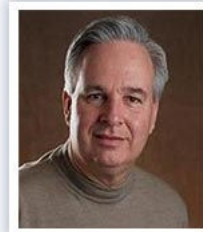


Why do I need Sales and Marketing?

Whether you are a CEO, a board member, or an investor, the question of whether or not you have the right focus, resources, and skills in Sales and Marketing, is an issue you should focus on. This paper is intended to start a conversation on this topic that might help you decide if you need to better understand this question in your company.

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Donn Atkins founded FlexSkill Consulting to help clients get access to experienced skills quickly. FlexSkill helps clients clarify their needs, build a plan to address them, and if necessary fulfill the needs until they find a permanent solution. The reason FlexSkill can do this is because their senior partners have done these things themselves, successfully for a long time. Before FlexSkill, Donn was a senior executive at IBM, leading its WW Channels Program, serving as General Manager of Worldwide Sales and Marketing for IBM Software, and President of IBM Latin America. He was a member of IBM's Worldwide Management Council, which is made up of the top 40 executives in the company.

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The Environment

A very senior executive once told me, "I wish I didn't have to have Sales and Marketing people. Just give me developers, engineers, and technical people." When asked what he meant he explained, "Customers don't like to buy our products, they just want to install and use them."

This may seem somewhat extreme, and perhaps it is, but there are many examples of companies, which are dominated by engineering and technical people, with no understanding or appreciation of what it takes to get a product to market, and more importantly, to drive the revenue necessary to sustain the company.

Conversely, the companies which see the best success are those who connect and balance Sales and Marketing with engineering and development to understand requirements, deliver the solutions the market wants, and delights customers.

Unfortunately the "if you build it, they will come" attitude exists in all size companies, across most industries. Senior leaders who have grown up on the technical side and never were exposed to the Sales and Marketing disciplines usually drive this view. These beliefs can be reinforced by their exclusive exposure to the technologists of their customers who continually praise them about the marvels of their technology.

Highly technical centric companies some times build walls between the market aware people and the technical executives. They either don't want to hear the marketplace messages, don't accept the feedback they get, or continually disagree with the views they get about the need for Sales and Marketing. There are examples of companies with new or leading edge solutions that continually like to invent new products or enhance existing products. These companies are constantly enamored by the "better mousetrap mentality". Their mantra is usually that they need to add a new feature, or enhance the product and therefore never aggressively take their solution to market.

Finally, there are companies who do not adequately communicate, promote or sell their products. They can have the best and most competitive offering in the market, which customers never know about. This is usually explained by statements like, "We don't have either the budget, skills, or resources to sell and market our products." Equally frustrating are those companies, which don't even know what they don't know.

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Questions you should ask

If your company has any of these characteristics, you should ask yourself a few simple questions:

1. How is Sales and Marketing incorporated into your management system? Is it part of the senior team? To whom does it report? Does it get an equal voice in strategy? Is it connected to the other parts of your business?
2. What percent of your revenue plan are you budgeting for Sales and Marketing? There is not a textbook answer to this question. There are a number of variables such as direct sales, web sales, or sales through partners. You should know where your company is and understand what your competitors are doing.
3. Does your senior leadership value Sales and Marketing as much as they do other disciplines? What is the quality and quantity of your respective teams? Are you paying competitive salaries? Are your Sales and Marketing people thought leaders?

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Next Steps

There are many more factors, which need to be a part of this discussion. This document barely scratches the surface of this issue. If any of these conditions exist in your company, you should immediately try to determine where you are and what actions you should take. Most companies who find themselves in this position look to either hire the right people or seek outside help to understand their situation. One of the biggest issues they face is whether or not they know the kind of person to hire. For that reason, seeking some outside guidance is usually a good first step.

Companies who don't know the skills and experience a candidate should have usually find themselves with a high turnover rate which could lead them to the opinion of " see, I told you I didn't need any Sales and Marketing people, they are just not very good." These companies ultimately fail or underperform.

If you have a suspicion that your Sales and Marketing capabilities are not what they need to be, take the time to educate yourself and get some help. Companies invest a lot to develop good products; they need to do the same with Sales and Marketing.

FlexSkill Consulting can help you understand the issues and questions discussed in this paper.

Please take a look at our website: www.FlexSkill.com
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THANK YOU.

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