

Demand Creation: Planning Assumptions 2011



For 2011, SiriusDecisions has identified five key issues that should drive the agenda of demand creation functions

Extending marketing's influence throughout the demand waterfall is a key theme

Adoption of new approaches supported by increasingly specialized roles and skill sets will be a requirement for success

In 1954, Roger Bannister became the first person to run a mile in less than four minutes, a barrier once believed to be physically impossible. Once the barrier was broken, however, it became the standard of all professional middle distance runners; roughly another 17 seconds has been shaved off the record since.

After several years of hard running when it comes to demand creation planning and execution, many b-to-b marketers may be tempted to believe that all that's left to do is some fine-tuning; nothing could be further from the truth. The race has just begun, and those at the front will continue to realize significant advantages in revenue creation, and an improving relationship between marketing and sales. In this brief, we share the five key trends that will impact demand creation functions in 2011, and discuss specifics around each.

ONE: ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL

Marketing automation. Lead scoring. Multi-touch campaigning. Put them all together, and it's easy to see why marketers have been excited by the prospects of delivering high volumes of better-qualified leads to sales, and improving their contribution to the business. Buoyed by this excitement, commitments on the percentage of pipeline sourced have abounded.

The trouble with this is that focusing too narrowly on delivering leads ignores the help that sales needs and the contributions marketing can make throughout the demand waterfall. In addition, a number of the organizations we work with sell to somewhere between a few and a few hundred target companies. No matter how effective their messaging, offers and execution prove to be, they won't ever be delivering leads in the thousands; there simply aren't that many targets to call on. And in these organizations where a rep typically manages only a few accounts, giving credit to marketing for finding

a new opportunity may be perceived as that rep not doing his or her job. Add it up, and you find that a world built around lead sourcing isn't for everyone.

In the brief "The Cascading Effects of the Demand Waterfall," we detailed five job families – seed, create, enable, accelerate and nurture – that we believe when combined comprise a comprehensive waterfall support effort. Some of these are directly related to the creation of a lead; others support this creation, and then facilitate its progress to opportunity and close. Depending on your organization's DNA and the requirements of sales, your focus on any and all of these jobs is likely to change. Just because the world is lead sourcing crazy right now doesn't mean you have to be.

SiriusAction: Blindly focusing on the "create" job family is likely to get all marketers in trouble; how else can your organization use demand creation technology and processes to drive four other critical families?

TWO: THE RISE OF INBOUND

It's hardly news that b-to-b buyers are increasingly turning to the Web, social networks and other information sources to conduct research before speaking with a sales rep. So why do so many companies continue to insist on using most of their marketing budgets to pound away at them, preferring to generating leads in a largely outbound capacity?

By 2015, SiriusDecisions estimates that as much as 75 percent of b-to-b demand will come from the Web. To capture these prospects, you must have a good feel for the sources that buyers go to get information; place content on these sources that entices buyers and provides value; and create a series of on-ramps to move prospects onto a Web site or landing page. When a prospect arrives, the site or page must

be optimized for conversion – which will facilitate ongoing dialogue – rather than being a one-off, static information provider.

While we don't believe that outbound marketing is going away, marketing strategy and spending as a whole must reflect a changing set of b-to-b buying realities. This fact has been – and will continue to be – difficult for marketers to swallow, especially those that have grown up in the "blast away" era.

SiriusAction: For many b-to-b organizations, 2011 must be a year where they turn the inbound marketing corner. Key areas of focus include better content development, Web site conversion optimization and search engine optimization.

THREE: SKILL SPECIALIZATION

Even the quickest of reads of our first two planning assumptions should make one thing more than clear: the job of demand creation is significantly different than it was just five years ago. In many organizations, this has led to a rapid opening of a skills gap, as marketers are challenged to think and act in new ways.

The fact that there are now so many different demand creation jobs to do fundamentally challenges the idea of a one-size-fits-all demand marketer. To address this, a growing number of organizations have created demand centers, shared centers of excellence that help those in the field do the jobs they don't have the time, budget or skill to do. Even within these centers, there is a move toward greater adoption of new, specialized skills; within five years, it won't be uncommon to see positions such as demand originator, nurturing program specialist, Web conversion optimizer and inbound marketing specialist. Even teleprospecting – long thought of as a homogeneous function – will see greater specialization of the roles of individual reps and teams.

Those organizations that struggle in the future to achieve their demand creation goals and demonstrate value throughout waterfall will largely do so because they are encumbered by legacy structures, skill sets and roles that were once effective, but are ill-suited to support new expectations and strategies. Tackling new jobs with old approaches just isn't a formula for success.

SiriusAction: Respect the level of expertise and specialization required to be a successful b-to-b demand creator; identify where your organization must augment the skills of current employees, and define how it will find new ones to fill key gaps.

FOUR: A FIELD MARKETING SEA CHANGE

In years past, field marketing was responsible both for the creation of "original" demand, as well as working with local sales teams to ensure that active deals were closing. The changes in the level of complexity –

and often technology – required to generate a lead at the top of the waterfall, as well as the rise of the demand center concept, mean that field marketing is now at a crossroads.

The fact is, many field marketers have been pulled to spend more time on deal closing, simply because of their proximity to sales. As a result, they have spent less time building the skills required to originate demand, be they related to marketing automation, inbound marketing or lead nurturing. What they tend to be particularly adept at are jobs such as pipeline acceleration and account-based marketing, both of which require significant collaboration with sales in order to succeed.

Juggling the roles of field marketing and the demand center will certainly be a challenge for many b-to-b organizations in the years to come. We believe putting the control of jobs where natural skills lie makes the most sense; then it can be determined how each function will support the other. Field marketers will also need to be looked at as more than just glorified event planners; they have much more to offer their sales teams, as well as the business as a whole.

SiriusAction: Review the roles of field marketing and your centralized demand creation functions, looking for miscast jobs and critical areas of overlap. Focus field marketing's role on end-of-the-waterfall activities, where it will have the greatest impact.

FIVE: CONTENT, CONTENT, CONTENT

Demand creation-related jobs including inbound marketing, lead nurturing, lead origination and pipeline acceleration all have a common driver at their core: content. If your content is weak, prospects won't interact with you, meaning you won't be able to track activity in your scoring models; you won't be able to see when it's time to stop nurturing them and send them back into sales; and you won't be able to collect incremental information about them.

Leading organizations are investing more time, effort and budget researching buyer behaviors and needs; designing robust content architectures that align topics, types, delivery mechanisms and gating rules with buying cycle stages; and then developing targeted, unique and relevant content. Content creation and management can no longer be treated as an afterthought; it is truly the lifeblood of any demand creation-related activity.

SiriusAction: Hire or appoint a content strategist with deep experience in content creation and management, who will act as a senior leader within the demand center with responsibility for meeting the needs of your buyers and your organization with high-value content.

THE SIRIUS DECISION

There's no question that an overriding theme for demand creation in

2011 will be the extension of marketing influence and contribution throughout the demand waterfall, as well as the need to adopt new approaches, skills and roles that will be required for success. Marketing organizations that are unable or unwilling to effectively take responsibility for seeding, enabling, accelerating and nurturing as well as creating

demand will find themselves in a weakened position to demonstrate significant value to the business. Worse, attempting to take on these responsibilities with legacy skills and roles will inevitably lead to failure on a scale that will make you wish the conspiracy theorists are right about the end of the world coming in 2012.