5 Sales Content Mistakes Impacting Your Revenue

And how to solve them

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5 Common Sales Content Mistakes Impacting Your Revenue

Chances are your content strategy is like the Earth's moon. You have a light side and dark side. Your marketing team produces great content that generates tons of leads and traffic to your website. Sometimes, your sale reps even use that content in their initial outreach to their prospects, but like the moon, there is a dark side to your content strategy. Your sales team can't find your content. Your marketing content doesn't work for your sales team, and they are making their own, rogue content as a result. Chances are you are making many of the following mistakes.

#1: Content is spread around and no one really knows what you have

Where is your sales content? Odds are, you don't completely know. Some may be in a content repository like Box, Google Drive or SharePoint. Perhaps you have multiple content repositories. Sales Powerpoint decks are saved on reps' computers, some are on the company website and you may even have a sales portal. The fact of the matter is, with content everywhere your sales reps can't find what they need, when they need it. If they do find what they need, they probably waste hours searching. In the worst cases, they don't find anything and wing it.   CSO Insights reports that sellers waste up to seven hours per week looking for content because they can't find it. That's a lot of time away from selling. That equates to wasted money in salaries and lost revenue in missed sales opportunities.

DID YOU KNOW?

A sales team of 100 sellers waste about 36,000 hours per year looking for content. That is the equivalent of more than 17 sales reps!!

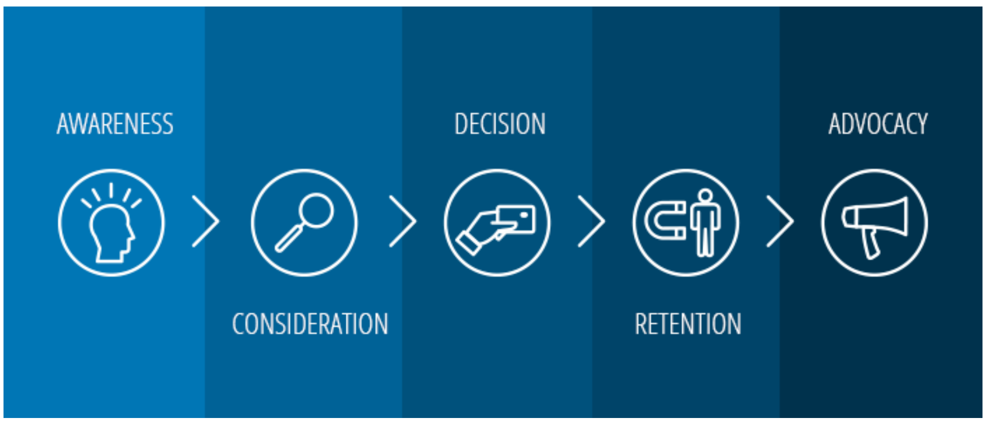
Solution:

Centralize your sales content for sales reps. That doesn't mean that you need to embark on an impossible multi-month effort to get all your content repository owners to agree to a single content repository. Many products on the market will integrate with common content repositories and surface up only the most relevant content for the rep.   That makes implementing a single source of truth simple and painless. With a central source, your sales reps are less likely to save versions on their laptop and they will save time to do what they do best. Sell.

#2: You don't have a sales journey

Notice we use the words "sales journey," not "buyers' journey."   What we mean by this is how your sellers think of the stages of the sales cycle, not the marketing team.   Most buyers' journey maps are weighted to marketing efforts and have an overly simplistic model like this: Trigger > Consideration > Purchase. That over simplifies or even ignores the content needs once the sales process starts. Based on our research, we estimate in over 55% of companies there is a disconnect between sales and marketing.

Typical Buyer's Journey Defined by Marketing



Typical Sales Stages Defined by Sales

Stage Name	Type	Probability
Prospecting	Open	10%
Qualification	Open	10%
Proposal/Price Quote	Open	75%
Negotiation/Review	Open	90%
Closed Won	Closed/Won	100%

Do you see the disconnect? Sales thinks in the stages they take the buyers' family through to make a decision. Thus, they need sales content that supports this journey.   Most companies have plenty of marketing content to get someone to have a first conversation, but then have nothing to move the sale along. The consequence of a mis-matched journey means your sellers do not have the assets they need toward the end of the sales cycle to help them influence buyers and win deals. If your organization is experiencing large numbers of opportunities stalling at the later stage of the sales process or sales cycles that are too long, then this is likely a contributing factor.

Solution:

The first step is to make sure you understand both the buyers' journey and sales journey or sales stages. Sales stages, usually 5-7 in number, are defined by sales leadership based on their experience moving opportunities to close and are a function of the CRM set up. As you develop your content strategy, it should extend from the very top of the marketing funnel and down through each of the sales stages. To be successful you'll need to ensure sales and marketing are aligned and have a common language for understanding.

#3: You don't have useful content for each stage of the sales process

Most companies have plenty of content to attract and nurture leads, but often their content dries up once the lead is passed over to sales. For sales, the process has just begun. Is a high level thought leadership white paper or case study going to help a sales rep when they are down to the final 3 vendors and they need to differentiate versus the 2 other competitors? If the content doesn't exist, chances are, sales just make something up. It's likely to be off-message and incomplete.

Solution:

If you know where your content is at, and you have your sales journey clearly defined, then you can conduct an inventory and map content to the stages of the journey to find your gaps. Here are steps you can follow to begin your audit:

1. Conduct an inventory of sales content. We recommend you limit it to the last 1-2 years.
2. Map each piece of content to the sales stages you've defined

SALES CONTENT TIP

Based on an analysis of 100 companies, sales content is most often missing in the middle to later sales stages where reps need the most help differentiating from the competition, quantifying business value and negotiating price. Great pieces for these stages include:

- Battle cards
- ROI calculators
- Negotiation give/gets guidelines
- 3 min video/audio sales scenarios

(and use in your CRM). Hint: don't try to stretch your content too far to fill your gaps. Most pieces will be relevant for no more than 1-2 stages.

EXAMPLE

- Survey sales for what assets they think they need to better support their sales process.
- Identify pieces that need to be refreshed, created due to gaps or eliminated entirely. You may also decide you need multiple versions based on persona or industry/vertical.
- Use technology to manage sales content recommendations in context to the buyer's journey for your sales reps. This ensures they are prompted with the best assets to use by sales stage, prospect type and more.

#4: You don't know where your gaps lie

Countless research studies have shown sellers don't read 70% of the content produced "for them." Part of the problem is probably that you aren't producing the right kind of content for the many different sales situations your sellers will encounter. Most marketing teams do well with early stage but lack content for later sales stages. It is also important to remember that your sellers are trying to sell value, so if your content repository is filled with nothing but product data sheets, you are not helping your sellers sell on value. Another problem many companies struggle with is that marketing and sales don't communicate enough. That results in the content creators not knowing what sales needs and wants as well as not knowing what is working and what isn't.

Solution:

The very first step you need to take is a content audit. You'll want to map your content against key needs such as:

- Sales stages
- Persona – do different personas need different content to convey your value?
- Product lines
- Business challenges / pain points – do you have content to help surface prospect pain points and explain where your offering solves it?

After mapping your content you'll want to work closely with sales and ask questions like:

- Where are deals getting stuck? Why? (content may help)
- What do you and don't you use today?
- What do you need?

Armed with your map and valuable feedback from sales, you'll be equipped to get rid of any waste and optimize your future content so the sales team will use it and it will assist your sellers in selling your value.

#5: You have no data on content usage, let alone ROI

For most marketers this is the worst question your CFO can ask: "I'm spending all this money on marketing. What am I getting in return?" Responding that you produced 10's or even 100's of pieces of content probably will not impress your CFO. If you can't attribute your content efforts to sales pipeline growth, sales pipeline advancement or ultimately sales, chances are, your CFO doesn't care.

Solution:

You need to track and use data to understand the impact of your content on the business. If you don't know where to start, think of it in phases:

Phase 1: Track usage and get feedback. Which content is used and which isn't? Sales isn't going to use content if it is ineffective, and they will re-use content if it helps them move deals through the pipeline and ultimately close deals. In this phase, you'll want to track things like which content is used and shared with prospects.

Phase 2: Track ROI. Using a sales enablement platform, and integrating with your CRM, you can directly attribute sales and marketing content to sales velocity and closed deals. Having this visibility allows marketers creating content to eliminate bad content (estimated up to 70%) and optimize content that is working.

Summary

Delivering content that your sales team will use and has a demonstrable ROI is not as hard as you think. It most definitely requires alignment between sales and marketing. You will also need a well-defined sales journey/process and a marketing content strategy. Whether you are swimming in content or starting from the beginning, with some simple planning upfront and alignment between your sales and marketing teams, you are well on your way to delivering content that has real, measurable business impact.

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