies are struggling to generate goals and a reporting structure that provide visibility into the funnel and pipeline and so hold all involved parties accountable for revenue production.

For best practices to help you reverse-engineer your own funnels and provide the visibility that all parties need to progress toward your revenue goals, see Refactored's Marketing Funnel Guide.

refactoredmedia.com/ MarketingFunnelGuide

General Questions

What are the biggest challenges your sales team currently faces?
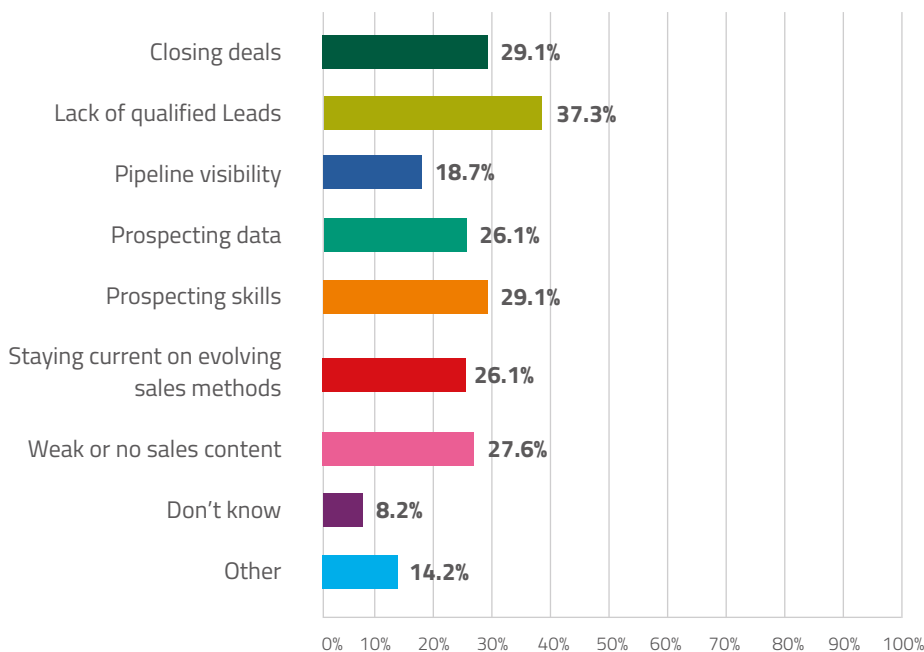

Figure 13. Sales challenges.

Figure 14. Sales challenges, by role.

The takeaway here is the difference between sales and marketing responses. Some discrepancy is to be expected, but if the two groups are well aligned, marketing will know the challenges that sales faces and look for opportunities to help.

Unsurprisingly, closing deals and finding qualified leads are the largest concerns for sales. But from an alignment perspective, the story is in the three categories that saw the biggest gap between sales and marketing responses:

1. Qualified leads
2. Prospecting data
3. Lack of effective sales content throughout the buyer's journey

Again, we aren't surprised that sales needs more leads. The problem is that sales' expectations for lead production differ so obviously from marketing's. With proper collaboration and reporting, such a disconnect on what marketing is accountable for should not exist.

With marketing facilitating the gathering or purchase of prospecting data, the division around a lack of content is also concerning. If your marketing staff lacks the bandwidth or skillset to produce the content that sales needs, you might consider exploring outsourcing options to close that gap.
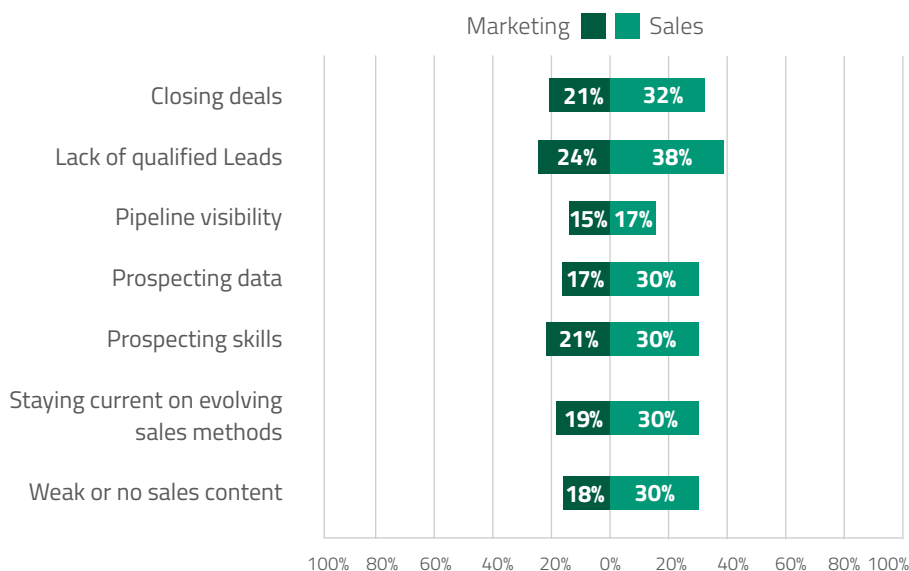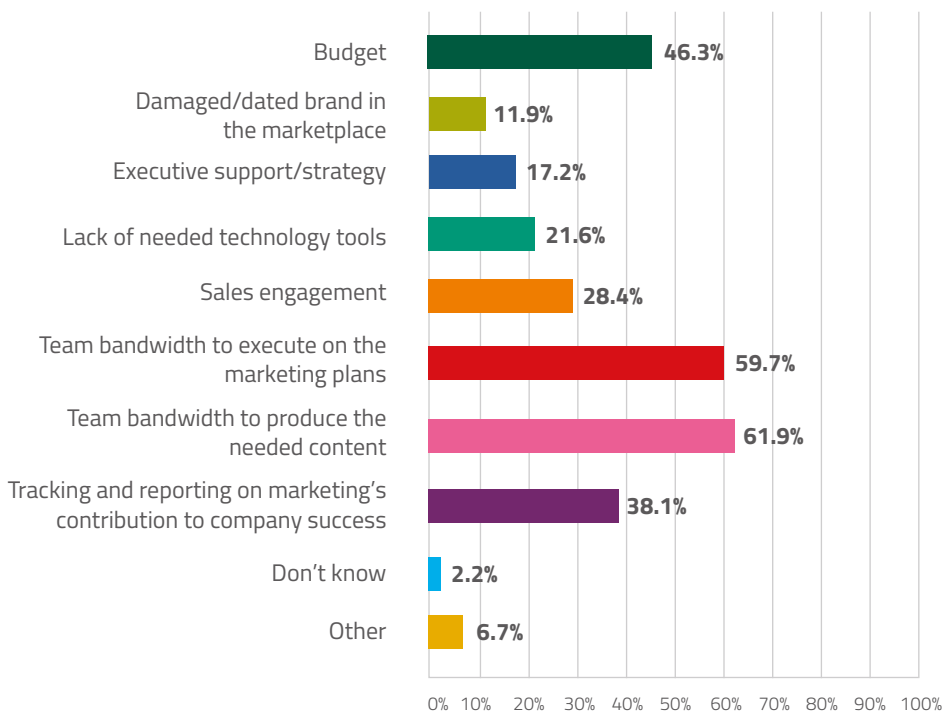
What are the biggest challenges your marketing team currently faces in supporting sales?

Challenge	%
Budget	46.3%
Damaged/dated brand in the marketplace	11.9%
Executive support/strategy	17.2%
Lack of needed technology tools	21.6%
Sales engagement	28.4%
Team bandwidth to execute on the marketing plans	59.7%
Team bandwidth to produce the needed content	61.9%
Tracking and reporting on marketing's contribution to company success	38.1%
Don't know	2.2%
Other	6.7%

Figure 15. Marketing challenges.

Here, the responses from sales and marketing show a much stronger correlation. The most significant disconnects involve bandwidth and communications around marketing's contributions. The regular meetings that we've proposed in response to other challenges can help align sales and marketing opinions on the latter issue. Overall, bandwidth seems to be the biggest issue for the clear majority of marketing teams.

If your marketing department is to provide sales with necessary content **and** complete all the projects in the marketing roster, consider additional staffing, or seek an agency that understands demand generation and content creation across the full buyer's journey.

Marketing / Sales

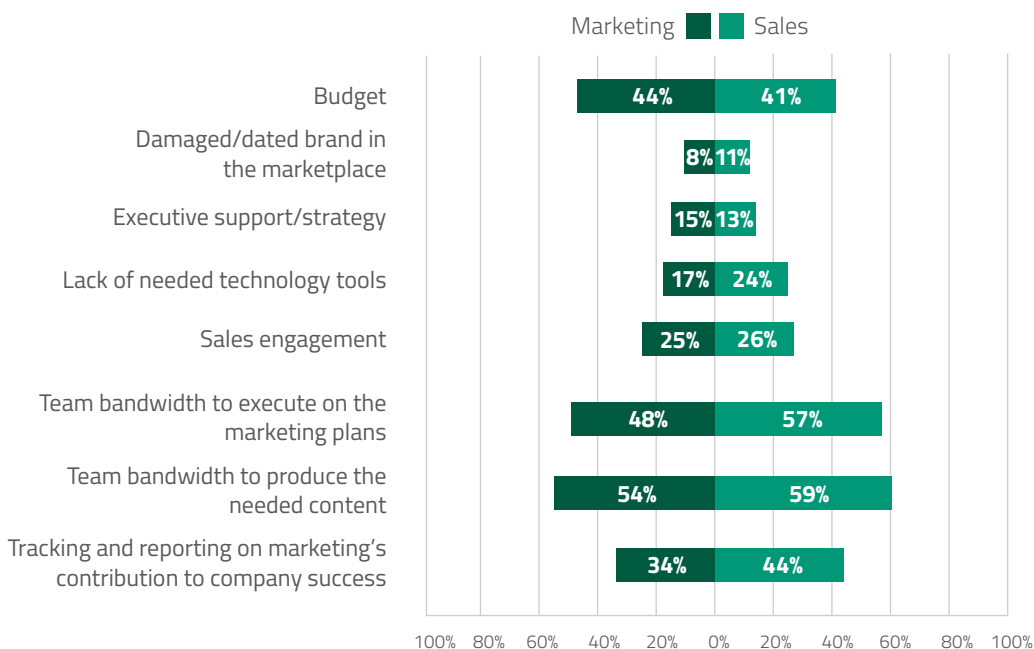| Challenge	Marketing	Sales
Budget	44%	41%
Damaged/dated brand in the marketplace	8%	11%
Executive support/strategy	15%	13%
Lack of needed technology tools	17%	24%
Sales engagement	25%	26%
Team bandwidth to execute on the marketing plans	48%	57%
Team bandwidth to produce the needed content	54%	59%
Tracking and reporting on marketing's contribution to company success	34%	44%

Figure 16. Marketing challenges, by role.

Final Insights

The state of sales enablement continues to evolve.

Within the parameters of sales and marketing alignment, sales empowerment, and demand generation, we see from these results that there is much work to be done, particularly in the area of alignment.

The majority of issues identified in this benchmarking survey can see great improvement simply by setting a weekly meeting to synchronize sales and marketing leadership. Open and honest exploration of a sales strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat (SWOT) analysis; prioritization of an action plan; and execution of that plan can resolve many other issues. These few adjustments should quickly begin to strengthen your organization's alignment and sales enablement overall.

If you are a marketing leader and do not already have regular discussions with sales, we encourage you to take ownership of that dialogue. Doing so is one of the best ways we know to prove the true value of great marketing.

You don't need to do it alone. Refactored is here to help with anything from facilitation of the sales/marketing relationship to web development and comprehensive content creation. Our people have decades of experience with most aspects of marketing and sales enablement. We would enjoy helping your company prosper.

Refactored

Refactored is a full-service B2B digital agency helping brands navigate the complexities of modern marketing by aligning people, process, and technology. Our goals are to showcase your brand's unique value and generate results that matter to your business. We help you find your voice, tell your story, and outperform your competition. Through engaging online and offline experiences that align with your customers' needs, we help you educate stakeholders and motivate them to positive action. Refactored serves national and international corporate clients from its home offices in Colorado. Let us show you how to demonstrate your compelling purpose— and strengthen your brand from the inside out. Let's talk about how our team of senior marketing professionals— with decades of experience in the areas of strategy, sales enablement, demand generation, content creation, and web development—can help supplement your team.

Connect with us at www.refactoredmedia.com

About the author: One of the biggest challenges organizations face in driving revenue is to bridge the gap between Marketing and Sales. For more than 20 years, Nick Bettis has been bucking the belief that Marketing and Sales must have an adversarial relationship. By taking a **collaborative** and empathic approach to the unique challenges that each team faces, Nick has been able to build bridges that ensure Marketing and Sales are pulling on the rope in the same direction, supporting that alignment with effective demand generation and sales enablement campaigns. If you need help bringing your teams together, building a demand generation strategy, or executing campaigns that will move the revenue needle, lets talk.

BMA COLO
BUSINESS MARKETING ASSOCIATION

Dedicated exclusively to the discipline of business-to-business marketing, the Colorado chapter of the Business Marketing Association (BMA) is the premier organization for marketing professionals in the region. Its membership comprises more than 500 business-to-business marketing practitioners employed by the region's leading corporations, agencies, suppliers, and small businesses. As one of the largest marketing organizations in the region and the largest BMA chapter in the country, BMA Colorado enriches the professional lives of its members by offering unparalleled opportunities for education, networking, and recognition, as well as exclusive access to industry resources and services.

Learn more about BMA Colorado at www.bmacolorado.org

Contact Information

hello@refactoredmedia.com
970.545.4171

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