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A close-up portrait of a middle-aged man with short brown hair, smiling. He is wearing a dark suit jacket, a white shirt, and a dark tie. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue and green.

BURBANK
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MD **Jarrod Sanfilippo** on how his small family business
became an industry icon



If Your Marketing Function Is Not Driving Growth, You're Not Doing It Right

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One of the big issues facing marketing is the perception, commonly held in businesses, that it is nothing more than the 'colouring in department'. It is a demeaning phrase and one I heard most recently earlier this year when I was invited to participate in a CEO Forum in the City by one of the accounting firms.

It was a breakfast meeting with a speaker presenting on how to drive business growth in low growth economies. There were about forty CEOs all enjoying pastries, fresh fruit and yogurt. Most were from medium to large private businesses predominantly with a business-to-business focus.

The presentation soon gave way to an open discussion between those present on the drivers of growth, with a heavy emphasis on the sales function as the real driver of revenue growth. Marketing did not get a mention until the speaker asked about the role of marketing and one of the CEOs delivered his knock-out put-down of marketing, which was met by the general consensus of the others in the room.

Reflecting on this, I considered how the marketing and sales function works seamlessly in

our own B2B professional services business. It is a seamless and integrated approach that starts with defining the business requirements and the revenue and growth objectives and identifying the segments and services we believe will deliver this growth based on past data and informed by market changes and customer trends.

Six years ago we implemented a major change in marketing direction, moving from a traditional out-bound marketing approach to an in-bound marketing strategy. This meant we went from a sales support model for marketing to one under which content marketing, SEO (search engine optimisation) and social media drove customers to our website and content, at which point automated marketing would help identify those customers and score their sales potential with encouragement to make an enquiry and become a lead. This lead would then be handled by sales to discuss the needs of the client, propose a solution and convert the lead to a sale.

The change in strategy had a significant impact in the first year leading to a 300% increase in traffic to our website and a 30% increase in revenue in that



Darren has been working with companies across the globe to implement marketing strategies

first year. You can read about this in more detail on our site including specifics on how it was developed and implemented. Under our outbound marketing strategy we were averaging a conversion rate of 26% - considered quite healthy. But with the in-bound marketing strategy our conversion rate is now 64% as in many ways the prospect is self-validated at the time they decide to become a lead.

For those interested, follow ups on those that do not convert indicate that it is usually because the prospect does not have the budget required or have decided to take a lower cost option or even undertake the process themselves.

At the end of last year we had over 200,000 unique visitors to the site from around the world and the site visitors continue to grow, which is terrific for a relatively niche consulting business in marketing management consulting. You can read more about how we achieved this visitor growth on our website.

The quality of those visitors is also high, based on the number of pages visited and time on-page, which all goes to calculate their Lead Score. We are continually testing the process of turning visitors into leads, looking for ways to optimise lead generation and conversion rates.

While some marketers will wonder where the role of brand building fits into this strategy, the fact is the content and the brand presentation is integrated into all aspects of the process to ensure every interaction builds on the brand positioning. All parts of the marketing and sales process are measured, optimised and reviewed to ensure we are achieving our short, medium and long term growth objectives, creating interest, driving leads, converting customers and building and reinforcing reputation.

So, it made we wonder how these other CEOs manage their marketing teams? What is the role of marketing in an organisation where the

leader is comfortable describing it as the 'colouring in department'? Don't get me wrong, I am not advocating in-bound marketing for any other business and not suggesting that we are in anyway the perfect example of business building. But the starting point for us was a recognition that our traditional out-bound marketing process of database cold and warm calling along with advertising and public relations and sales support materials was not delivering the leads and sales conversions we needed.

It meant we needed clearly to articulate our business objectives and then develop a marketing and sales strategy that would attract the customers we needed. It was not a sales-led strategy or a marketing-led strategy, but a customer-led strategy. The sales people and the consultants who are closest to our existing customers inform the content and content marketing strategy and marketing focuses on maximising traffic and optimising leads, leaving sales to convert those leads into sales and revenue. All parts of the business share results and review performance on a weekly and monthly basis. There is no point marketing increasing leads if conversions drop, so both must work together to drive revenue and profitability.

Hopefully the next time you hear a fellow CEO refer to their marketing team as the 'colouring in department' you'll share with them the fact that if they have set up their marketing function simply to colour in their sales support materials then they are really not doing it right and then direct them to this article or our website. Having the right marketing and sales strategy working together has clearly driven growth for our business and will absolutely deliver the same results for yours.

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