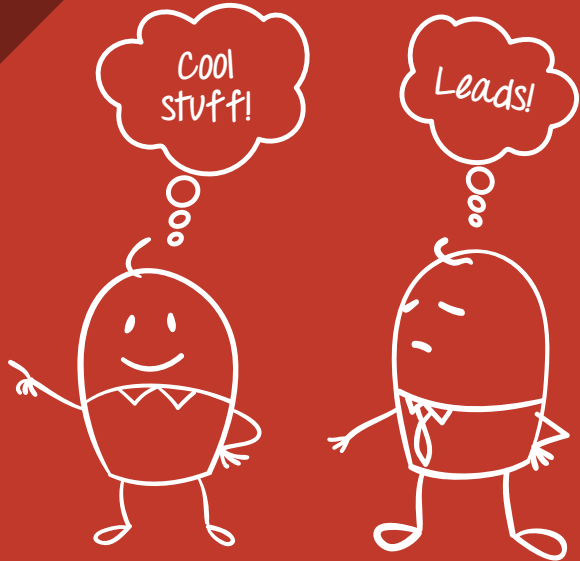


OCTOPUS
GROUP

TIMING AND RHYMING

OF MARKETING AND SALES



The Adventures of
Mick and Mike

Is this a guide for
sales people to better
understand marketing?



Or a guide for marketeers
to better understand sales?

BOTH!



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Sales and marketing often see the world differently. It's not that they have opposing views. The fundamental reason for any disconnect is that sales and marketing are, pretty much, different. Content can be a surprising broker in the process of bringing sales and marketing together. Here's why.

An underlying challenge that sets sales and marketing at odds is timing. Most businesses want to sell in a hurry. Marketing is a courtship, a ceremony, and it takes time. What we often talk about as a **'funnel'** in sales and marketing terms can also be seen as a clock. **'Tick Tock.'**

The hour hand of brand, drives the minute hand of contact which drives the second hand of sales. The cogs all work in dependence upon the other and are geared in unison, right? If only!

No, our sales and marketing clock works slightly differently. The hands often travel in different directions, sometimes fast, sometimes slow. At times they line up, but it's not something you could 'set your watch by.'



Okay, enough of the clock analogy. Sufficed to say that creating a brand can take years and closing a deal can take minutes. Conversely, you can market to customers on a daily basis but they may only transact with you periodically. Within these dynamics are the origins of sales and marketing disconnects.

If sales and marketing 'rhyme', the pace of either is unproblematic. Short sales cycles supported by impactful marketing, long lead brand building supporting slow-burn sales strategies. It's when the activity doesn't match. That's when some unenviable tail-chasing can kick in.

Is this going to generate sales leads?

Everything you do with marketing strategy should connect to sales. However, the number of marketing activities we engage in without any real question as to the sales value or alignment is alarming. From the outset, the important aim is to ensure that all investment is connected to delivering sales value.



MQL closure increases by 57% for businesses where sales and marketing plan together.

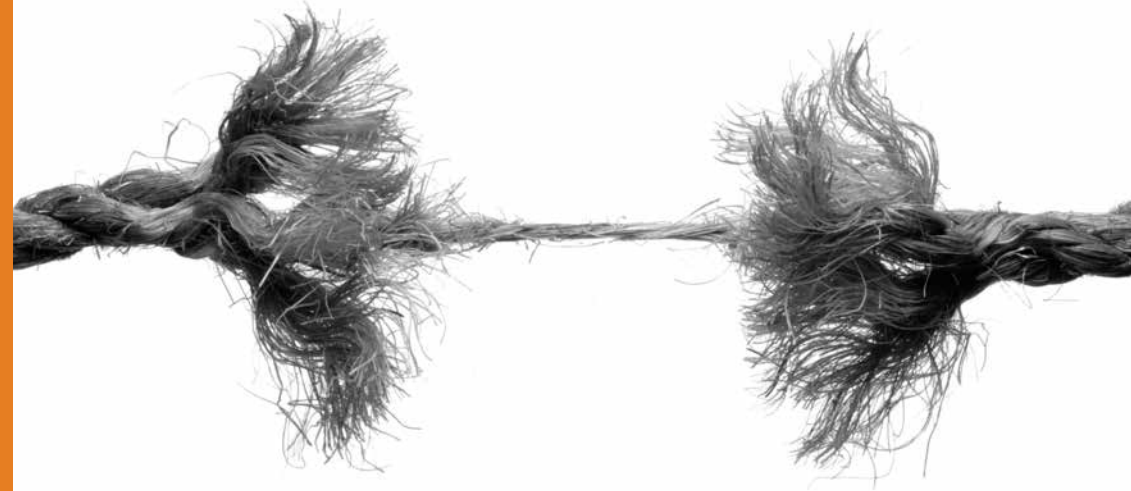
Source: Marketo 2013

Slow-burn sales don't 'really' exist, of course. Even the most lucid, long hand sales activity is high pressure and volatile. Equally, tactical, immediate transactions, for example selling anti-virus software upgrades online, require a long lead of attention grabbing and shepherding into position. To add to the confusion, short lead sales can require long lead marketing strategy and vice versa. That's okay though. As long as they rhyme.

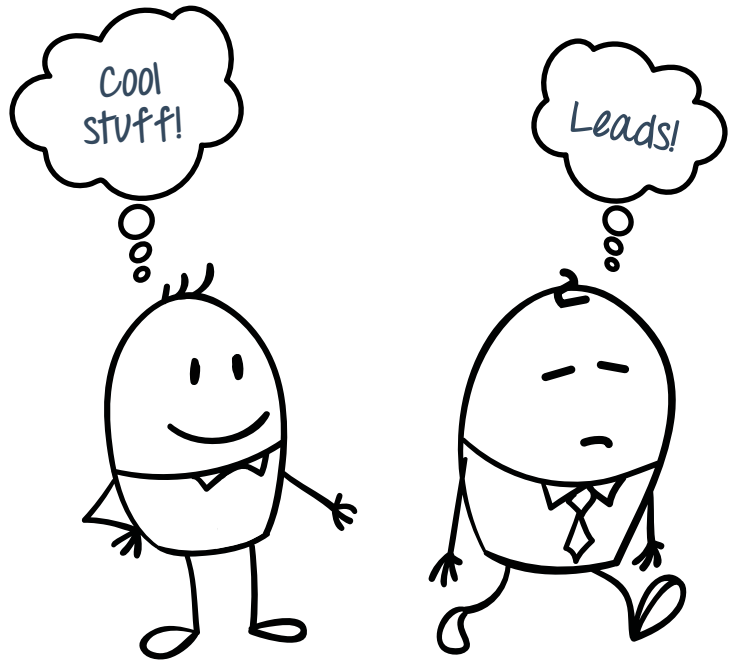


Chapter One

Long Leads and Short Tempers



Matt Logo and **Mike Pipeline** are great filters for figuring out how much work your sales and marketing functions need to do in order to line up.



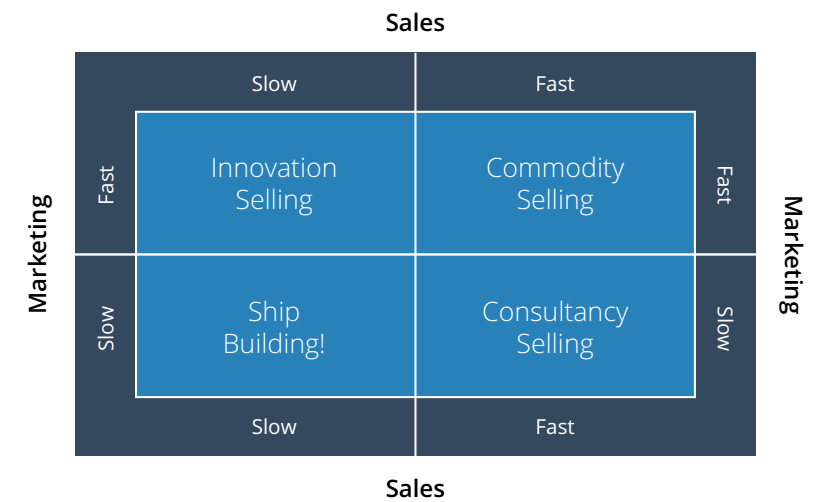
Matt Logo, Marketing

"Hey Mike, have you seen this new app? It tells you how warm your feet are!"

Mike Pipeline, Sales

"Great Matt. Does it generate leads? My feet are getting colder by the second."

Here are some examples of how sales influences the pace of marketing:



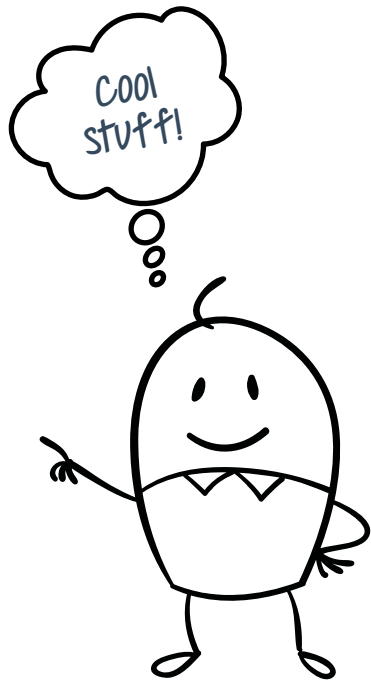
Innovation Selling
Selling innovation is selling to a need that, technically, doesn't exist yet. It's heavily focused on marketing ahead and at higher pace than the sales it will yield in the near term. This is a typical model for start-up IT businesses.

Commodity Selling
Commodity selling has many different flavours, but, in essence, the marketing is there to meet an immediate sales need. It's the origin of a BOGOF.

Ship Building
Slow marketing for slow selling – well, that's not a plentiful arena to occupy, but long lead sales where new entrants are few fit the bill. Want to buy a ship, anyone?

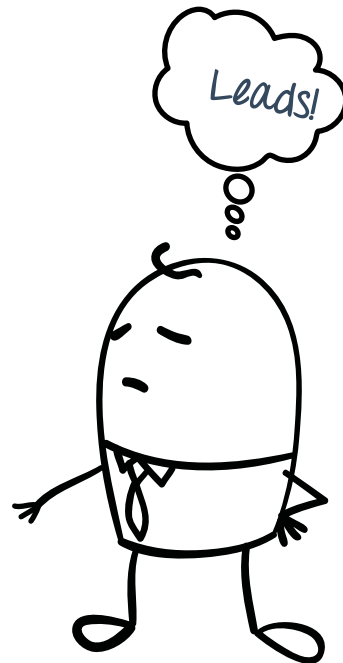
Consultancy Selling
Fast sales with slow marketing is not an easy thing to conceive. Marketing is never slow? But in some cases, particularly services such as consulting, you are marketing to a known future need. Ivory tower marketing buys time.

All too often, sales strategy and marketing strategy look aligned – perhaps because of a calendar, schedule or ratio of conversations that adds up to the same number, but when tactics fail it is often timing at the root of the failure.



Matt Logo, Marketing

"Hey Mike, our Facebook page has just got to 1000 likes!"



Mike Pipeline, Sales

"Great Matt. The phone has been ringing non-stop since we passed 995."





Chapter Two

The Mailshot and The Press Release [A Content Tale]

Press releases represent a lot of things but are they lead generation material? If you need to give a sales team a list of 100 leads to follow up by the end of the quarter, are you going to reach out to your database, or send out a press release to the masses?

At best, a press release is a long lead sales tool, and the need for leads is generally a short lead need. Therefore, a short lead tactic, like an email blast to a database, seems to match a short term need – the need for leads to follow up on. However, there are some BIG buts to this approach.

Lead Quality

Generally speaking, the easier a lead is to obtain, the lower the quality. Prospects responding to email blasts can be as far away from purchasing as those that never respond at all. Lead scoring, driven by content consumption, can help to improve lead quality.

Alignment

A press release on its own is of little value as a tactical lead generator, but it is a great tool for generating awareness and filling the top of a sales funnel. If a business has sufficient intelligence about how awareness generation ignites its customers' sales journeys, it's alignment to sales can be quantified. Moreover, different types of press release prompt different types of response from an audience. And what was once food for media and analysts can now be seen as also a lever for content marketing.

A person in a grey suit is standing next to a black suitcase. The person's legs and the suitcase are visible. The background is white.

If Only We All Sold Hotel Rooms

A great example of short term marketing outreach aligning to short term sales need is the selling of hotel rooms at discount rates on short notice. There is an immediate value for the customer (a discount), and immediate need for the vendor (an empty room) and the transaction itself is short and simple.

However, if the marketing need is to 'fill the funnel' and enable the sales function to engage with prospects – more typical of a B2B activity – then email leads driven by tactical outreach are far less likely to fit the bill.

Unfortunately, the answer to whether a press release or a mailshot is a better short term lead generator is, well, **NEITHER** works. Tactical email shots can only ever be that. A press release hanging on a website as hollow self-promotion is also largely useless. But both rely on content and if we take a strategic view of the content a business creates then both can be deployed in a way that connects them to a sales process directly. All content has a sales value if the timing and rhyming is right.

Whilst content marketing places a lot of resource pressure on businesses (becoming a publisher overnight is never easy) it also puts you in the driving seat. Creating content that takes a prospect on a journey, aligns to information needs and is deployed in a variety of different ways, that's a good thing! It takes some of the 'chance' out of marketing to prospects and bridges the peaks and troughs of the marketing mix.



Chapter Three

Sales Funnels with Stretchy Necks

Content marketing takes the traditional concept of a marketing funnel and stretches it a bit. This stretch is a refreshing workout for the sales and marketing dynamic. The 'journey' to a lead doesn't start with a business reaching out to a stranger, it starts with a stranger coming to you. This has important implications for a marketing calendar.

In most cases a marketing calendar of activity is driven by what a company is doing and when. Trouble is, customer buying needs are not defined by sellers' calendars. Customers need stuff when they need it and are increasingly more educated about what they need before they come a-knocking.



Mostly, marketing and sales calendars align for organisational purposes. However, we also need an 'always on' approach to enable sound content marketing. The benefits are many:

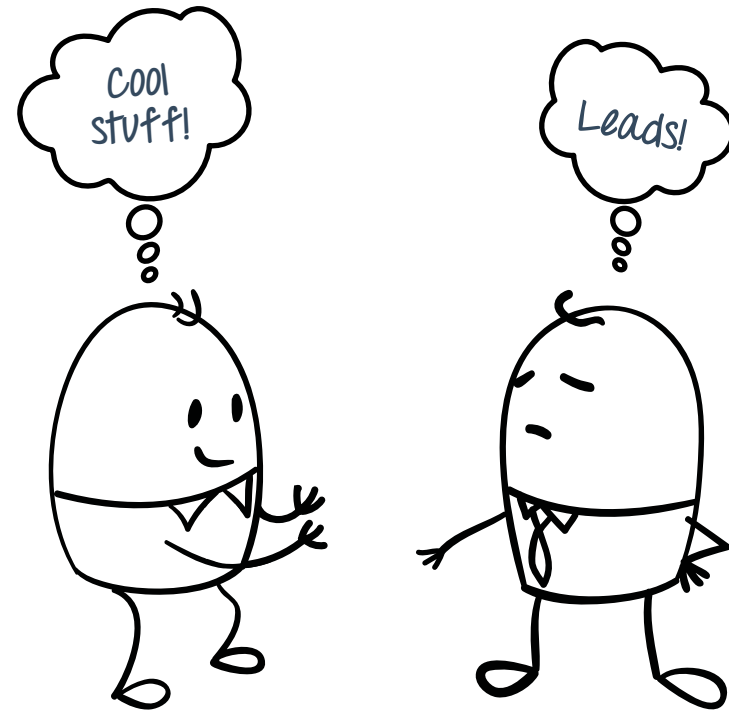
- Engage customers in the early stage of the buying process
- Reflect customer information needs, not vendor calendars
- Create accountable processes for marketing lead generation

Content marketing is an approach to lead generation that connects content to sales. Information gathering and consumption are now conspicuous and measurable in the sales process. In order to be wholly accountable there is the need for marketing automation infrastructure to gather and track consumption, which not all businesses have, or deploy properly but use of tools such as, Hubspot, Pardot, Marketo etc. is growing considerably year on year. The accountability tide is definitely turning.

When does a funnel start?

It starts with prospects (we call them 'people' in the real world) consuming information. You can allocate your funnel a start and end point by tracking and scoring this process.

The important point to understand is that content marketing provides an effective method of generating sales leads. Good content equates to good content marketing. Who knew?



Matt Logo, Marketing

Mike Pipeline, Sales

"We need to collaborate better, Mike. I suggest a weekly sit down and create a dedicated page on the intranet to share ideas."

"Great Matt. I'm free at the end of the year. My username is Bonus-Ghost. Ping me."

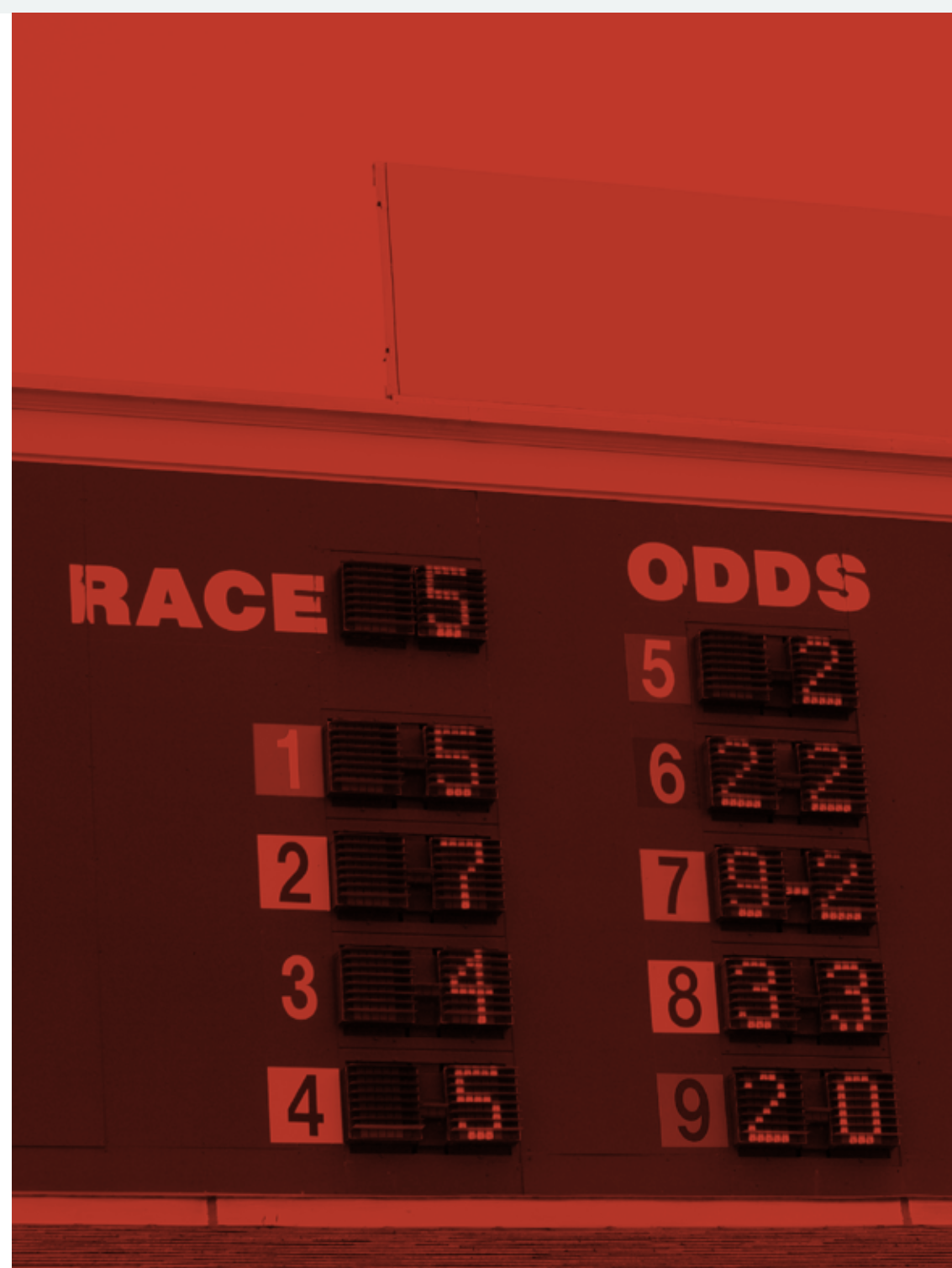
However, the benefits of a content marketing approach equate to much more than just funky infographics and a scorecard.

Looking at the world through a content marketing lens breaks two bad organisational habits. It forces a business to align sales and marketing and it demands that you think of the buyer first. You cannot have effective content if your buyer needs and personas are not engrained in the thought process of the business. You cannot have effective content marketing if sales and marketing are at odds. Addressing the gap between marketing and sales through the process of creating 'cool stuff' for customer consumption, that's quite a payback. All that and not an org chart in sight.



The average B2B client is 60% of the way through the purchase decision before engaging supplier sales reps.

Source: CEB Research 2013/ Forbes Magazine





In Summary

We have our very own mantra that serves as a good signpost for getting marketing alignment right. It's in the key of 'G'

Goals

Planning. Sales and marketing goals need to be aligned. They need to be clearly stated and recognised as supporting each other. This alignment needs to happen across the business and needs to be revisited and referred to as often as possible. This may seem an obvious step to have in place, but it is often the case that each strategy is executed exclusive of the other. Create a two column list. Put Sales Goals on one side. Put Marketing Goals on the other. Make sure they match up.

Gears

Timing. With the goals aligned, the company has direction. The next dimension is timing. How is the marketing strategy geared to support sales? If it takes 6 months to generate awareness, followed by a 6 month buying cycle, are long lead activities designed to support buying decisions a year from now? If awareness is established and buying cycles are immediate, what tactical levers are in place to convert prospects?

Games

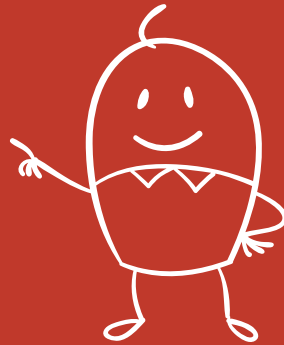
Targets. There are more ways to measure marketing output now than there has ever been. Social metrics, CRM conversion ratios, online traffic, surveys, live polling, scorecards and the like all inform performance. Targets are essential as benchmarks, incentives and insights. Whilst all metrics hold some level of value, too many numbers makes a muddle. What three numbers best demonstrate how marketing is feeding the funnel? Use those numbers.

Give

Flexibility. Targets, plans and objectives are generally rigid, fixed and all the better for that. However, flexibility needs to be built into the process of connecting brand to sales. Content marketing is responsive and dynamic. Markets change, buyers evolve and knowing what works is a process of fine tuning messages and the mix of activities that attract customers to you. Flexibility needs to be built into any strategy.

Thank you
for reading

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