

Integrated sales, marketing teams essential to convert leads

In December 2016, Oracle launched its research finding in a report titled, *Can Virtual Experiences Replace Reality*. The research found that 40% of sales organisations are seeing customers do more research on their own, before making a purchase. Sales and marketing teams need to work more closely together to understand their audience better and convert leads.

Oracle has gone on to explore how marketing, sales and service teams can make better use of data and collaborate more closely to align themselves with the new customer journey, as well as highlight how predictable analysis of customer data helps brands become more adaptable and strategic in the way they engage with their audience. Finally, it explains why brands must move away from outdated metrics and measure themselves against outcomes that reflect the way people actually engage with digital channels.

Small window of engagement

A growing preference among customers to move through the buying journey in their own time, using their own preferred channels, has given brands a smaller window of time to engage with them. The research reveals many brands in South Africa continue to be held back by divisions between their sales and marketing teams, even though they understand the need for change.



Chantel Troskie, customer experience account manager at Oracle South Africa

According to Oracle's *From Metrics to Outcomes* report, only half of brands combine data from multiple sources to inform their marketing and sales strategies and less than half regularly examine their customer data to better understand their audience.

Fifty percent of brands say changes in customer behaviour have made alignment between sales and marketing teams more important. Indeed, 46% agree there is a trend towards greater collaboration between marketing and sales and believe lead conversion is more successful when both departments are aligned and 44% admit there is a trend towards greater collaboration between marketing and sales.

Struggle to make linkages

Yet, more than one third of South African brands still struggle to link their sales and marketing activities:

- 37% admit their sales, marketing and customer service teams work completely independently of each other
- 32% of marketing teams say they struggle to meet key metrics while aligning with the needs of sales
- 31% say their current systems and technologies make it difficult for sales and marketing to collaborate

The tendency among customers to take the buying journey into their own hands also makes it harder to attribute sales success to any one department or activity. Thirty percent of brands say it would take a complete organisational restructure for them to deliver a joined up customer experience.

Encouragingly, half of South African brands say the priorities of their sales and marketing teams are closely aligned. Now is the time for those priorities to be turned into action.

Chantel Troskie, customer experience account manager at Oracle South Africa said, “Customers rely on a mix of online resources, marketing materials and third-party research to inform their purchases, so determining which tactics directly led them to buy takes a more nuanced assessment. It is time brands align their teams internally and move them away from insular KPIs, such as impressions and towards value-based metrics that reflect the way people engage with them through digital channels.”

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