

# Marketing-led *Post-COVID-19* Growth Strategies

FOR 2020 AND BEYOND



# Introduction

Businesses are laying off workers, shutting their doors (some permanently), and struggling to react to the radical destruction that coronavirus (COVID-19) is doing to our society and communities. Most have already sustained massive damage, and we still have yet to see the scope of impact of the global pandemic that has upended the globe.

Any return to normalcy may seem far-off, but sales and marketing are on the front lines of restarting the economy. When the dust settles, we have a responsibility to turn our shock and grief into fierce determination, and lead the charge of responsible, strategic, sustainable future growth.

However, there's no team better suited to lead that charge than the marketing department. Marketers are uniquely positioned to provide creative solutions to aid their organization in times of change and chart a course for navigating success.

**In this eBook, we'll discuss leading strategies to create a marketing-led growth strategy for 2020 and beyond, including:**

- ✓ Positioning your organization for automation
- ✓ Strategically aligning your systems and teams
- ✓ Getting consensus on how to define "qualified leads"



# Position Your Organization for Automation

Preparing your organization for automation is a solid first step, no matter what the future holds.

Many business activities require specific strategies to be effective, but in times of unprecedented change, detailed planning might not be possible. Luckily, it's easy to make the business case for automation, even with a lot of unknown factors.

Whether the coronavirus pandemic is pushing your products and services in a new yet-to-be-determined direction; whether you move to a business model with fewer employees; whether you're determined to bounce back with a vengeance and come out ahead of the competition - you can lay the groundwork now for automation that will benefit your company in the future.

## What Are the Business Cases for Automation?

There are many areas where human beings do critical jobs that are not able to be replaced by technology. But there are many business benefits from technology-enabled automation:



**Improve speed of service:** By automating deliverables and contingencies, businesses don't need to rely on slow manual labor or sign-offs. This can shorten the sales cycle as well as time-to-market.



**Increase efficiencies:** Quickly tighten business activities to save time and money.



**Help scale growth:** What works for one person doesn't work for 20 or 200 people. Some individual one-off actions, even well executed, become very impractical as a business grows. Automation is perfect for scaling repeatable activities.



**Achieve consistency:** Consistency via automation ensures customer expectations are met. It also decreases the need to "reinvent the wheel" with human intervention.



**Contain costs:** By decreasing the need for employee involvement, businesses can lower labor costs. Gains in speed and efficiency also save money.



**Prepare the company for AI:** Successful artificial intelligence tools require the same baseline as automation: consistent, accurate data - and lots of it. Automation lays the groundwork for a wide variety of AI-powered tools.

# Position Your Organization for Automation



KRC Research found that nearly 80% of executives said that they could save 360 hours a year through automation.

Your organization might not be ready for certain areas of automation today. But there are actions you can take to hit the ground running with automation when normalcy returns.

## Areas of Opportunity for Company-Wide Automation:

Which areas can forward-thinking marketers help prepare their company for automation in a post-pandemic world? Look for places where there's a lot of repetition and potential for human error (or human procrastination). Here are areas where automation has the biggest immediate impact:

- 1. Email marketing:** Behavior-based segmentation is a relatively simple and straight-forward place to automate. Add an opt-in 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 on a landing page.
- 2. Lead scoring and routing:** Even if your target market is small and your price point is high, the ability to scale lead scoring and routing is critical for business growth. A good place to start is by connecting your CRM with your marketing automation system, so you can route leads from marketing to sales based on certain high-value actions, such as registering for a webinar or downloading a whitepaper.
- 3. Closing deals:** Shortening the sales cycle should be a priority, and there are plenty of opportunities for automation; for example, implement an electronic signature tool such as DocuSign, and include autopay setup and auto-renew as part of the contract.

### MARKETING TIP:

*Dynamic, accurate data is necessary for any kind of automation. What kind of data is your company collecting or purchasing? Is it accurate? Do your sales and marketing teams trust and use the same data sources?*

# Strategically Align Systems and Teams

Sales and marketing alignment contributes to concrete efficiencies that save time and money. Once again, marketing is in a great position to make organizational changes and align teams to pave the way for long-term, post-pandemic success.

## Why Is Sales and Marketing Alignment Important?

According to Forrester Research, aligned organizations achieved an average of 32% annual revenue growth, while less aligned companies reported an average 7% decline in revenue.

Aligned teams also have higher customer retention rates, grow faster, and have lower employee turnover than misaligned teams. Unfortunately, the relationship between sales and marketing functions is often complicated, and sometimes contentious.

This misalignment often stems from a fundamental misunderstanding: how leads are identified and defined. Before you determine whether the lead is qualified, you need to know whether they're a lead at all: Do they meet the "fit criteria" of your company's target audience?



# Strategically Align Systems and Teams

It's important to get aligned on what kinds of customers are a fit for your company, so get consensus from sales and marketing teams on lead "fit" factors.

## Agree on "Good Fit" Criteria:

Not everyone is a good fit for the product or service - even if they request a demo or are ready to purchase your product. If marketing is passing along hand-raisers who aren't from good-fit accounts as MQLs, the sales team is wasting their time. Consider using this information as a benchmark:

### ✓ Firmographic Information:

Industry, company size, and location: Is the company in an industry that you've had success with before? Are they big enough to afford and take full advantage of your product? Do their installed technologies compliment your offering?

### ✓ Demographic Information:

Title, role, and responsibility: Does the individual have purchasing power? (If they don't have authority to sign the check - again, sales is wasting their time).

This criteria should be identified and agreed upon by both sales and marketing teams - so when marketing sends over new inbound leads, the sales team can be confident that their time is well spent as they follow up. If an individual doesn't meet whatever criteria marketing and sales teams agree is necessary for a successful customer, they should not be considered a lead - even if they request a demo.

#### MARKETING TIP:

*If you're not sure what "fit factors" to target, start by identifying your current best customers - long-time customers who spend the most, and who love your service. Note any common traits, then work backwards: Those common characteristics are good fit criteria for your customers-to-be.*

# Get Consensus on How “Qualified Leads” Are Defined:

Ask 10 different people how they define a “lead,” and you’ll get 10 different answers ... even from folks on the same team.

## What Is a Lead?

Someone who visits your blog? Someone who reads 5 blog posts? Someone who registers for your webinar? (What if they don’t attend - are they still a lead?) Or just a warm body in a particular industry? It doesn’t matter how you define a lead. But sales and marketing must agree. A lot of conflict between these two departments stems from a fundamental misalignment around how leads are defined, and when they’re passed over to the sales team.

To maximize results, prospects should both meet a mutually-agreed-upon lead score threshold and ultimately be a good fit.

### MARKETING TIP:

*Establish an SLA (service-level agreement) between sales and marketing teams to document definitions and lead thresholds, as well as expectations for each team. Three ways to do so include:*

- **What are fit criteria?**
- **How are leads defined?**
- **At what point will marketing pass leads over to the sales team?**

# Conclusion

Difficult times call for strong leadership, creating an opportunity for marketers to help drive the organization toward future success. But it's not just an opportunity to aid our own organizations; we also have an obligation to help our larger communities who are impacted by pandemic. The COVID-19 virus has had a negative impact on almost everyone - businesses and people alike. Using these techniques, marketers can be the high tide that lifts all boats.

For data intelligence about your potential leads - including direct-dial telephone numbers, direct email addresses, and many different predictive insights to help you prioritize people most likely to purchase your product, visit [www.zoominfo.com](http://www.zoominfo.com) to learn more!





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