IMPLEMENTING A MARKETING INFRASTRUCTURE: 'INTERNAL VERSUS OUTSOURCING'

BY TODD M. ZIELINSKI

As companies continue to find ways to accelerate and improve their sales growth efforts, one growing market trend is the use of front-end business development and lead generation activities to support sales efforts. This approach challenges the traditional thinking that sales reps are responsible for prospecting and lead generation activities, in addition to executing the active sales process, developing proposals and quotes, negotiating and closing new opportunities, as well as account management activities that require customer retention and increase of share within the customer base.

The goal of front-end marketing and business development activities is to create a consistent and steady stream of qualified opportunities for the sales team to work. The concept is to create a division of labor model within the sales process that allows sales resources to focus on what they do best—sell and close new relationships. So, what are the components and requirements of an effective front-end marketing and sales support infrastructure? Let's take a look:

- Develop processes and controls for staff to operate and leadership to manage, too, including:
  - Lead generation and lead management (repetitive and multiple contact touches in the form of direct mail, email, and outbound sales calling efforts to introduce/educate your company and capabilities, identify a specific opportunity or need, and qualify the relationship in order to solidify the first step in the active sales process for the sales team).
  - Market awareness programs (relationship touches, social media, case studies, testimonials, white papers, industry articles, collateral materials, etc.).
  - Programs required to secure market feedback/intelligence necessary for continual improvements in areas of strategy, target marketing, marketing and sales initiatives, and improving processes.
- Development, purchase, or lease of technologies required to integrate with and enable processes, including:
  - CRM (customer relationship management)
  - Marketing automation software
  - Lead management systems
  - Email marketing systems
- Staffing to develop, execute, and manage the processes, including:
  - Experienced and knowledgeable marketers who have the ability to develop processes, integrate technologies, and train staff to execute (in-house and/or consultant fees).
  - Staff to tactically execute processes (must be trained to utilize processes and technologies).
  - Company management to supervise, develop/retain staff, schedule and supervise staff activity, and manage teams to meet expectations and produce desired results and goals.

A key question that companies need to consider is what types of costs are associated with the implementation of this model. Based on my 17 years of experience executing business development processes, I would estimate that firms can invest up to $300,000 over a two-year period to internally implement the model and systems identified above (as a best practice marketing infrastructure solution). Recognizing that this infrastructure approach is a rather sizable

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investment and commitment, companies might find themselves evaluating options, such as an industry outsourcing partnership. A typical investment with outsourcing partnerships can run from $75,000 to $90,000, annually, which can be an attractive price alternative to implementing internally. When evaluating outsourced partnerships, it is highly important to make sure that the provider has good industry experience (including proven results within your specific target markets), provides a complete holistic and high-collaboration solution, as well as measurements and tools for tracking performance, goals, and the ability to continually improve process.

So, here are some items to consider when evaluating a front-end marketing and sales infrastructure:
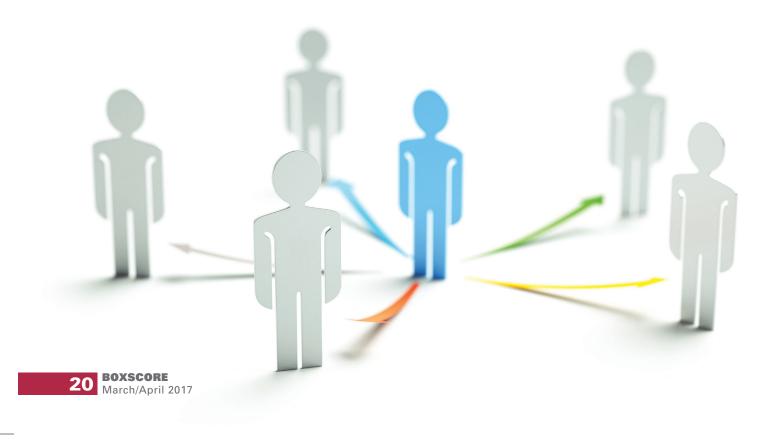
1 Hiring a skilled staff member to execute the process activities can range between $45,000 and $50,000 in total annual compensation and benefits. It can take three to six months to secure the right skill level and another three to six months to train the new staff member adequately. Skill sets compensated at the lower end will typically provide less-than-desired results and can take more time and effort to achieve the learning curve (regarding process, enabling technologies, your business, markets, etc.).

2 If you are looking to develop and implement a best-practice marketing infrastructure, consider that it will typically take about two to three different skill sets (people) and types of experience to create and operationalize a process similar to what was identified above. This can include resources and skill sets for the following activities:
   – Outbound sales phone calling and qualification support.
   – Content development and graphic design capabilities.
   – Profiling, prospect research, list development, and list cleaning.
   – Technology support for various kinds of IT tool enablement and automation (CRM, lead management, marketing automation, sales pipeline reporting).

3 What's the value of speed to market and leveraging an experienced staff with all the appropriate skill sets, a proven process model, enabling technologies, and an industry-experienced team that understands your industry and target markets? ■

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