



THE POWER COUPLE

How **Sales & Marketing
Alignment** Makes Your
Business Unstoppable



Table of Contents

03	Introduction	14	Here's How Sales and Marketing Can Get Better at Collaboration
04	Key Findings	16	Revenue is the Best Way to Measure Sales and Marketing Alignment
05	Alignment has a Direct Impact on Customers and Business	18	How the LinkedIn Platform Can Boost the Power of Sales-Marketing Alignment
07	Lack of Collaboration and its Downsides	19	The Level of Sales-Marketing Alignment on LinkedIn
08	Sales and Marketing Alignment is Seen as a Key Part of the Customer Buying Experience	21	How Marketing on LinkedIn Can Boost the Effectiveness of the Sales Team
10	The State of Sales and Marketing Alignment	23	How Increasing LinkedIn Engagement of the Sales Team Boosts Marketing's Effectiveness
11	Size Doesn't Matter, Much	24	Conclusion
13	Collaboration is Improving, but it Could Be Better		

Introduction

The bond between a company's sales team and its marketing department is often compared to a relationship. There can be good ones, rocky ones, and of course ones that don't work out.

When it comes to sales and marketing, the latest global research from Join the Dots and LinkedIn shows that these two departments, which have often been at odds, are much better aligned than conventional wisdom leads us to believe.

And the reason sales and marketing are collaborating are clear. It pays off in important ways. It boosts financial performance and can improve internal culture.

Best of all, our research shows some simple steps that can help boost sales and marketing alignment.



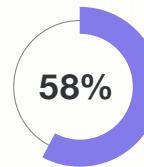
Key Findings

Sales and marketing collaboration is getting better and having a strong impact on the customer buying experience while also delivering business outcomes

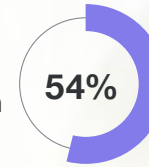
LinkedIn's and Join the Dots research, which surveyed 3,516 sales professionals and 3,627 marketers from Australia, India, Southeast Asia, the United Kingdom and the United States, revealed three main conclusions.

1. Alignment is Critical

End-Customers are looking for Sales and Marketing alignment and it is critical for the bottom line, with **58%** of salespeople and marketers saying collaboration delivers improved customer retention and another **54%** saying it boosts financial performance.



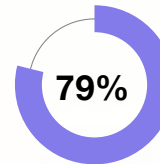
delivers improved customer retention



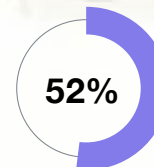
boosts financial performance

2. A Culture of Collaboration

Marketing departments and sales teams are more closely aligned than you might think, with **8 out of 10 (79%)** respondents agreeing that there is a culture of collaboration between sales and marketing at their company.



agree that collaboration exists between sales and marketing



believe shared objectives and KPIs improve collaboration

3. Shared Objectives and Measurement Improves Collaboration

Sales and marketing teams should start with clear objectives and success metrics. **Over half (52%)** of sales and marketing professionals cited that shared objectives and KPIs help the business improve collaboration.

Alignment has a Direct Impact on Customers and Business

For this study, we defined sales and marketing alignment broadly.

Alignment between sales and marketing included developing strategy together, sharing goals (up to and including revenue), agreeing on lead definitions and the hand-off of prospects between marketing and sales, and aligning on measurement and even compensation.

Our research found that customers are the main winners when sales and marketing work together. Seventy percent of respondents said sales and marketing collaboration delivers a better customer buying experience.

But it's not just the customer that benefits; vendors do, too.

The key business benefits of increased collaboration are:



It's instructive to consider what the respondents mean by financial performance. Primarily, they are referring to top-line revenue growth and bottom-line increases in profits. Overall, increased alignment between sales and marketing appears to result in more qualified leads, which deliver top-line growth. Alignment also can deliver greater customer retention, which has a strong positive contribution to profits.



Alignment has a Direct Impact on Customers and Business

How sales and marketing teams that collaborate differ from those that don't

Sales and marketing teams that collaborate stand out from those that don't in some clear ways:



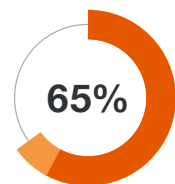
67% Say they have a clearer understanding of the customer

13% higher than those that don't

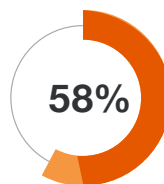


61% say they have support from business leaders

13% higher than those that don't



65% collect feedback from customers, which is **8%** higher than those that don't.



58% implement feedback from customers, which is **9%** higher than those that don't.

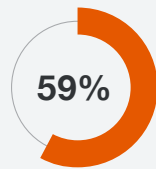
Lack of Collaboration and its Downsides

If the upside of increased collaboration isn't convincing, maybe the downside of lack of collaboration will be.

The research revealed that a lack of alignment between sales and marketing had a direct negative impact on customers and business:



Weaker financial performance



Poorer customer experience



Reduced customer retention

Additionally, a significant portion of respondents said that lack of collaboration between sales and marketing could lead to extremely negative consequences, such as:

11%

Said it could lead to **very negative financial performance**

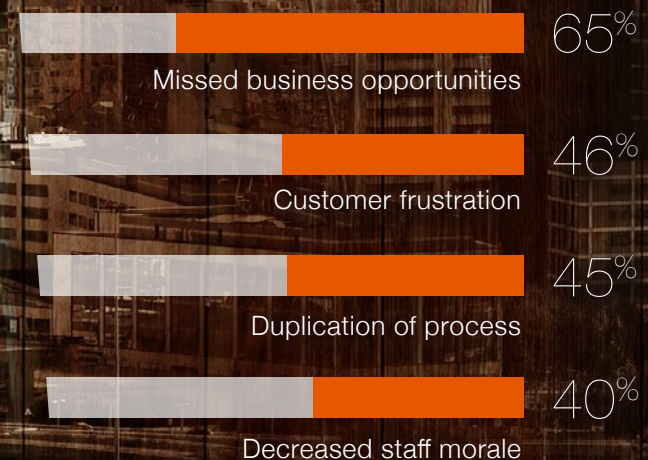
12%

Said it could lead to **very negative customer experience**

13%

Said it could lead to **very negative customer retention**

Businesses identified the most likely negative outcomes from a lack of sales and marketing collaboration to be:



Sales and Marketing Alignment is Seen as a Key Part of the Customer Buying Experience

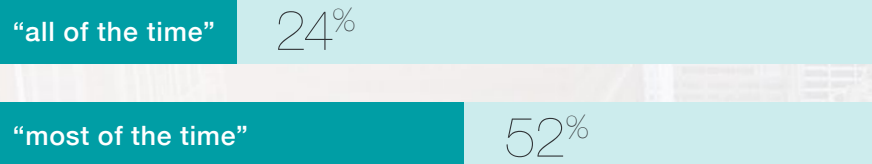
Our research revealed that those businesses that believe they are delivering a good customer buying experience had many positive characteristics in common:



Sales and Marketing Alignment is Seen as a Key Part of the Customer Buying Experience

The data around the companies that have mapped a buyer journey is worth diving into more deeply.

These companies say that there is alignment between sales and marketing about the path of the buyer journey:



Confusion reigns among companies not delivering a good customer buying experience.

Sales professionals and marketers who don't believe that their companies are delivering a good customer buying experience find it difficult to explain the deficiency. The most common explanations were:

24%

Treating everyone with the same approach/
not tailored

27%

Lack of clarity around customer buying journey

30%

Lack of clear strategy

The State of Sales and Marketing Alignment

LinkedIn research showed salespeople and marketers had extremely similar viewpoints on the state of alignment and collaboration, however the sales team are slightly more positive about how the teams collaborate together.

Of salespeople, 79 percent said they agreed or strongly agreed there is a culture of collaboration at their company. Similarly, 78 percent of marketers felt the same way.



LinkedIn research showed significant alignment between Sales and Marketing with **79 percent** of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that there is a culture of collaboration between Sales and Marketing at their company.

However, only **21 percent** said they “strongly” agreed, so there’s room for improvement.



Size Doesn't Matter, Much

This alignment between Sales and Marketing is consistent no matter the size of the company.

There is virtually no difference between small, medium and large businesses when describing collaboration between their sales and marketing teams:

80%

Small
businesses

79%

Medium
businesses

79%

Large
businesses

Agree
that there is collaboration

25%

Small
businesses

21%

Medium
businesses

20%

Large
businesses

Strongly Agree
that there is collaboration

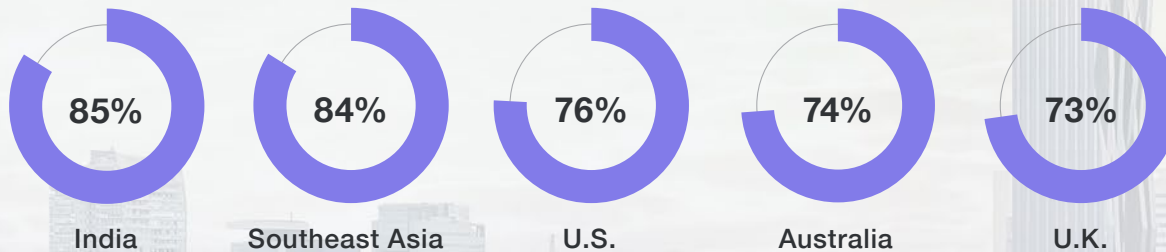
The research also showed that small businesses tend to have leaders who are more likely to encourage (or even demand) sales and marketing collaboration than larger companies by a margin of **76 percent** to **71 percent**.

Additionally, sales and marketing teams at small companies are more likely to involve each other in the development of marketing strategies by a margin of **63 percent** to **55 percent** over larger companies. They're also more likely to act as a cohesive team (**57 percent** compared with **53 percent**). And marketers at SMBs are more likely to involve the sales department in content creation and planning by a margin of **69 percent** to **58 percent** when compared with large companies.



Size Doesn't Matter, Much

Rates of sales-marketing collaboration varies by region and by country. Salespeople and marketers in India and Southeast Asia tended to have higher levels of collaboration than Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom.



The data also showed that India and Southeast Asia were more likely to collaborate in a variety of ways when compared with Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom. Perhaps the individualistic nature of Australia, the U.S. and the U.K. when compared with India and South East Asia offers some explanation for the difference in collaboration levels.

% believe Sales and Marketing collaborate well in the following ways:

	India	S.E.A	U.S.	Australia	U.K.
Align to the same strategy and objectives	77%	81%	66%	65%	60%
Share customer and market information freely	68%	70%	62%	59%	59%
Have a shared understanding of the customer journey	78%	76%	58%	62%	58%
Are keeping pace with what customers want	74%	72%	50%	57%	57%
The leadership within the company encourages sales and marketing collaboration	82%	78%	69%	67%	63%

Collaboration is Improving, but it Could Be Better

Businesses who said they had improved sales and marketing collaboration attributed the gains to three key factors:

- 57% Frequently meeting to share ideas and information
- 53% Coordinated planning and outreach
- 52% Agreeing on shared objectives and measurement

Teams that collaborate well see a host of benefits

Overall, our research indicates that sales and marketing teams that collaborated well together shared these five characteristics:

- 82% Leadership actively encourages collaboration
- 80% Aligned to the same strategy and objectives
- 76% Have a shared understanding of the customer journey
- 74% Share market and customer information freely
- 71% Effectively address customer needs

The downside of not being aligned

Interestingly, only a small portion (7 percent) believe that sales and marketing collaboration in their business has worsened. These reasons were offered for the decline in alignment:

- 52% Different objectives and metrics to measure performance
- 48% Lack of engagement between sales and marketing
- 46% Lack of shared understanding of the customer

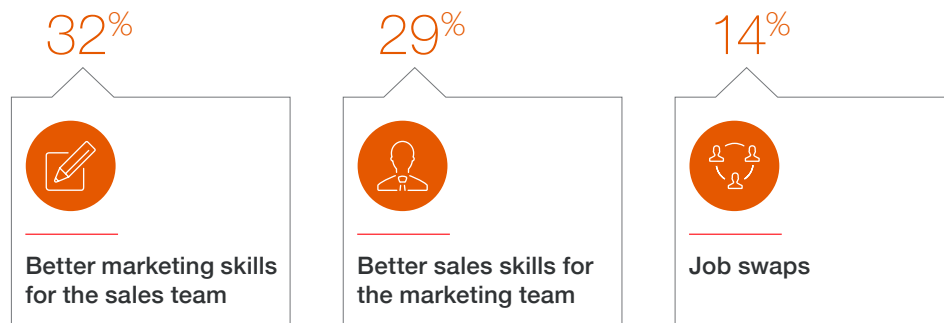
Businesses are optimistic about the state of collaboration between their sales and marketing teams. Almost three-quarters of respondents (74%) said their companies have improved their sales-marketing collaboration in the past year.



Here's How Sales and Marketing Can Get Better at Collaboration

Whilst collaboration is improving between sales and marketing, there is still work to be done.

It's interesting to note that ensuring collaboration had little to do with job swaps or cross-training. These actions ranked near the bottom in ensuring collaboration:



Interestingly, the large majority of both sales professionals and marketers rejected the notion that a shared budget would improve collaboration between sales and marketing.

Only 16% of respondents agreed that a shared budget would improve sales-marketing alignment. Despite an emphasis on collaboration, neither sales nor marketing want their departments unified.



Here's How Sales and Marketing Can Get Better at Collaboration

Both remain territorial with only **15 percent** of salespeople and **16 percent** of marketers saying that a shared budget would boost alignment. Yet another example of agreement between sales and marketing.



Sales and Marketing professionals told us...

These are the top actions to get right to ensure collaboration between sales and marketing:

Have shared objectives and KPIs

52%

Generate better customer insights and understanding

52%

Ensure clear accountability and workflow

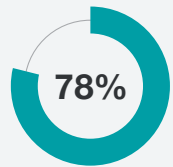
47%

Adhere to a schedule of regular team meetings

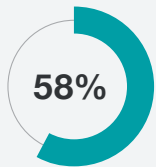
45%

Revenue is the Best Way to Measure Sales and Marketing Alignment

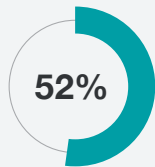
Our research found that sales and marketing collaboration is most likely to be measured through:



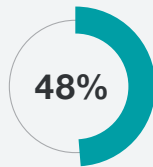
Revenue growth



Pipeline growth



NPS / customer satisfaction



Employee engagement

Interestingly, respondents believe that good collaboration between Sales and Marketing is most likely to have a positive impact on the customer experience, but businesses are most likely to measure Sales and Marketing collaboration through financial measures.



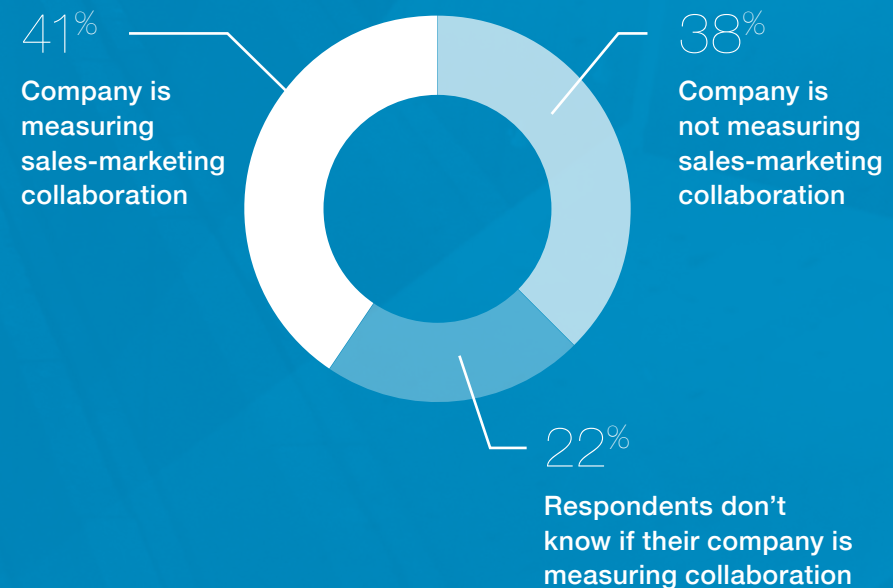
Revenue is the Best Way to Measure Sales and Marketing Alignment

Measurement correlates to collaboration

There is strong proof that measurement leads to increased collaboration. The research showed that of businesses that measured collaboration, a significant **91 percent** said they collaborate well whilst only **7 percent** said they don't collaborate well. However, among companies that didn't measure collaboration, **70 percent** said they collaborated well and **26 percent** said they didn't collaborate well.

If you can't measure something, you can't improve it. To know your sales and marketing teams are collaborating you need to measure their alignment.

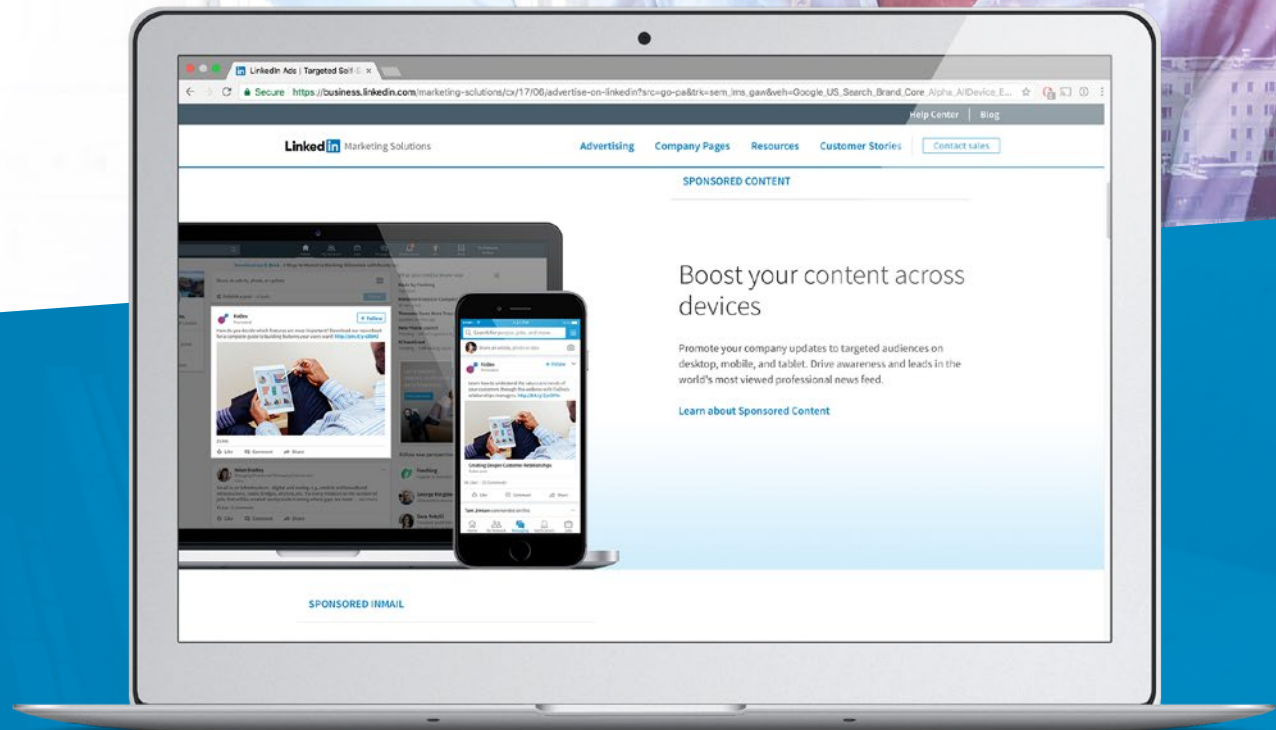
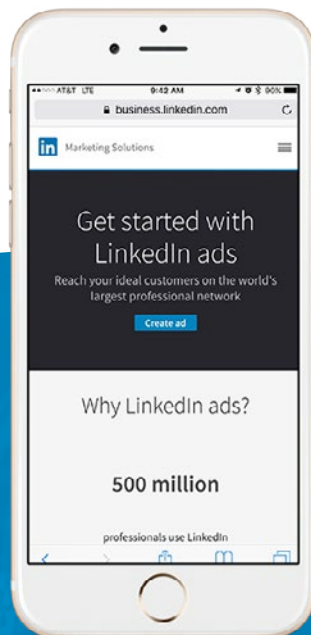
Our research revealed a fairly even distribution between those who said their companies measured sales-marketing collaboration and those who said their companies didn't measure collaboration:



How the LinkedIn Platform Can Boost the Power of Sales-Marketing Alignment

Beyond the global survey of sales and marketing professionals that LinkedIn conducted, data on how sales and marketing teams use the LinkedIn platform itself provides additional insight into the state of sales-marketing alignment.

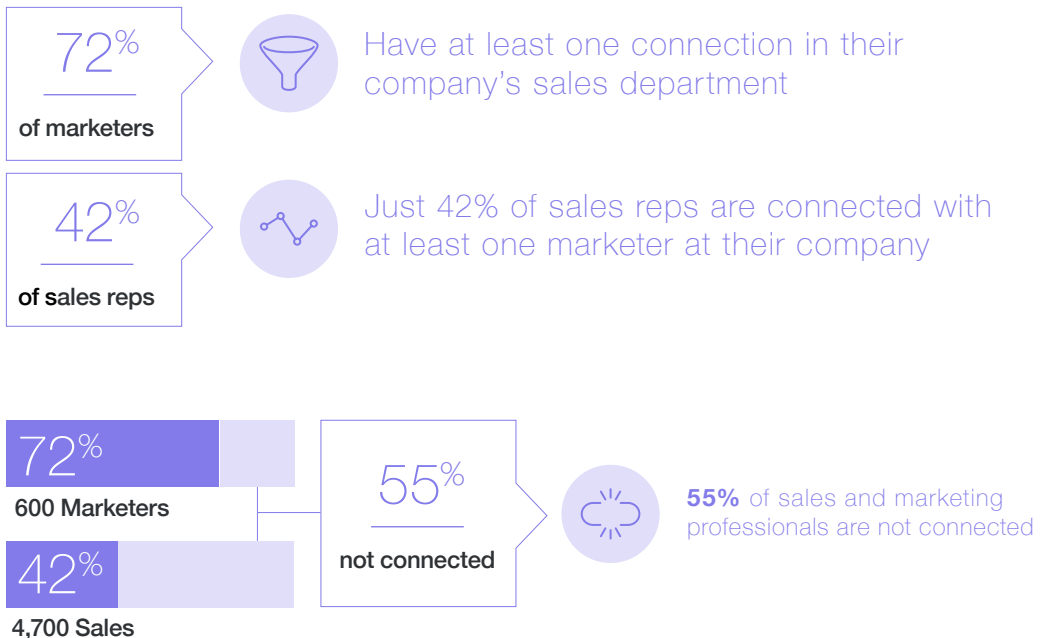
The data shows that the more aligned sales and marketing teams are, the better their performance on the platform. Moreover, the more that sales and marketing teams are integrated into the platform, the more each team aids the other. Put another way, data shows that using LinkedIn Sponsored Content on the platform makes sales more effective. Additionally, the more connected a sales team is with LinkedIn members, the more effective a company's marketing can be.



The Level of Sales-Marketing Alignment on LinkedIn

LinkedIn analysis of organisations* shows that there is a significant amount of interconnectedness on the LinkedIn platform between sales and marketing professionals.

Interconnectivity on LinkedIn provides a strong indication that sales and marketing professionals have a working relationship. **The research showed:**

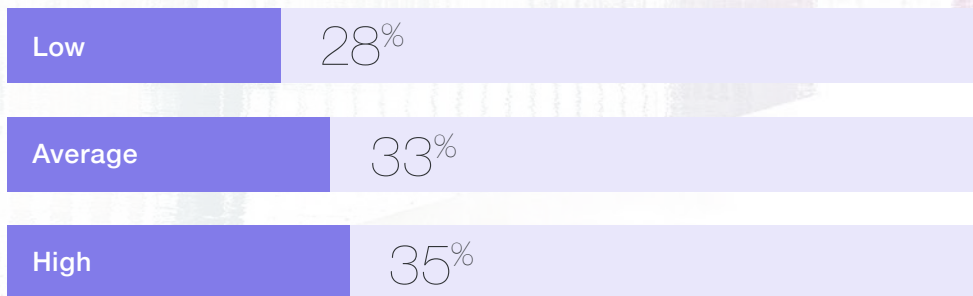


*The analysed organisations met a certain minimum threshold of usership for both LinkedIn Marketing Solutions and LinkedIn Sales Solutions and have 600 marketers and 4,700 sales reps, on average.



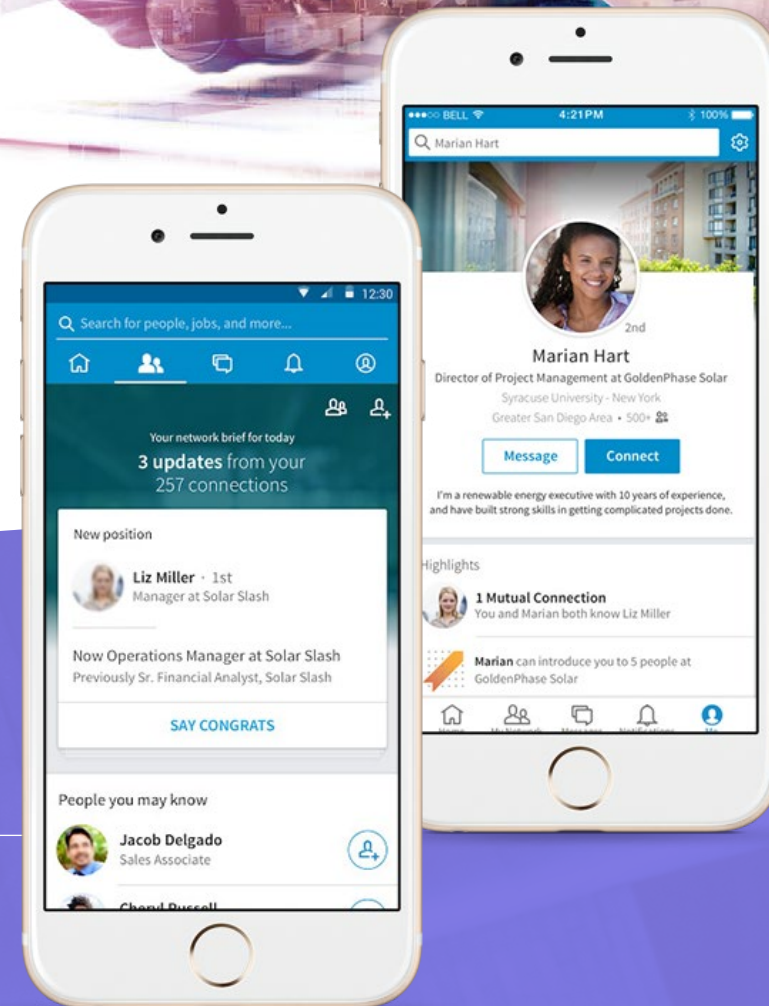
The Level of Sales-Marketing Alignment on LinkedIn

In the top quartile of interconnected sales and marketing teams, **35%** of prospects that sales reps reach out to have already been nurtured by marketing. On the other hand, in the lowest quartile, just **28%** of prospects have been nurtured.



LinkedIn's research also finds

The more aligned sales and marketing teams are, the more often sales reps are reaching out to prospects that have already been nurtured or "warmed up."



How Marketing on LinkedIn Can Boost the Effectiveness of the Sales Team

A prospect that has been nurtured by a company's marketing is more likely to respond to that same company's sales reps.

LinkedIn members exposed to a company's marketing on the platform are **25% more likely to respond** to a Sales Navigator InMail from one of that company's salespeople.



Response rate to InMails sent by sales reps

15.8%

control

19.8%

exposed

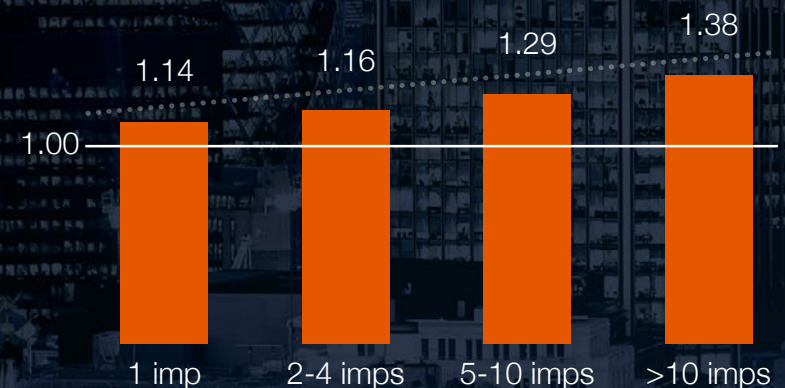
The more often members are exposed to a company's Sponsored Content on LinkedIn, the more likely they are to respond to an InMail from that company's sales reps.

1.38^x

more likely to respond to InMail from a sales team when they are exposed to more than 10 Sponsored Content impressions from that company



Lift in response rate vs exposure to Sponsored Content
(1 = control = no exposure)



How Marketing on LinkedIn Can Boost the Effectiveness of the Sales Team

Similarly, LinkedIn members who have been nurtured by a company are 10.7% more likely to accept a connection request from that company's LinkedIn Sales Navigator users.



Response rate to connection requests sent by sales reps

69.8%

control

77.3%

exposed

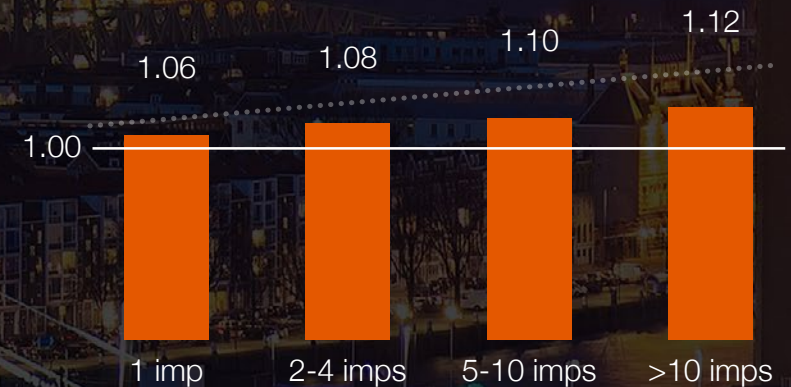
The more often members are exposed to a company's Sponsored Content on LinkedIn, the more likely they are to connect with that company's sales reps.

1.12^x

more likely to connect with a sales rep. when exposed to more than 10 Sponsored Content impressions from that company



Lift in connection rate vs exposure to Sponsored Content
(1 = control = no exposure)



How Increasing the LinkedIn Engagement of the Sales Team Boosts Marketing's Effectiveness

It's clear that marketing can aid the sales team on the LinkedIn platform. Salespeople can also help spread their company's marketing messages on LinkedIn.

Members who are connected to one sales rep in a company are

2.2×

more likely to engage with that company's Sponsored Content on LinkedIn.

Additionally, a sales rep's connections are

4.8×

more likely to re-share the marketing messages of that rep's company on the LinkedIn platform.

Engagement Rate with Sponsored Content



Control

1.5%

Exposed

3.7%

147%

more likely to like and comment on the rep's company's Sponsored Content



Re-share rate of Sales reps' connections



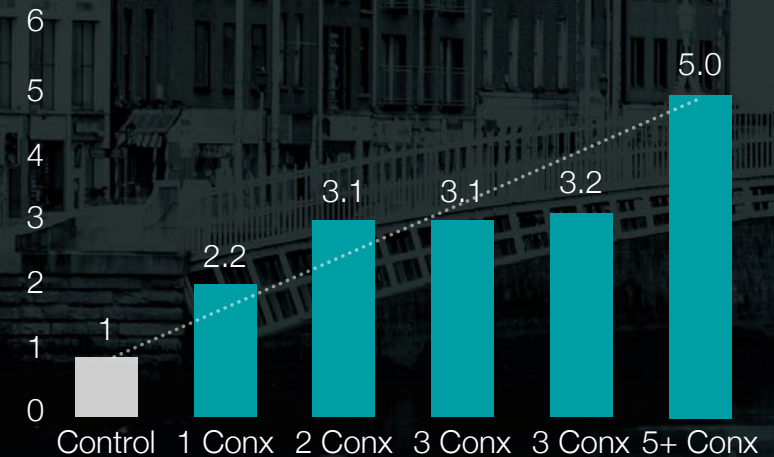
Control

0.017%

Exposed

0.080%

Lift in engagement rate vs. number of connections



Conclusion

Our global research proves that sales and marketing are collaborating more closely than many observers could have imagined. There's room to grow, however, and this alignment between sales and marketing could grow even stronger.

There are many reasons why both sales teams and marketing departments would want their collaboration to increase. Respondents to our survey believe that greater sales-marketing alignment leads to improved customer retention, efficiency, financial performance, and productivity.

The LinkedIn platform is a window to the positive impacts of greater sales and marketing alignment. Research shows that marketing's use of LinkedIn Sponsored Content on the platform makes sales more effective, because prospects nurtured by marketing are more responsive. Additionally, the research indicates that the more connected a sales team is with LinkedIn members, the more effective a company's marketing on the platform can be.

Ensuring better collaboration between sales and marketing is not out of reach at your company. But implementing a collaborative culture does tend to require a commitment to actions, such as implementing shared objectives and understanding of the customer, ensuring clearer workflow, and simply adhering to a schedule of regular team meetings.

Methodology

Join the Dots, a research company, was commissioned by LinkedIn to conduct an online survey of 7140 sales and marketing professionals across five key markets including United States, United Kingdom, Australia, India and South-East Asia. All participants completed the survey between 26 September 2016 to 19 October 2016.

They were invited to take the survey via an email invitation. Respondents were incented to participate. All participants were 18 years of age or older and worked in sales or marketing roles.

LinkedIn

About LinkedIn

LinkedIn operates the world's largest professional network on the Internet with more than 500 million members in over 200 countries and territories. This represents the largest group anywhere of influential, affluent and educated people.

Relationships Matter

With LinkedIn Marketing Solutions, brands build relationships with the world's professionals by using accurate targeting to deliver relevant content and communications. As today's connected professionals seek out ideas and insights from the people and brands they trust, marketers use LinkedIn to target advertising and publish relevant content in a professional context. Brands extend reach through the social sharing that occurs naturally on LinkedIn.

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