



## Flawless sales execution

*It takes a whole company to make a sale*

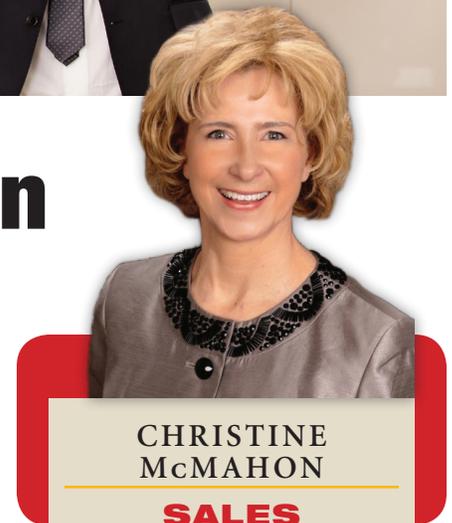
**S**alespeople matter. In fact, B2B buyers state that direct interaction with a sales professional is the greatest influence on their purchasing decisions, according to Gartner's May report, "Tech Go-to-Market: Effective Sales Interactions Guide Buyers Forward Through Insights and Added Value." This reinforces the notion that business leaders need to eliminate the activities that pull salespeople away from engaging with prospects and clients.

Revenue growth is the sales organization's primary responsibility; but flawless sales execution is a whole company effort. Flawless sales execution is achieved when: The corporate strategy is understood by those who are expected to execute; department goals align to support the corporate strategy; and information about

each particular order flows to all stakeholders at the appropriate time.

To create strategic alignment, communications and workflow processes must align, creating a seamless flow as the order advances through the system from order entry to engineering, from operations to manufacturing, from shipping to accounting. Without proper alignment, order fulfillment is often delayed. Bottlenecks congest the system, which forces salespeople to put on their project manager hats and figure out how to release the logjam.

In the study, "How to Make Your Number in 2016" conducted by Sales Benchmark Index, a "whopping 91 percent of companies failed to exhibit internal and external strategic alignment." This means that while executives invest



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**SALES**

time developing strategic plans, they fail to properly communicate the plans and create the interdepartmental alignment needed for flawless execution.

So where do you begin?

Once the corporate strategy has been defined, determine how each department is responsible for supporting sales success. Then, examine what happens when a new order is entered into the system. How does the flow of communication from one department to another, from one step to another, happen? Is it a turnkey process where all parties know what is expected of

them and the systems and processes support easy execution? Or are orders manually advanced through the system?

Likewise, does every business function understand how it contributes to success? What expectations have been communicated? How will progress be communicated to sales so constant “check-ins” can be avoided?

To begin the conversation, consider the following questions to help determine if alignment exists or if there are opportunities to close some gaps:

## Marketing

1. What trends support the identified market opportunity(s) and how large is the opportunity(s)?
2. What are the needs and wants of the target markets?
3. What is our go-to-market strategy for each product or service offering?
4. What is our competitive advantage? What is our value proposition?
5. What is the ideal customer profile? What does the buying decision look like?
6. How will marketing generate leads to create inbound activity? Will marketing provide a list of targeted prospects to sales? How will inbound leads be responded to (within 24 hours or less)? How will this be tracked?
7. What collateral and support will sales need in order to win new business?

## Sales

1. What is the go-to-market sales strategy and plan?
2. What is the sales process? What materials (general capabilities presentation, pricing sheet, product/service info, demos, webinars, etc.) are needed to support sales success?
3. What is the best lead generation methodology?

4. What is the criterion for qualifying a lead?
5. If sales needs engineering/operations/manufacturing's support to qualify or close a sale, how does this happen?
6. What information must sales communicate to these departments so they have adequate time to prepare/respond?
7. What information does sales need to place a complete order?

## Operations

1. What information is needed by sales so realistic delivery expectations can be communicated to customers?
2. What information does purchasing require from sales so materials arrive when they are needed? How will operations be informed?
3. What information does engineering need in order to meet product/project specifications?
4. What information does manufacturing need to build the right product on the right timing?
5. Does IT play a role? If so, how is it expected to support the process?
6. How does quality assurance support the process?
7. What information must shipping know, and on what timing, to ensure timely delivery?

After the corporate goals have been defined, test the system. Place a few beta orders and observe how they flow through the company from one step to the next, from one department to the next. Investigate areas where bottlenecks occur and to the best of your ability, resolve them. ■

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