

Presented by “The Marketing Id”

B2B Engagement

What’s Driving Your Strategy — BANT or Can’t?

How companies are making the right moves to
engage with the right stakeholders



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STATE OF B2B ENGAGEMENT

In his February 2016 blog post, [“Survey finds only 29% of B2B customers are engaged – why I’m not surprised,”](#) Rob Brickle, Managing Director of Bsquared Consulting, offered this illuminating data:

“B2B companies are failing to engage 70% of their customer base according to a recent Gallup report. This significant study, conducted over five years and based on responses from over one hundred thousand people, completely chimes with research by Bsquared which shows that only 8% of B2B companies have reached full “maturity” in their customer engagement.”

Robert Hennessey, Founder of IndustryArchive.Org, in a [February 2017 press release](#) announcing *“a new business engagement platform that helps B2B Buyers engage Sellers before buying decisions are made,”* said the following:

“Recognizing that Buyers are in control is critically important for B2B demand engagement. Now Sellers must engage Buyers at the time of their choosing and on their terms.”

While Hennessey’s first assertion is true, the second observation is only partly so because it misses the point on the benefits of unsolicited early engagement by the Seller – on which, this paper will say more later. But then, Hennessey also went on to mischaracterize *“the role marketing automation plays in Internet marketing”* because it does not alter *“the traditional linear purchase cycle.”* Well, actually, to paraphrase a famous Shakespearean play, *“the fault, dear Hennessey, is not in our automation platform, but in ourselves.”* Sellers have simply not adapted adequately to the new marketing automation paradigm, when it comes to B2B engagement.



WINDOW OF ENGAGEMENT OPENS EARLY

In a recent interview on CRM Radio titled, [“Getting a 5X Lift Through Early Engagement,”](#) Mari Anne Vanella, CEO & Founder of The Vanella Group, Inc., noted that the window of engagement (which also serves as a window of influence) in today’s B2B sales cycle opens up much earlier than is typically assumed in the traditional BANT (Budget, Authority, Needs, and Timeline) method of opportunity identification. Over a decade ago, when marketing automation systems began offering seamless integration with a B2B’s CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system, they set in motion an “early engagement” paradigm, which when properly deployed can have a positive impact on pipeline management.

Unfortunately, many Sellers, i.e. sales reps misunderstand the role of marketing automation and thus miss out on the benefits of early engagement in the B2B sales cycle. As Mari Anne points out in her CRM Radio interview, *“Marketing automation doesn’t automate marketing, it only automates what you tell it to do.”*

Early engagement is generally not in the DNA of sales reps focused largely on making their next quarter’s numbers. This is where the sales leader in conjunction with Marketing can program their marketing automation system to enforce early engagement.

THE EARLY BIRD GETS THE WORM

Per the old adage, *“the early bird gets the worm.”* So early engagement is critical, in this new marketing paradigm and its customer engagement lifecycle. But early engagement does not have to be a typical **“two strikes—two calls, two emails—and you’re out”** sales philosophy. In her latest blog post, [“Whose Responsibility Is It To Fix B2B Engagement?”](#) Mari Anne suggests why:

“Engagement is the reason a lot of companies just buy “appointments,” but appointments only fill a calendar, not a pipeline.”

She then goes on to explain how such mistaken engagement goals, i.e. just an appointment, whether early or just in time, is rarely successful. If a sales rep's B2B engagement is floundering, it could be due to a misalignment of the steps required to connect with a prospect? Mari Anne recommends four underutilized tools, which can help improve engagement, including early engagement:

- Understanding your prospect's role and persona.
- Mining pertinent prospect data available in the public domain and within your platforms.
- Normalizing email and voice mail use.
- Critical thinking that will help you get through to your prospect.

BANT AND THE NEW MARKETING PARADIGM

The bottom line is engaging a prospect per BANT rules is no longer a winning proposition in the new marketing paradigm and it may be too little, too late in the customer engagement lifecycle. As IndustryArchive.Org's Hennessey noted in the aforementioned PR:

"B2B Web marketing has changed with over 70% of Buyers using generic searches to find business solutions to their problems. Additionally, Buyers are already 60% on the way to a decision before they contact a Seller according to recent studies."

CUSTOMER LIFECYCLE MANAGEMENT OWNERSHIP

So if a B2B rep has not engaged early with the right content to the right person(s) using the right channel(s), s/he is quite likely to have missed the Buyer's window altogether. Finally, even if a B2B rep gets their engagement right, success can be stymied for lack of ownership in the customer engagement lifecycle. As **Cindy Collins-Taylor**, lamented in her January 2017 blog post, "[Rethinking the Role of Marketing in B2B Customer Engagement](#)":

"Management of the customer lifecycle is largely fragmented and broken at many companies — and no single department is generally accountable for the stewardship of the entire customer relationship. Our research confirms that too many B2B organizations still treat the customer lifecycle as a series of handoffs among marketing, sales, and customer success teams instead of a comprehensive thing owned by one group within an organization. According to respondents, alignment with sales is a common challenge."

In this new marketing paradigm, there is a mistaken impression that Marketing is the new Sales. This is absolutely false because Sales owns the customer, even if they don't own the customer engagement lifecycle, and Sales is still the primary human interface with the customer. Nonetheless, it could be said that Marketing has usurped the new Business Development role as prospects progress through the pipeline prior to handoff to Sales as qualified leads.

CONCLUSIONS

To summarize, a successful B2B engagement strategy requires understanding the following:

- Marketing automation does only what you tell it to do.
- Buyers are in control but Sellers must remain engaged and early engagement is key to success in closing the deal.
- Ownership, by someone akin to a program manager, of the customer engagement lifecycle is absolutely critical.
- Marketing and other functional groups must be aligned with Sales throughout the customer engagement lifecycle.

About The Marketing Id

The Marketing Id (pronounced Eye-D) is a marketplace for sharing marketing ideas and experiences from the entrepreneurial and SMB worlds that primarily target B2B audiences.

To learn more about The Marketing Id and its wide array of technical marketing and business development services, please visit themarketingid.com or call 240.426.7018

About The Vanella Group, Inc.

The Vanella Group, Inc. is the leading provider of expert, high-quality, B2B telemarketing and telesales-based lead generation services exclusively for technology companies.

To learn more about B2B engagement and other aspects of developing successful, strategic sales development solutions, please visit www.vanellagroup.com or call 888.335.0340