



CMM Group Article:

Avoiding Collateral Damage

By Tim Riesterer, CEO
CMM Group: Customer Message Management LLC
info@customermesssage.com

You invest significant resources in marketing to create messaging, positioning, sales tools and training designed to increase sales effectiveness. Sometimes referred to as “collaterals,” this content is often relegated to a tactical blip on the business radar screen. But, take a moment to consider the cost to your organization when one or more of the following occurs:

- **You build it, but sales doesn't use it.** Up to 90% of messages and tools created in the name of sales support goes unused by the field, and 87% of training is forgotten four weeks after it's transmitted. That's a lot of wasted time and money that isn't having an impact on company sales effectiveness.
- **You build it, and sales uses it, but it doesn't fit.** 75% of solution selling efforts are considered failures by the companies that implement them. The number one reason cited is the lack of alignment between marketing and sales, including “collaterals” that don't reinforce – or often oppose or conflict with -- the desired best selling practices.
- **Sales builds their own stuff, and it's bad news.** Up to 40% of sales time is spent searching for content and creating their brand of “clandestine collateral” to support the sales effort. This corrupts productive selling time and has proven to be a recipe for inconsistency, poor quality, and worse: inaccuracy and liability.

“Collateral damage” means wasting valuable marketing budget, wasting precious selling time and wasting potential points of competitive differentiation. Regardless of the reason(s) that apply to your organization, “collateral damage” significantly reduces sales and marketing effectiveness.

What causes the damage?

Over the past five years, we've traced collateral damage to four main causes:

1. The messages and content don't reflect the conversations that sales people want to have with customers and vice versa.

“Customers want to know what we can do to help them accomplish their goals. They aren't interested in hearing what we have to sell them.” Sales Manager, Manufacturing Company

2. The sales tools don't work the way a customer decision process or sales cycle works.

“There are moments of truth at each step of the customer decision-making process that require tools which are relevant to that interaction – not tools that fit some sort of marketing or brand guidebook.” Sales Operations, Professional Services Company



3. Sales training is not provided in a way that busy road-warriors, who have to be “expert” in multiple products and markets, want to learn or learn best.

“Sales people are just-in-time, opportunity-specific learners. They learn what they need to learn when they need to learn it, and they only want to learn as much as they need to learn for the specific opportunity.” Field Marketing, Technology Company

4. Our online technologies (CRM and Intranets) are not centralized, clear and intuitive in terms of helping sales people quickly find the right content they need to advance a deal.

“I need to uncover client needs and then respond with something that shows how I meet those needs. There’s nothing in my CRM system that helps me do that, and our sales intranet is a cesspool of information.” Sales Rep, Financial Services Company

Is it worth fixing?

A recent survey produced by CSO Insights¹ titled, “Optimizing Sales Performance with Consistent Message Management,” correlates company sales results with their ability to communicate consistent messaging to and through their sales force.

Of the 1,300+ companies surveyed, only 87 said they would consider themselves “world-class” at **connecting their marketing and customer messaging to and through field sales people.**

When the sales results of those 87 companies were compared to the rest who said they were very good, average or below, here’s what they found.

World-class companies:

- ▶ Outdistance others in quota achievement by 25%
- ▶ Win rates 20% higher than average sales forces
- ▶ 3x more successful in proposals closing to a sale
- ▶ Significantly better cross-selling and up-selling
- ▶ 5x better at avoiding excessive discounting
- ▶ Significantly more effective new product launches

In response, the authors of the survey and executive whitepaper said:

“Whether these firms are more disciplined because they embarked on the consistent message management journey or they were willing to go down the consistent message management path because they already had a more structured corporate and sales culture, the results are inescapably the same: they’re getting a much bigger bang for each sales and marketing dollar.”

Jim Dickie and Barry Trailer, CSO Insights

¹ CSO Insights: Chief Sales Officer (www.csoinsights.com). Barry Trailer and Jim Dickie.



Repairing the damage

So, what do the world-class messaging companies have in common? Following are four best practices that correlate to the four problems described earlier in this article:

1. They build customer-relevant messaging based on decision-maker roles and goals.
2. They deliver sales tools specific to the tasks at hand in an identified buying cycle.
3. They make sure all necessary content is available in a single, central repository.
4. They “push” content based on selling situation vs. “pull” from a mass of content.

Customer-relevant messaging

Companies that want to *avoid collateral damage* and drive more consistent, high-quality customer conversations build messaging based on targeted decision-makers and their most pressing business objectives and challenges. They abandon the traditional “inside-out” messaging approach that starts with the company and its products. Instead, they define the *customer context*, and the map how they best respond to repeatable customer situations.

This literally means creating “Conversation Roadmaps” for each repeatable business objective, filled with messaging about the problem, potential solution, business value and proof points.

Buying cycle-relevant tools

If you want sales people to stop building their own tools and diluting your brand, you must take the time to understand the customer buying cycle and selling activities that take place within it. Ask sales people what they are trying to accomplish at each step.

Find out how and where they are conducting each conversation and interaction. Determine the kind of messaging and level of detail needed to prepare, conduct or respond to the customer. And, diagram the most appropriate type of tool to deliver that information.

Single, online repository

Your sales people should have one online place for everything they need to create, cultivate and close deals. Too many databases, microsites, binders and presentations in too many locations result in an immense drag on sales productivity, increase frustration and can create huge gaps in message consistency and accuracy.

Review your sales resources, consolidate the most useful tools into a single online repository, and work with sales people to organize content in a way that is intuitive and meaningful to them.



Push vs. pull

When your messages and tools are available in one location, then work on just-in-time, opportunity-specific access by changing your user interface to support the way sales people think through a sales cycle. Leading companies recognize that their sales teams can't be expected to remember everything about their markets, messages and solutions. Those companies are transforming the intranet experience to push messages and support tools to sales people rather than making them search and pull collaterals – hoping they find the right stuff.

A “push” interface often takes the form of an “interview” that asks sales people to answer simple questions about their customer opportunity, such as market segment, decision-maker, business needs and potential solution. Based on the answers, the most appropriate content from the site is filtered, customized and dynamically pushed to the sales person.

Case Study

A back-office technology and services company recently implemented a project they based on the four best practices described in this article.

- Situation:
 - Strategic business development push in key vertical markets
 - 89.6% of marketing collateral on sales intranet was not being used
 - Majority of field didn't feel equipped to sell “high” in accounts
- Goals:
 - Increase revenue in target markets to support corporate strategy
 - Engage executive suite more often and more powerfully
 - Sell bundled solutions vs. individual products
- Results:
 - 98% of new messaging used daily in sales conversations
 - 94% of new materials referenced weekly to reinforce knowledge
 - 33% revenue growth for targeted market and solutions
 - 25% pipeline growth for targeted market and solutions
 - Engage executive suite more often and more powerfully

When their messages and tools were launched recently, sales management and sales representatives voted the initiative the “**most valuable sales training and support program**” ever delivered at the company.

For more information, please contact CMM Group at:

WEBSITE: www.customermessage.com

EMAIL: info@customremessage.com