

Customer Experience: The Secret Weapon in The B2B Sales Process



By David Richardson, Director of Marketing Strategy, Spire Agency

B2B is complicated. Industries like technology, manufacturing and professional services are highly complex, jargon-filled beasts with deals costing millions and taking months to close.

And B2B products aren't marketed; no sir, they're sold by rainmakers working their network. Understandably, a cool logo, clever tagline or glossy print ad isn't going to move the needle in the same way it does for a soda, smartphone or new car, right?

Of course, that's the perspective we hear time and again from sales departments. We don't blame them for thinking this way – B2B sales is a very different process compared to selling a B2C product, requiring a hands-on element to nurture and guide the customer through the entire sales process. But instead of relying on marketing as an equal partner, often times sales views marketing as merely a vendor to create support materials.

However, there's one thing the marketing department can do to make the sales department's life infinitely easier: focus on the customer experience.

The customer experience begins long before a potential

customer even realizes they have a problem or that your product is the solution. This is where branding is key: clear positioning of what your company provides, creatively and consistently articulated, creates the awareness needed to make sure your product is on the shortlist when it comes time to research solutions. It also ensures that when your salespeople call, the first question on the other line isn't "Who?"

B2B companies want to do business with a leader, but leadership isn't a product attribute. Leadership is something that must be demonstrated, over and over again. To become a leader in the product marketplace, you must become a leader in the mental marketplace of your customers. And just as no one follows the quiet guy in the corner, you need to make some noise to let people know who you are, what you believe in and why others should believe in you.

Once a potential client enters the sales funnel, the marketing department must still keep their focus on the customer experience. This doesn't just mean creating sales brochures and landing pages; it's about sustaining a true understanding of your customers. Marketing shouldn't just talk. They need to listen: not only to what your customers have to say about your company and its products, but also to what they have to say about the industry, their personal challenges and the challenges of their own customers. Marketing must then bring this intelligence back to your engineers, product developers and executives to make certain the customer is represented in the development and delivery of the product.

Finally, marketing ensures that the customer experience continues to be delivered after the sale. Just as the B2B sales process is driven by relationships, marketing can be used to consistently nurture and engage with customers post-sale at scale, delivering the leadership positioning and the relevant content needed to help them get the most out of your brand. This in turn fosters the recommendations and referrals the sales teams rely on for gaining new leads.

Don't sell the customer experience short. Good will, positive impressions and reputation all play a role in a company's positioning as a leader. Everyone has a part, not just one department.

By improving the customer experience before, during and after the sale, marketing can give sales the secret weapon they need to start making the sale long before they ever pick up the phone.

***About the Author:** David has built his career around aligning marketing and sales teams and moving them forward in one cohesive direction under one unified company goal. "Grow always, in all ways" is the motto he lives by, and his passion around developing marketing strategies that are tied directly to revenue has been successful with start-ups to Fortune 500s.*