



## Sales and Marketing Must Change the Way They Engage and Deliver Customer Value, Right Now



COVID-19 has forced many organizations to shift rapidly to virtual meetings, virtual events and fully digital programs and techniques.

**F**ield driven sales and marketing activities as we've known them have stopped for some organizations, and for others, they have been severely constrained. Getting access to the full suite of decision makers and decision influencers on any given deal was very challenging before; now it is much more difficult and, in some cases, not realistically achievable. Direct and partner selling has changed. Some companies are already sophisticated digital users, but many are not. As digital becomes increasingly important now that in-person touch points have been eliminated for the time being, what should a sales leader be thinking about, and more important, what should a sales and marketing leader be doing right now?

For your and your customers' sake, here are some steps to take:

**1. Align, and Align Again.** It's more important than

ever to provide your customers with a valuable experience when they engage with you. Now's the time to make sure you have sales and marketing alignment in place. Even if you think you're perfectly aligned, check again. If you haven't synced up all of your digital and virtual customer touch points and tactics, across your company, *for what's right for this moment, you must*. Start with sales and marketing, and include customer support, too. Get everyone on the same page internally and rally the teams. What's more, no customer wants to get disjointed or tone-deaf messages from you, especially now. Instead, they need to know how you can help them, conveyed in the most straightforward way possible. Simply "going digital" isn't enough. Get your strategy and alignment right, and good things -- and good customer experience -- will follow.

**2. Rethink Your Selected Accounts.** Right now,

sadly, some industries and companies have been severely affected or even shut down due to COVID-19. Others are able to push on and still others are thriving due to the essential goods and services they provide. As you reassess, use your valuable insights from your sales and marketing teams, plus your own internal analytics, *and* collect the available industry data that reflect the *moment*. Then use all of this to narrow down a target list that focuses on those companies still seeking solutions to serve their markets. Set aside for now those that are not. If you haven't taken companies off of your selected list, try again. Be deliberate and focused on the essential areas in which to invest your precious time and resources, for right now.

**3. Stand in Your Customers' Shoes.** Think about what your customers are going through today. This is not Business As Usual. Carefully consider the tone of your messages, and their frequency (fewer!). Your customers themselves are being forced to make tough decisions internally. Now is the time to demonstrate that you understand what they're facing within their own businesses, and how you can best help them serve *their* customers.

**4. Always Deliver Value.** We're all affected by this pandemic in some way. Delivering value is always important but it's essential now. Value is always defined by what's important to your customer, from *their* perspective, in the way that will help them do *their job* more effectively and serve *their* customers more successfully. Use the customer insights and motivations you've gained over time. Consider their company's business objectives. Chances are they've changed recently. Find out how. If you're able to express and provide real value to your customers when they need it most, they won't soon forget this. And you'll feel good about it, too.

**5. Don't Waste Time and Money.** No one can afford to do this, especially now. Carefully think through every aspect of your go-to-market plan.

Use all of the steps above as a check list. Please do this: Get aligned. Select viable accounts and deselect others. Show empathy. Deliver value based on what you know or have learned about your customers and their industries' current challenges.

We've navigated through crises before. This one clearly is different. We've already felt and witnessed some jarring changes, and more are on the way. We will persevere by becoming even closer to our own team members and our customers, and by taking the right steps to provide demonstrable value in this time of intense difficulty.

The lessons learned in 2008 and 2009 should not be forgotten. The firms that somehow figured out how to "invest" during that crisis came out of the period of difficulty much stronger and were off to the races as conditions improved. Those that jumped in the bunker – and stayed there -- struggled. This "investment" need not always be a financial investment. This "investment" can be, as we suggest, using the crisis to clarify a value proposition, to tailor messages to highlight unique value for the times we are in, and most of all, to be sure that your team members are motivated, too. Ensure marketing and sales are fully aligned and are working from a mutually developed *and* mutually agreed-to playbook. The future of a successful sales organization's ability to build and maintain relationships with customers is, now more than ever, inextricably linked to effective and seamless orchestration with their marketing partners. ■

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