

**Sales versus Marketing:
So what's the difference?**

Most people assume that sales and marketing are one and the same thing. The two words are often used interchangeably. You may have even heard the joke, “a marketing person is just a salesman with a degree.” Sounds funny, but it’s not true. I know a lot of marketing managers who don’t have degrees!

Others assume that marketing is strategic (the process of doing needs analysis, market research, test marketing, etc.) and sales is tactical (the process of getting the product into the hands of the customer.)

I’m sure there is some good rhyme and reason to this view, but I would argue that marketing is simply the process of bringing value to the marketplace. In business, the result of marketing correctly is a sale. In life, it may be landing your ideal job. In a personal situation, it could be your ideal marriage! People will only buy products, services, ideas or build relationships with you if they think it is of value to them.

To be successful in your marketing, as in any other area of life, you need to prepare. This is called market research. If you do your preparation and present a compelling case, the result will usually be a sale.

When you sell, you show people you have something of value to them, and you are, in fact, marketing. **Although sales is a function of its own, it still falls under the umbrella of marketing.** To effectively market (sell), first find out what your customer wants, then deliver it. It’s really that simple. If this is the case, why do so many people struggle with sales?

Most people sell "backwards." They intentionally or unintentionally sell products that they like to sell, not what the customer likes, needs or even wants to buy! We call this the hard sell!

In my opinion, what is lacking in the sales profession today is market research: getting the facts versus making assumptions. When was the last time you asked your customer the following questions:

- Why do you buy from me?
- What do you look for when you buy?
- What are the key attributes most important to you when you make a buying decision?
- How important is each one?
- How can I improve my product offering to you?
- How do you like to be sold?

Asking these questions beats assuming that you know all the answers! It's not a surprise that business people seldom ask these questions.

Marketing is about bringing perceived value to the marketplace, value that others perceive to be important (not what we perceive to be important.) To do this effectively, be both rational and objective. Realize that at the end of the day our role as professional salespeople is to serve our customers, not to be self-serving.

I'm sure you've heard it before, but it's worth repeating:

The only way to get what you want is to help others get what they want.

Another way to look at a sale is a reward for taking care of someone else's problem. But to take care of someone else's problem, you need to know what it is in the first place.

This comes through the willingness to learn, and the ability to listen and ask quality questions. Invest in others before they invest in you!

Investing in others means taking the time upfront to find out what their problems really are and researching their needs. This can be either formal or informal. Formal can mean primary or secondary market research. Informal can simply be asking the right questions.

Market research is the key to successful sales.

Market research ensures that when you do make your sales pitch (proposition), it is on the mark. It's called marketing because the goal of marketing is to be on the mark of what the market wants:

Mark-----→Market-----→Marketing!!!

The more you know about your customers' business, the more interested they will be in you, and the more you'll be seen as a valuable resource. They will find more reasons to want to continue a relationship with you.

Marketing is not a one-time event; it is a continuous and perpetual process of adding value to your customer. Marketing takes discipline to be consistent. It builds trust by building incremental value with each subsequent customer contact.

One of the most successful marketing practices being used these days is the concept of sending customers "value items." This is information of value to your customers: maybe an article, report, video clip, etc.

It may be information about things they don't normally have time to research themselves, but need to know to be able to run an efficient business. Your customers always need to see you as a "value added" resource if you are to be seen as a true salesperson. If you research your customers' needs, you will know what to send them.

Do what I recommend, and you actually don't even need to sell. In researching the customers' business and sending them information relevant and pertinent to their business on a regular basis, you "silently sell to them" all along! Just by marketing!

Customers know who you are, what you do, they see you as a valuable resource and they know where to find you when they need you. It's just a matter of time, and all because you did your homework, or market research.

Look at it another way: the final sale is really the result of doing your marketing correctly. Sales is not separate from marketing, it is a part of it and the result of it. Looking at sales as a separate entity gives an incomplete and myopic view and does not use the full power of marketing as it was designed to be used.

If the activity is right, the results will surely follow. In the sales world this means doing your homework. Never forget the 5P's of marketing.

Prior
Preparation
Prevents
Poor
Performance

When people say “We have to market, so put on your sales hat,” they have their hat on backwards! They need to say, “We need to sell, so put on your marketing hat.” Find out what the market needs, wants and desires, and the whole job of sales becomes a lot easier! Remember, market research is the preparation, sales is the result, and marketing is the process!