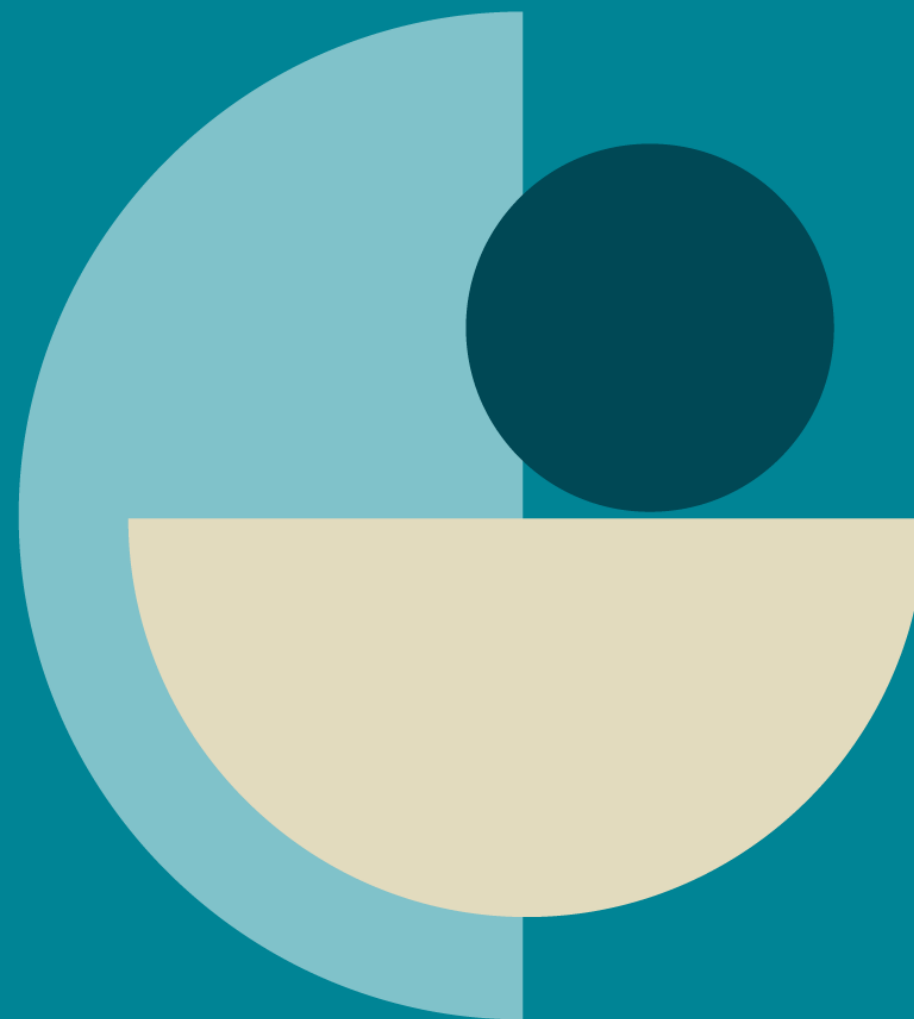


# The art of sales and marketing alignment:

## Three ways to level the GTM playing field

Rob Leavitt, Partner, Momentum ITSMA

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# *Another* report on sales and marketing alignment?

Drawing on new interviews with senior marketing leaders, this report explores three initiatives to enhance collaboration across go-to-market teams



## Why now?

While sales and marketing alignment has improved, B2B companies still struggle to achieve full collaboration in today's dramatically different go-to-market environment.

Since Covid, the need for unified teams has intensified due to:

- Digital, social, and business transformation reshaping markets, partners, and competition
- Cautious buyers demanding personalized, multichannel experiences with credible assurance of value
- Remote and hybrid work complicating operations
- AI transforming buyer-provider interactions

In this context, companies can no longer afford siloed approaches or outdated "sales support" models where marketing is deferential to sales. Instead, both teams must collaborate and contribute equally at every stage.

As one CMO explained it: "Marketing is quite often subservient to sales and that's part of the problem. We're constantly asking 'what do you want' instead of leading with our own insight and working as equal partners."

This report offers a fresh perspective on this challenge, particularly for large enterprises, addressing multiple levels: organizational design, leadership and planning, formal operations, and daily interactions.

Drawing on new interviews with senior marketing leaders and our proprietary research, it emphasizes three initiatives to enhance collaboration and impact:

- **Strengthening organizational alignment:** Objectives, planning, and metrics
- **Streamlining process integration:** Client-centricity, infrastructure, and enablement
- **Building a collaborative culture:** Team building, incentives, and communities of practice

By focusing on these areas, companies can broaden and deepen sales and marketing collaboration and accelerate market impact.



**Rob Leavitt**

Partner, Momentum ITSMA

[Read this report online](#)

# 1. Strengthen organizational alignment

Drive shared objectives across  
challenging team structures



# Bridging the gap

Few marketing or sales leaders would admit to misalignment at the top. CMOs and CROs or heads of sales typically align on strategic priorities for the business. Jennifer Jackson, CMO at Actian, says, "I make it my mission to be aligned to what the business is doing and what the business cares about." The major challenge is cascading that alignment through differently organized teams.

B2B enterprise sales teams are usually segmented by region, industry, and account-level prioritization, such as key accounts, enterprise, and commercial. Marketing is typically function-based, including brand, demand, operations, and field.

While field and regional marketing teams often align neatly with sales, most marketing groups do not. "Aligning marketing to the way the sales team is structured sounds obvious but some organizations don't do that," says Virtusa CMO Brian Jochum. Organizational alignment thus relies heavily on three areas: objectives, planning, and metrics.

# Aligned objectives



“The biggest challenge many organizations have is aligning marketing and sales objectives and metrics,” says Marlowe Fenne, Director of ABX at Pulum. Marketing focuses both on long-term objectives, such as brand development, and near-term initiatives for engagement, leads, and loyalty. Sales focuses primarily on winning deals and booking revenue. The goals are complementary but lead to differing priorities in daily practice.

Agreeing on a “Three R’s” approach—Reputation, Relationships, and Revenue—helps create shared business objectives that drive both near- and long-term growth. Marketing commits to tangible revenue goals, not just engagement and leads, while sales commits to positioning and relationship measures that pave the way for future revenue.



## Integrated planning

Shared objectives can support more collaborative planning across marketing and sales. Account-based marketing (ABM) is often a crucial step.

Mapping out shared priorities and initiatives at the account level helps model broader integration while building trust in the field.

At Infosys, for example, marketing works with sales on every opportunity with their most important accounts, from planning to execution. Amit Deshpande, Associate Vice President, Marketing at Infosys says, “We work on the plan together with the account team, ideally with a three-year horizon, and then figure out together how marketing can best serve their objectives.”

At a higher level, Actian has developed an integrated go-to-market planning process with sales and marketing leadership focused on top business objectives. Jennifer Jackson explains, “We have an in-depth planning process each year where we assess, product by product, what the business needs to achieve and then build our plans to support that.”



# Shared metrics

Establishing shared metrics helps close the loop on aligned objectives and integrated planning. Revenue measures often come first; marketing commits to pipeline goals in areas such as customer acquisition, retention, and revenue growth. Complementary measures can then support a more holistic, strategic approach toward the three R's. These could include metrics such as brand preference, executive-level relationships, and Net Promoter Scores (NPS)—all of which support sustainable growth.

Getting past the attribution battles is key. "Attribution can be a zero-sum way of thinking. If I'm getting credit, you're not," says Virtusa's Brian Jochum. "I try to reframe that conversation completely by never claiming to be the sole party responsible for success. Instead, we focus on correlations and not causation." Marlowe Fenne adds, "It's amazing what can happen when nobody cares who gets the credit."

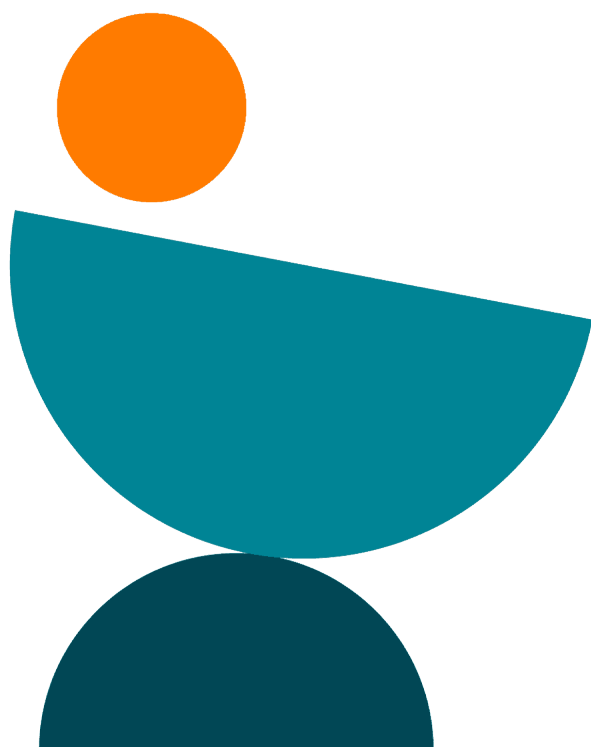


## 2. Streamline process integration

Focus on processes before people



# Fix what needs fixing



“Attack the process first, not the people,” says Jennifer Jackson. “It’s the processes that are broken.” Historically, marketing and sales alignment focused on handoffs. Marketing built brand and generated leads; sales closed deals. This siloed approach led to misunderstandings and conflicts. Marketing spent “too much time” on branding instead of sales support, and sales saw many leads as worthless, failing to appreciate marketing’s contributions.

Today’s clients require an integrated approach to a non-linear, bespoke buying process. They want new ideas, proof of value, and constant support. Marketing and sales must work together throughout the client lifecycle to meet these demands.

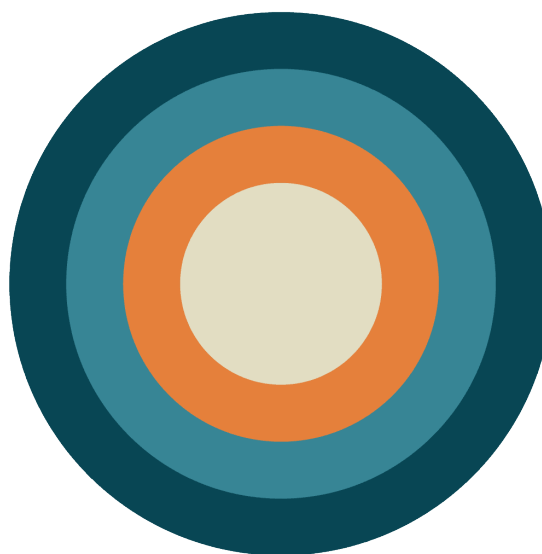
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Jennifer Jackson, CMO, Actian

# Client-centricity

Marketing and sales teams have long struggled with shifting from product-out to client-in approaches. Pushing the portfolio often seems easier than starting with client needs and designing customized solutions. However, as customer demands rise, client-centricity becomes more important.

Organizing around client needs and the buyer's journey guides a more integrated marketing and sales motion. Campaign planning is more effective with deep client insight; sales enablement can focus on responding to the unique needs of different accounts.



ABM can lead the way. ABM methodologies bring marketing and sales together to diagnose customer needs, map stakeholders, develop targeted sales plays, and design integrated campaigns. Nearly three-quarters of ABM programs see improved sales team satisfaction, and 68% of marketers believe ABM significantly improves marketing and sales alignment.<sup>[1]</sup>

This approach allows teams to collaborate on client insight, campaign planning, messaging, content development, and ongoing engagement. It can involve sales in the marketing process earlier and define requirements for ongoing marketing initiatives throughout the sales process.

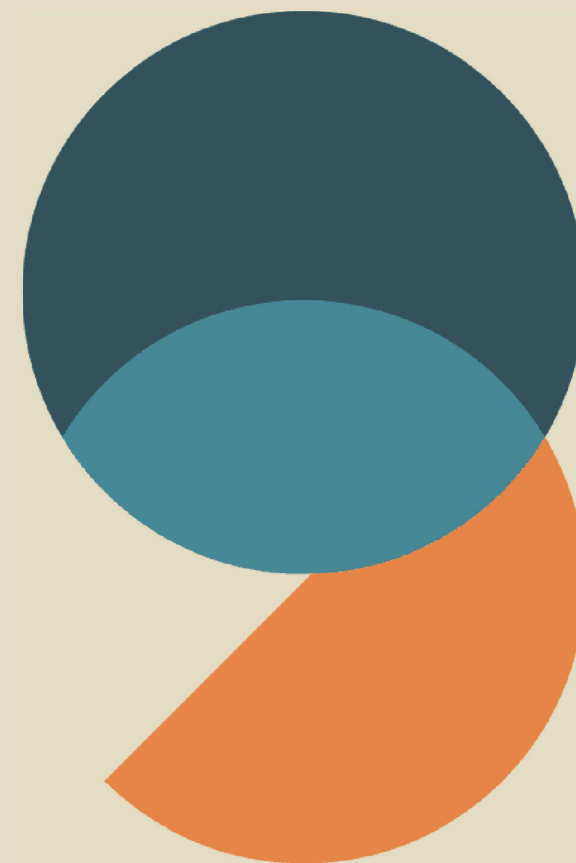
# Shared infrastructure

Tools and data are fragmented and managed by different teams for different objectives. Investing in a unified infrastructure for marketing and sales is daunting but beneficial. "If you don't have a clear data architecture purpose-built for your applications and workflow, you will fall behind," says Marianna Kantor, CMO at Esri.

Joint tools, such as common CRM, ABM, and content management platforms, enable seamless communication and collaboration. "It's about improving client intelligence but also avoiding the times when sales asks you to quickly pull together an executive client briefing and people are running around and spending hours researching," says Steve Sienkiewicz, Strategic Account Program Leader at Black & Veatch.

Amit Deshpande highlights the importance of integrated dashboards that provide real-time performance insights: "We have a shared services team that helped us build a dashboard aggregating relevant information so both marketers and salespeople can access the same data. Reducing the effort to find information allows more time for consuming necessary data."

Read our [Beginners' guide to martech](#) for more information on how to optimize your tech stack



# Integrated enablement

The third critical lever in process integration is enablement, primarily for sales but also for marketing. B2B firms have invested heavily in sales enablement recently, and the rise of generative AI provides new support capabilities. The question is the extent to which marketing and sales develop initiatives and assets together versus operating in silos.

Marketing should build sales enablement into processes for thought leadership, executive engagement, events, and campaign planning. Sales should provide input and feedback on key activities, equipping marketing with insights about the sales process.

Integrating sales and marketing operations for enablement teams can be beneficial. Virtusa's Brian Jochum says, "Our sales operations group supports both marketing and sales. That way we are equal partners with data, processes, and training. We're aligned on the same tools and operations for activities like email campaigns and using LinkedIn SalesNavigator. It's a simple thing but being aligned at the core on our methods and systems is a big deal."

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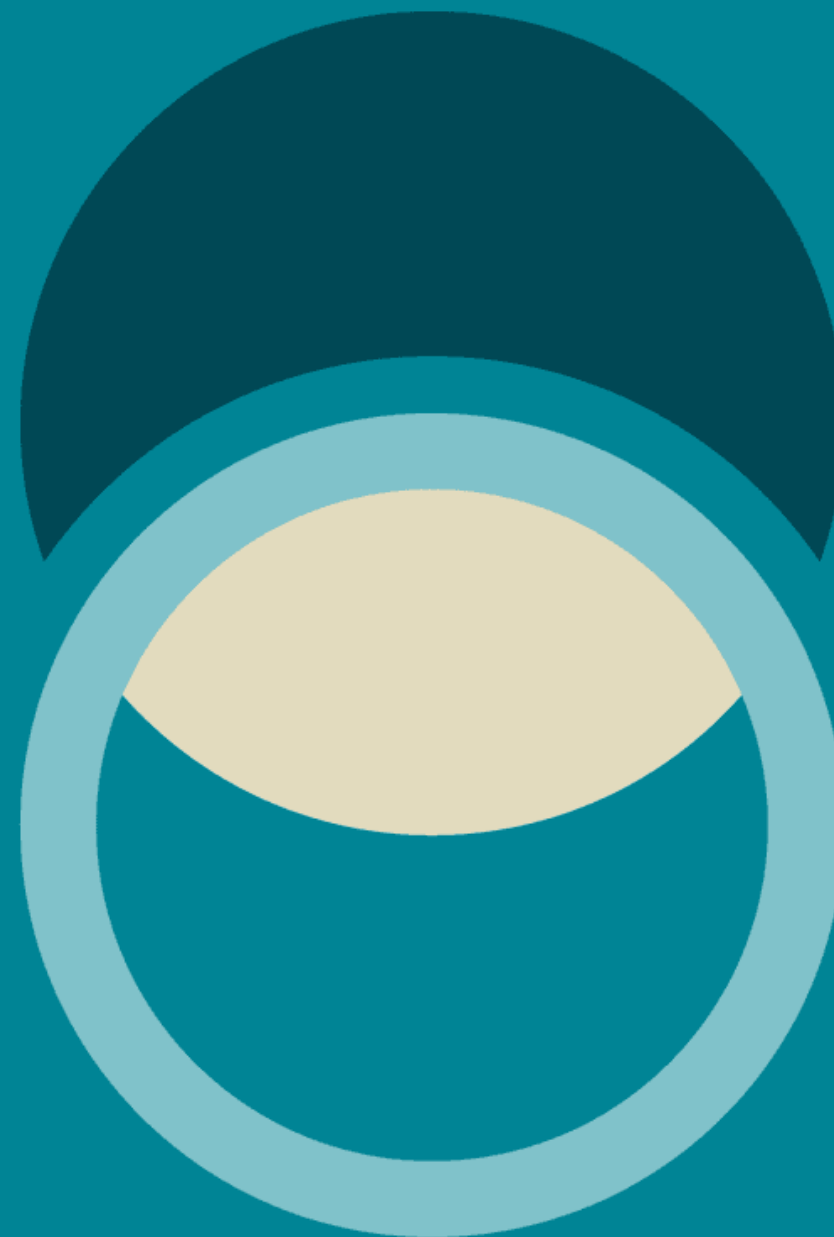
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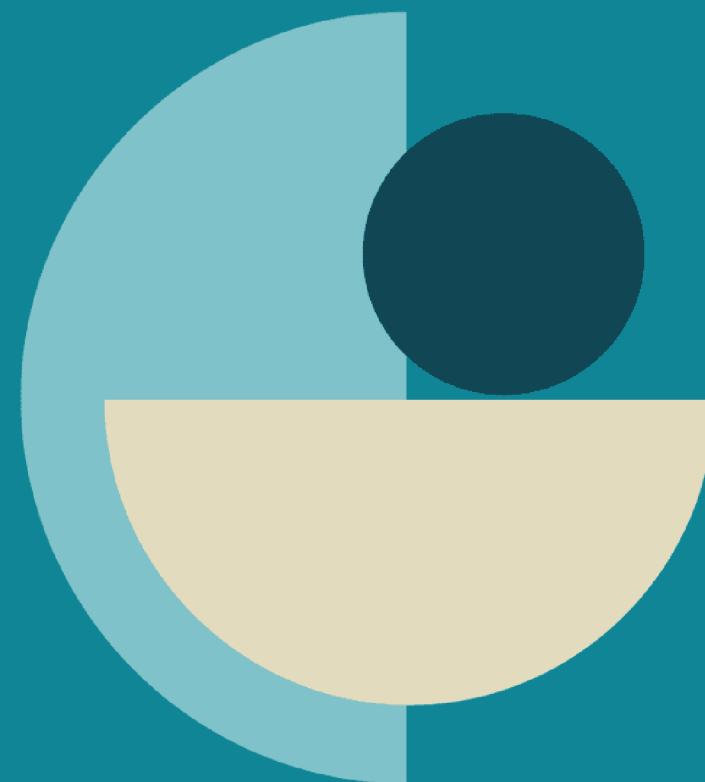
### 3. Build a collaborative culture

Nurture empathy and equality



## The power of culture

Aligned organization, tools, and processes are foundational. But, as the famed management consultant Peter Drucker said, “culture—no matter how defined—is singularly persistent.” To build a more collaborative culture, given the long history of sales and marketing culture clash, you need intentional and substantial efforts in hiring, training, and day-to-day connection.





# Team building

Strong communication skills, adaptability, and a willingness to collaborate are table-stakes skills. “When it comes to working with sales, my most successful team members are those who are persistent, thick-skinned, and not people pleasers,” says Gabrielle Pirzad, Director of ABM Strategy & Global Programs, Cloud Software Group.

Empathy, a central tenet of emotional intelligence, is crucial. As Actian’s Jennifer Jackson says, “You have to step back and think, why would I expect sales to do this thing that takes them away from making their quota?”

Hiring people with sales or commercial backgrounds should be a priority for marketing, especially in ABM. “To be credible in front of a salesperson, you need to speak their language. A mature ABM account should have an ABM-er who is so deep in the context of that account that they are almost indistinguishable from the salesperson,” says Infosys’s Amit Deshpande.

# Complementary incentives

Marrying incentives and recognition programs across sales and marketing reinforces the importance of alignment and the equal value of both organizations. "Silos happen when teams are incentivized differently and working towards different objectives," says Black & Veatch's Steve Sienkiewicz.

The biggest question relates to compensation and incentives. As many of our interviewees note, sellers work on commission but marketers do not.

Can marketing move in that direction? Marketing incentives tied to deals and revenue would emphasize the importance of contributing to sales outcomes. Performance-based bonuses and recognition programs can reward marketing efforts linked to revenue.

Conversely, can sales move beyond its typical deal-based approach? Is a three R's approach viable for sellers or sales leaders with at least some nod toward reputation and relationships in the accounts or territories they own? Pirzad notes, "Sales have a short-term focus whereas marketers, particularly ABM-ers, are interested in the nurture process over months or years." Can ABM help bridge the incentives divide?

# Communities of practice

In the ABM domain, building communities of practice has played an important role in bringing together marketers from diverse teams and regions to share ideas, experiences, best practices, and lessons learned. But sales is rarely included. Building a cross-functional community of practice starts at the top.

“We have biweekly operational reviews at the C-suite level,” says Actian’s Jennifer Jackson. “Sales and marketing present together on how the demand engine is working. These meetings are not self-promotional; they’re working sessions—demonstrations of what’s working, what isn’t, and what we’re testing next.”

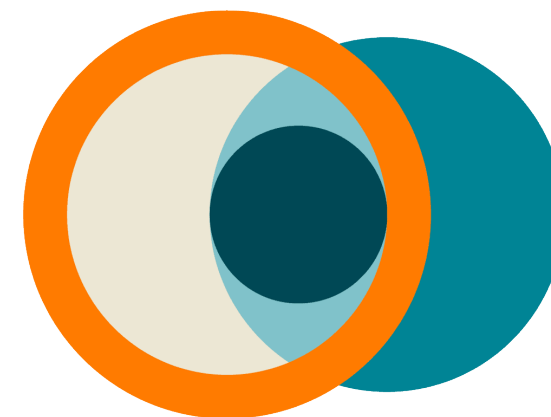
Creating regular reviews for feedback, process development, and continuous improvement. Bringing marketing into sales kick-offs is a small step forward. Adding community development to the ongoing enablement agenda can create a more open and fluid process for cross-team input, dialogue, learning, and recognition.

Continuous improvement should be a core principle in building alignment. Regularly review processes, gather feedback, and implement changes to enhance collaboration. Encourage a mindset of ongoing learning and adaptation, ensuring that the teams remain agile and responsive to new challenges and opportunities.

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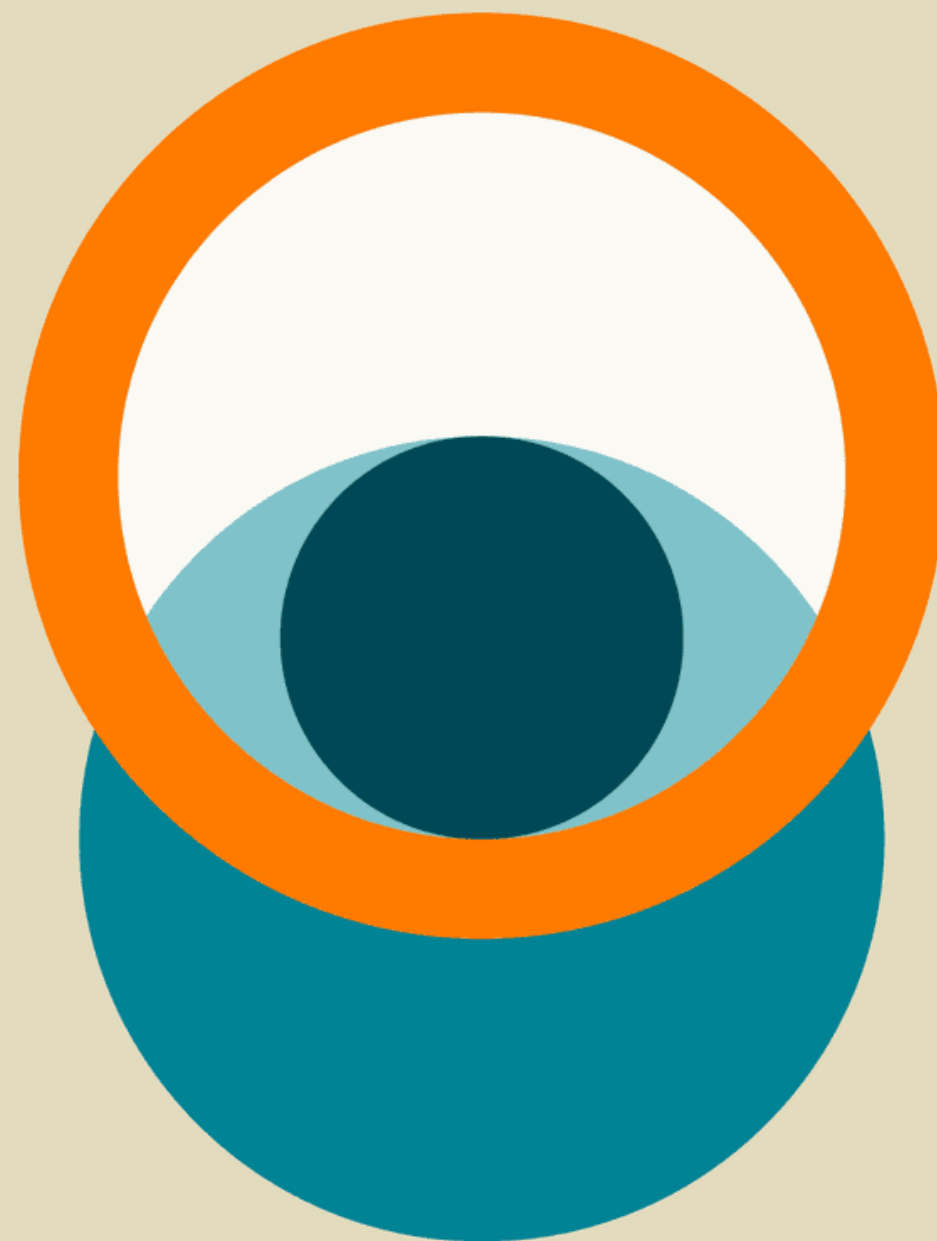
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# Test for success

Adhere to these nine statements and you're on the path to true GTM alignment



1.

We have unified objectives supporting Reputation, Relationships, and Revenue.

2.

We use an integrated planning process for annual priorities, programs, and shared roles.

3.

We have shared KPIs reflecting joint contributions from marketing and sales.

4.

We adopt a client-centric approach with shared responsibility for client insight and the buyer's journey.

5.

We partner with IT to build and optimize a shared infrastructure and access to dashboards and data.

6.

We provide cross-team operations, training, and ongoing support.

7.

We prioritize shared purpose, understanding, collaboration, and empathy.

8.

We align incentives and recognition programs across sales and marketing.

9.

We have a cross-team community of practice for feedback and continuous improvement.

# Final thoughts

Need help determining what's fixable and what's manageable? Our experts are here



# Embracing friction

Sales and marketing collaboration will never be perfect. Friction is inevitable given their different growth approaches. As Virtusa's Brian Jochum notes, "Some challenges are fixable, others will always be there."

Actian's Jennifer Jackson adds, "There needs to be some healthy tension to continually up our game." The focus should be on fixing what's fixable, reducing unnecessary friction, and fostering collaboration that meets buyer demands and maximizes the impact of both teams' capabilities and expertise.



This report was sponsored by Demandbase

# Elevate your GTM. Speak to our experts.

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