



Marketing is Not Sales

By Lisa A. Rozycki



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How many times have you heard the words marketing and sales used interchangeably? How many “salespeople” in a company or professional services firm do you actually run into? Many organizations give their salespeople titles such as marketing representative or business development manager and blur the line between marketing and selling. Probably because they aren’t aware of the difference between marketing and sales functions within an organization or they believe that clients will be more open to their products and services if they disguise their salespeople from what they really are, salespeople. Does this add to the confusion about the differences between marketing and sales? Yes, I think it does.

Many professional service firms have hired Marketing Directors to manage the marketing function of a firm. Many firms engage in marketing activities but too few understand that there also needs to be a sales function within a firm in order to bring in new business. Today, especially among the larger accounting firms, salespeople are being added to the mix.

Marketing and sales are essential for the growth of any organization, but they are not the same. To describe it simply, marketing’s role is to decide where to place the shelf, what products and services to put onto the shelf based on clients’ needs and wants, and at what price they will buy them. The role of the salesperson is to persuade customers to buy those products off the shelf in exchange for something of value, money.

Marketing activities support sales efforts by laying the groundwork for sales. Actually, they are usually the most significant force in stimulating sales. Oftentimes, marketing activities like firm brochures, advertising campaigns, public relations or seminars must occur before a sale can be made. They sometimes follow the sale as well, to pave the way for future sales and referrals.

Many professional service firms are confused by this fundamental difference, so they often combine sales and marketing together. On the contrary, a firm’s sales and marketing staff must work together but remain separate entities to maximize effectiveness.

One person is rarely ever able to fill both the sales and marketing functions because the two are vastly different. A person’s knowledge and skill sets either make them more effective in marketing or more effective in sales.

The ultimate success is when sales and marketing efforts are coordinated and work together to generate profitability for a professional services firm. Growing the business is having the right combination of both.

Lisa is the founder and Principal of LR Marketing Group, a marketing consulting practice specializing in growing revenue of professional service firms through market analysis, planning and implementation, public relations, lead generation, and business development. Lisa has over 25 years of marketing experience. She can be reached at 1-610-582-0097 or lisa@lrmarketinggroup.com.

www.lrmarketinggroup.com