



ATS

Advanced Technology Services, Inc.

Customer Acquisition: How to evolve your marketing approach and make a measurable contribution to revenue.

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A shift in thinking – and the solid alignment of goals and measurable strategies – can grow your marketing organization from a cost center to a revenue generator.

If you're like most marketing organizations, you are viewed as a cost center to the business. Advertising, communications, public relations, etc. that support efforts to acquire customers and generate leads – they're all looked upon as "takes money to make money" propositions that are hard to track in terms of effectiveness and success.

But, there is a way to bring your marketing efforts into a new light, and have them viewed not as a cost center with the vague task of "building the brand", but rather as a profit center that makes a significant, measurable contribution to your company's bottom line.

How? By transforming your marketing organization strategically, bringing your team's efforts more in line with the objectives of the business and utilizing today's exciting new technologies to drive high performance and ROI on all marketing activities.

Alignment of Goals

The first step when transforming your marketing operation into a successful contributor to sales pipelines and closed revenues is to clearly align your marketing team's goals and objectives with those of the overall business. In theory this sounds simple, but it is quite common for marketing departments to have been gradually led off-track chasing the short-term objectives that are not aligned to the key growth targets and objectives of the business.

Therefore, it is of utmost importance to develop a strong overall marketing strategy that is in lock-step with, and is essentially woven throughout, the overall goals of the organization. Any activities or tactics occurring beneath that strategic umbrella must support it directly, and any efforts to lead the team off track must be reviewed regularly so that only little productivity is lost in your efforts to reaching key objectives.

In our case, our company was operating in an environment where our customers were making purchase decisions much differently than they ever had before. So, understanding their buying behaviors and patterns then, and only then targeting, attracting and converting them to users of our brand - was the overall goal. The marketing goals then fell right into line, and from that, a very methodical two-pronged strategy was developed.

Inbound and Outbound Strategies

Inbound: Finding customers with the propensity to buy.

In order to capture customer mindshare earlier in the buying process, an inbound marketing strategy was developed that helped us find companies that had a propensity to outsource the type of services we offered, and were in the early phases of external research. These efforts included the development of compelling messages that addressed their most immediate needs, making sure online landing pages, for example, had dynamic content that directly addressed their pain points and offered our services as a solution. These efforts increased conversion ratios significantly, and filled the pipeline with qualified leads.

Outbound: Finding customers that are a strategic fit for the business. Our outbound marketing strategy represented the most organizationally dramatic evolution in our company's marketing shift. In the past, like many organizations, marketing efforts were "mass" in nature — targeting anyone and everyone who may or may not ever have the ability to buy our services. During our evolution, however, we learned it was more advantageous to focus outbound efforts by concentrating on two areas: market selection and customer selection.

We embarked on an outbound strategy that helped identify which industries/markets held the most potential for partnership with our company and its offerings. This key vertical market strategy involved leveraging research and business intelligence to evaluate many metrics with regard to market size, sales, profitability, growth trends, margins, etc., and then force-ranking each market to uncover prime candidates. This helped identify which markets to focus on and where to invest our marketing time and resources.

Once key vertical markets were identified, we dove deeper into identifying which customers to target within those markets. Our key target account strategy involved using the same types of market research and business intelligence as mentioned above, only this time using specific company data involving total annual sales, geographic footprint, expansion activity, etc. This helped us precisely find which customers we ideally wanted to do business with — prospects that showed the most potential for profitability today, and growth in the longer term.

messages that directly addressed the challenges they face. Within key customer groups, we identified and profiled important decision influencers and delivered customized messaging via the marketing channels that were proven to have their attention.

It was at this point that our transformative approach began to really take shape and yield measurable results.

Results: It's What You Do With Them

In order to determine marketing's specific contribution to revenue through customer acquisition, it is vital to measure results in very specific, concrete terms. To start, the number of MQLs (Marketing Qualified Leads) generated proved to be the best criteria by which to measure. It was a metric marketing could control through our efforts and one which could also be expanded upon through sales pipeline values and closed revenues.

All of this data was tracked utilizing some of today's highly sophisticated marketing technology tools with performance dashboards showing measurable value of activities in real time. The importance of utilizing such tools are critical: they not only allow the ability to track, improve on and optimize all activities based on solid metrics, but also give the ability to be nimble and respond to trends so we can continue to evolve our team's strategy.

The Revenue Pay-Off

Our marketing transformation continues to evolve and from the start involved overcoming significant challenges that required a complete change in the way we collaborated with our sales team and the business as a whole. But, by staying focused and consistently highlighting to leadership — in concrete, measurable terms — the value that marketing was adding, the results eventually spoke for themselves.

"From a revenue generation standpoint, 50% of the revenue generated by eFactory Services in 2017 is based on opportunities brought to us by the new marketing demand generation efforts."

—ATS Operations Manager



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Tactics: Back to Basics

Once specific targets were identified, the tactics employed brought us back to marketing basics: developing tailored messaging specific to our most desirable customers — delivering

To date, this approach has yielded our organization a national award and, most importantly, millions of dollars in incremental closed revenue. This year, we are pacing to exceed last year's totals, as our efforts continue to evolve and become even more focused and efficient.

You, too, can make this kind of transformation with your team. Using the above (and what other world-class marketing organizations are doing) as best practice guidelines, you can begin to enjoy a new status within your organization and eventually contribute significantly to the company's bottom line in a measurable way.