

## What is the Difference Between Sales and Marketing?

In traditional business, marketing is what brings your prospect to your door, gets them to call, send an email or in some cases actually buy. Sales is everything that happens after the prospect has contacted you. Traditional business is still with us though it has clearly been evolving very rapidly in recent years. Although the general definitions of sales and marketing still apply, business evolution has expanded and radically changed both concepts. And that evolution appears to be accelerating. The most obvious difference is the blurring of the lines between sales and marketing. Most low consideration sales involve an emotion, impulse or unmet need. The prospect or customer either buys 'on the spot' or they do not buy at all, just like the grocery store. Almost everything we buy falls into this category. These impulse or emotional sales include items such as hot dogs, toothpaste and gasoline. In these sales the marketing and sales are all bound up into one 'presentation'. The good news is the sales process and cycle is short and sweet; the bad news is everybody in the world is competing for that same sale. Higher consideration sales, such as cars, houses, properties, colleges, etc., still fit the more traditional divisions of sales and marketing. That is why many companies split their sales and marketing departments; their respective functions often can be separated. Most companies set up their marketing departments to drive qualified prospects to their sales department. It is the sales department's job to assess needs, do presentations, prepare bids and contracts and of course, close the sale. Although sales and marketing are both involved in buying a CD online or buying a timeshare condo in Akumal, the two processes are very different. Yet even these higher consideration sales are beginning to evolve. Many companies have their marketing departments identify and qualify their prospects before sending the 'lead' to the sales department. The marketing department may be involved in a number of actual sales 'touch points' before the sales department gets the lead. The rule is form follows function and function follows results. Of course with anything humans attempt the devil is always in the details. It may seem like sales and marketing would be the same across companies in the same vertical and even horizontal industries. Not so anymore. How a company structures their sales and marketing processes often determines their degree of success in the marketplace. Technology has now 'forced' smaller and medium sized companies to compete directly on strategy. If everything else is equal between competitors, the one with the best strategy wins. Those companies that don't wish to compete on strategy simply don't compete. The easiest way to determine where marketing ends and sales begins in your company is to draw a flow chart of your sales cycle. Plot out each step as your prospects find out about you, contact you, go through your sales presentation, ask questions and obtain enough information to make an informed decision. And of course buy. If your sales process is complex and involves repeat sales, don't forget to include the follow-up on ongoing sales potential. The important point to remember is it is not as important to create a distinction between sales and marketing as it is to develop marketing and sales strategies that work. Consequently your marketing and sales departments may be the same or they may be on opposite sides of the planet, depending on your sales cycle. So the real answer to what is the difference between sales and marketing is ...it depends. It's relative because the answer will always be dependent on the application or sales cycle and process. How your company structures your sales and marketing functions will most likely determine whether your company succeeds and fails. But like most things in life, the devil is always in the details...

## About the Author

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