



B2B GUIDE

Marketing-Led Post-COVID-19 Growth Strategies.

2022 and Beyond

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Introduction

At the peak of the pandemic, businesses struggled to navigate the disruptions and upheavals of COVID-19. Now they're trying to figure out what to do next as they emerge from the chaos.

Who better to lead the business recovery charge than marketing? According to [Deloitte](#), "marketing budgets as a percentage of overall budgets have risen to 11.8%, resetting to pre-pandemic levels." Additionally, yearly marketing spending is breaking records in areas including brand building, customer relationship management, and traditional advertising.

[Harvard Business Review](#) describes the elevated role of marketing as transitioning from a "marketing is important for growth" mindset to one where "marketing is at the center of the growth agenda for the full C-suite."

Marketing is in a unique position to build and implement top-performing growth strategies. But how do you unlock your full marketing potential? By aligning sales and marketing teams (including an agreed-upon definition of a lead) and equipping them with the right automation tools.

**In this eBook,
discover how to:**

01.

Get your sales and marketing teams aligned

02.

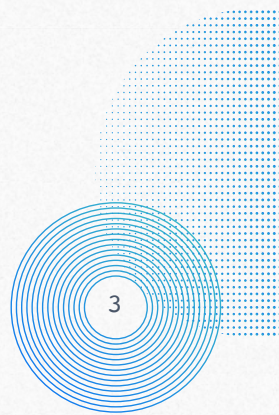
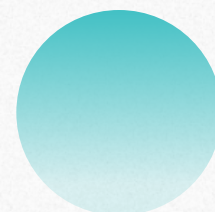
Define and agree on "qualified leads"

03.

Level up your marketing automation

04.

Prepare your organization for automation with AI



Get Your Sales and Marketing Teams Aligned

When you [align sales and marketing](#), you set up your organization for real success.

For instance, at ZoomInfo, we do “[Demo Day](#)” – an annual event where sales reps convert hundreds of leads in a single day. Each year, they raise the bar to hit a higher number. It’s exciting and wildly successful, and it all starts with the marketing team preparing lists of thousands of prospects. As ZoomInfo’s vice president of sales development Brian Vital notes:

“They turn over every stone, new and old, to gather recent marketing qualified leads (MQLs) and win back prior customers, customers on basic packages, and unconverted leads.”

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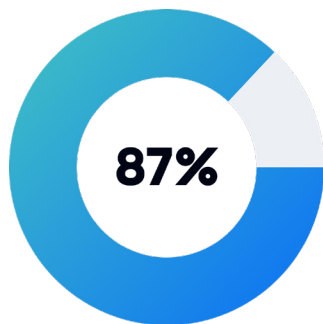
Brian Vital

Vice President of Sales Development,
ZoomInfo

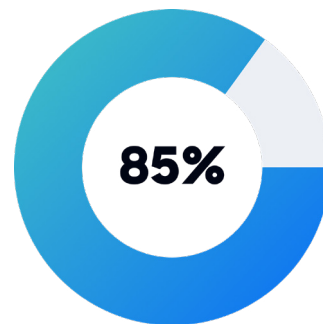


Why is Sales and Marketing Alignment Essential?

The vast majority of sales and marketing leaders agree that having their teams aligned is critical to growth. But getting sales and marketing on the same page is not always easy. Sometimes, that difficulty is leftover from traditional demand generation marketing that focuses on volume – getting as many leads as possible for sales to sort through. But when marketing and sales work together, you galvanize your growth strategy, from qualifying quality leads to closing more deals.



of sales and marketing leaders say collaboration between sales and marketing enables critical business growth.



say sales and marketing alignment is the largest opportunity for improving business performance today.

Source: [LinkedIn](#): Moments of Trust: Why customer value is the key to sales and marketing alignment.

Get Team Consensus on Best Customers

It's important to get aligned on which customers are a good fit for your company. If marketing passes along MQLs that aren't viable, the sales team will waste time pursuing them.

Fit criteria must be identified and agreed upon by both sales and marketing. That way, when marketing sends over new inbound leads, the sales team will feel confident about following up.

Start by getting consensus on lead "fit" factors. Not everyone is a good customer for your product or service – even when they request a demo or are ready to purchase your product.

Use the following information to establish good-fit criteria:

Firmographic Information

Industry, company size, and location:

Is the company in an industry that you've sold to before? Are they big enough to afford and take full advantage of your product? Will their existing technologies support your offering?

Demographic Information

Title, role, and responsibility:

Does the individual have purchasing power? Are they on the buying committee? If they don't have the authority to sign the check or influence decisions, sales may be wasting their time.

Marketing Tip:

If you're unsure about which fit factors to target, start by identifying your best customers – long-time partners who spend the most and love your service. Identify any common traits, then work backward. Those common characteristics are good-fit criteria for your customers-to-be.



Define and Agree on “Qualified Leads”

Lead quality often divides teams due to a fundamental misunderstanding of how leads are identified and defined. Ask 10 different people how they define “lead” and you’re likely to get 10 different answers – even from folks on the same team. Like good-fit criteria, you must agree on what defines a lead for your organization.

Start with, “What is a Lead?”

Is a lead someone who visits your blog and reads a few posts? Is it someone who registers for your webinar? If they don’t attend – are they still a lead?

It doesn’t really matter how you define a lead, but sales and marketing must agree on the definition. For example, prospects must meet an agreed-upon lead-score threshold to qualify as a lead.

Marketing Tip:

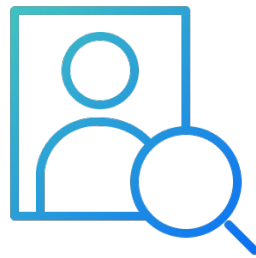
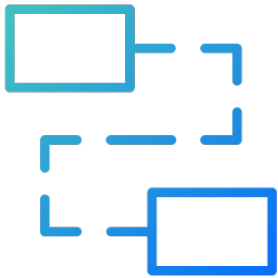
Document definitions and lead thresholds, including expectations for each team. Three questions to guide your lead definition agreement might include:

- How are leads defined?
- How are leads qualified?
- When will marketing pass leads over to the sales team?



Level Up Your Marketing Automation

Once defined, qualifying and managing leads requires good automation tools. As you determine which automation tools to add or update, consider the following:



- What pandemic-era business changes will push your products and services in new and unexpected directions?
- Have business changes resulted in fewer or more employees?
- What types of automation will benefit your company now and in the future?

What are the Business Benefits of Automation?

Pandemic shutdowns forced many companies to pivot to a work-from-home model. This led many to fast-track their digital transformation. If your company was on the fence about tech before the pandemic, you're poised to drive innovative growth with automation.

Automation tools are a necessity for leading a growth-focused strategy. Their benefits include:



Improves speed of service:

Automation can shorten the sales cycle and time to market. By automating deliverables and contingencies, businesses don't need to rely on manual labor or sign-offs.



Creates messaging consistency:

Automation ensures you meet customer expectations with consistent brand interactions.



Automates to scale:

Automation is perfect for scaling repeatable activities. Processes that work for your current company size might not work when adding 20 or 200 people. Some tasks, even when well-executed, become impractical as a business grows.



Reduces costs:

Automation saves time and resources. Removing manual tasks allows skilled employees to focus on meaningful, productive work.



Areas of Opportunity for Automation

Forward-thinking marketers can prepare you for automation in the pandemic era. Here are three areas where automation has the most significant and immediate impact:

1. **Email marketing:** Behavior-based segmentation is relatively straightforward to automate. Start by adding a subscription pop-up to your blog or website. Configure your email marketing system to automatically add contacts to a drip nurture campaign when visitors opt-in or fill out a web form.
2. **Lead scoring and routing:** The ability to scale lead scoring and routing is critical for growth. An excellent place to start is connecting your CRM with your marketing automation tool. Then the system can route leads from marketing to sales based on specific high-value actions, such as registering for a webinar or downloading a whitepaper.
3. **Closing deals:** Shortening the sales cycle is a catalyst for growth, and there are plenty of opportunities here with automation. For example, implement an electronic signature tool (such as DocuSign), and specify auto-pay and auto-renew set up in the contract.



Prepare Your Organization for Automation with AI

Automation lays the groundwork for a wide variety of solutions powered by artificial intelligence software. Dynamic, accurate, high-quality data is critical for any kind of automation, especially AI tools. What kind of data is your company collecting or purchasing? Do your sales and marketing teams trust and use the same data sources?

Making a case for AI requires a broad mindset shift.

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Organizations that embrace an AI-enabled mindset are better at meeting the most formidable technical and cultural challenges, and making organizational changes so they can read the full value that the data and technology offer.

Source: [McKinsey](#)

It's Time to Lead Your Organization into the Future

The worst of the pandemic has passed and economies are now dealing with recovery, inflation, talent shortages, and asset price fluctuations. More than ever, leaders need marketers to align, innovate, and drive their organizations toward a successful future.

Your marketing-led growth strategy will need the cleanest, most up-to-date data available. That includes intelligence about your potential leads (direct-dial telephone numbers, direct email addresses, and predictive insights) and automation to ensure you engage your best-fit prospects and leads while they're most likely to purchase your product.

ZoomInfo's MarketingOS does just that.

[Learn more here](#)

