

Dick Maggiore: Digital dictates need to reset sales, marketing

By [Dick Maggiore Special](#) to The Canton Repository

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When I was a kid and my dad wanted to buy a car, the first place he would go was the car dealership.

Dad wanted information, and the car dealer had it. The dealer used that information as bait to get you in to the dealership and guide you on your path to purchase — with him that is.

That is called “information asymmetry.”

Researchers say that up to 90% of today’s car-buying decisions are made before the customer goes to the dealer. How? We go online. Some choose to skip the salesperson altogether, preferring to handle the sale by email or phone. The customer is in the driver’s seat.

That’s called “information symmetry.”

Daniel Pink, in his book “To Sell is Human,” introduced us to these new terms and shares how selling is moving from the A-B-C (“Always Be Closing”) type of selling to a more consultative, insight-providing selling approach.

Even with businesses selling to other businesses, the percentage of buying decisions made before the salesperson is contacted is between 60 and 90, researchers say.

The buying process is going through a tectonic shift. The world of commerce is reorienting. And so must the sales and [marketing](#) roles. They have changed more in the last few years than the last three decades.

Organizations must reset their sales and marketing teams to build the experience the customer expects and wants.

In many companies, marketers don’t appreciate the sales function — at least, not enough. And sales folks think marketers waste too much of their time and budget on weak activities. This rivalry is putting the organization at a disadvantage. They’re losing sales.

Traditionally, marketing is involved with the conception of the product, where it should be sold (place), its price and how it’s promoted. Those are marketing’s 4Ps.

Sales has traditionally been involved with the face-to-face interaction with the customer. Simply said, marketing got the leads and sales closed the deal. Sadly, many organizations still run that way — staying in their own silos.

Today, the world is driven by digital.

Getting sales and marketing right can make the difference between success and failure.

The sales and marketing sandbox has gotten really muddy. It is difficult to tell them apart. We still need front-line salespeople. We still need marketers. It's how they work together and how tightly they work together that must change.

Digital marketing has compelled sales and marketing to align. Technology is disrupting their roles and moving them to a more united function.

An example of disruption on the marketing side comes from a recent AdAge article reporting that JPMorgan Chase Bank is getting better results from ads written by artificial intelligence than from experienced copywriters (Ouch! This hits very close to home).

A human wrote this headline: "Access cash from the equity in your home." The computer wrote this: "It's true — You can unlock cash from the equity in your home." The computer's headline outperformed the human's headline by as much as double.

On the sales side, outbound sales calls aren't working like they used to. Much of the work, such as lead prospecting, building reports, meeting scheduling and emails, has become largely automated.

Like them or not, chatboxes have displaced many customer service people. Think of the millions of e-commerce websites. The buyer is dealing with technology, not humans.

Ultimately, we will adapt to the changing job landscape just as we have with technological revolutions like steam, electric and industrial. Now we are in the digital revolution.

Even though sales and marketing functions are changing and merging, they have the same order of business: to increase the company's revenue.

Marketers have to get in the revenue camp and the sales force has to get in the technology camp. Working together, they'll sing Kumbaya in harmony.

One practical way to move in this direction is for sales and marketing to switch places for a while, maybe a month. Until we walk in each other's shoes, we cannot know what it's like. We will learn from each other.

Clearly, sales must become more competent with marketing since buyers are having fewer and fewer personal meetings. Marketers must learn from sales that it is about relationships. Together, they must learn how to personalize on a large scale.

When they do work together, studies have shown it's not uncommon for companies to enjoy 40% higher sales wins and retention rates. That can result in a 20% annual growth rate.

When sales and marketing functions don't work well together, declines in revenue of 10% or more are typical. The most successful sales and marketing operations have merged into one revenue operations group.

Today, the sales leader must be a marketer and the marketing leader must be a salesperson. A good title for this leader is chief revenue officer, with the sales and marketing folks reporting to her or him.

Dick Maggiore is president and CEO of [Innis Maggiore](#) founded in Canton in 1974, and today recognized as America's leading positioning ad agency helping brands compete and win in the marketplace here and across the country.