

HOW PRODUCT OWNERS CAN **DRIVE SALES SUCCESS**





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Creating a winning product that sales teams can successfully sell to customers doesn't just happen by chance. It is the result of product owners delivering to the sales channel a solution that meets a market need, and whose value is clearly communicated to the end customer. In addition to the right solution, a sales team must have a strong foundation comprised of many important components, such as training and tools, organizational support, and a product team that comprehends the needs of the sales organization. Unfortunately, often some of these elements are missing, or overlooked completely.

Incorporating all components is essential to driving sales success. To start, there must be strong collaboration between the product development, product marketing, and sales teams. The product release should follow a proven process to the customer that enables it to have all of the features the market demands, and those features need to be clearly communicated. Large scale product rollouts should be avoided, while sales effectiveness should be embraced. Finally, the product needs to be tracked throughout the sales cycle. There is a path that leads to channel success.

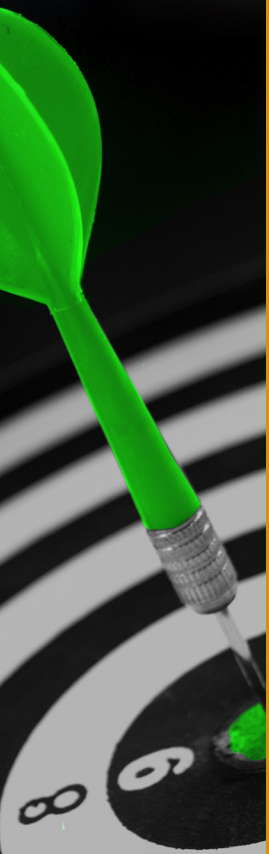
Aligning the product to the right target customer

Time and again, companies will either develop a product then try to find a market for it, or launch a viable product but do not message it to the right customer. It may seem obvious, but finding the right market fit for a product and having a focused offering that customers will want it is critical.

Customers should be engaged early and often to guarantee that the product is right for the market and that the messaging resonates with the target audience. It is important to remember that within any customer organization, there are going to be different decision makers, each with a different viewpoint. For example, a systems administrator will have a far different take on what makes a product valuable when compared to a CIO.

Messaging is key

Sales teams must be equipped to communicate a product's advantages in a way that resonates with each potential type of customer. Understanding the needs and pain points for each target customer is crucial to sales effectiveness. As sales tools are developed, they must include messaging for each possible decision maker within an organization. The tools must communicate a given product's competitive advantage, and this needs to be communicated to the sales teams as well.



Strong collaboration is necessary

The product team must work closely with the product marketing and sales teams. Often there is a lack of cooperation, or worse, outright contention between these groups. Properly aligning resources requires close communication and shared goals. Channels of communication need to be formed so that each team will buy into the process and work together throughout the product release and sales cycle.

Proven product success

Any product release needs to follow a proven path to success. The market must be identified and beta customers engaged early on. Different programs need to be tested and each success and drawback learned from to move the product forward. Once success can be replicated, product owners can shift to a program that scales, and begin to replicate with a broad audience. Testing and iterating to a path that works improves ROI, protects against organizational waste, and greatly improves the chance of success.

Avoid big bang / waterfall sales push

Organizations often fall into the trap of having a waterfall or “big bang” product launch. They try to put everything into one release to get the most out of their efforts. This rarely works as product delays, feature availability, and a changing market make it difficult to launch everything to all people at once in a successful manner.

Instead of a larger waterfall roll-out, a far more successful method is to launch a product in phases. This allows product teams to more effectively receive feedback in all stages of the development cycle. Challenges experienced during a product release can be learned from, to make improvements in the next cycle. This minimizes the risk of alienating customers and wasting resources. Training can be rolled out to make the sales team product experts and to provide them with effective sales enablement tools. Getting in front of sales and target customers early and often provides a good ROI, while minimizing risk with customers, the market, and your own organization.

Make sales more productive

Proper back office support is critical to an effective sales team. New sales tools are making it possible for companies to invest in low cost, high touch sales enablement solutions. These can include digital and online communication tools that enable sales to engage with customers more effectively, and at the right time in their buying cycle. This can also include leveraging other operation teams to support sales processing, implementation, or even pre-sales.

Product owner tracking success of the product

By tracking the sales of their products and evaluating the overall funnel, owners can use analytics to identify areas for improvement, trends, and successes. By pinpointing where the product is successful and where it is not, and taking into consideration all the product lifecycle data, they can make informed decisions about the best path forward.



Conclusion

Companies are loading up on a mix of products, solutions, sales teams, and sales coverage, raising costs and increasing complexities. The focus should, however, actually be on improving efficiencies, correcting problems, and aligning resources, as well as ensuring the right target offer and customer, plus the right product fit.

At Exact Market, we help customers successfully launch products on time and with the right tools to be successful. Our expertise keeps the focus on what's important and what works, instead of wasting time, money, and resources on what doesn't. We work closely with you to ensure your sales team has the right foundation – the training, programs, collaboration, tools, and messaging, to successfully reach the target customer in need of your solution.



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