

Maintaining a healthy sales funnel of qualified leads is a goal of sales and marketing professionals in transportation and logistics — many of whom are members of the Transportation Marketing & Sales Association. This whitepaper will help you better understand how to shift your sales strategies to accommodate changing purchasing habits in the industry.

TMSA helps its members and their companies to make sales, marketing and communications strategies more effective, productive, and profitable. The only non-profit association of its kind serving the transportation and logistics industry, TMSA delivers value to members through knowledge, connections, recognition, and solutions.

There's no question that sales activities are becoming more personalized, complex, and dictated by today's buyer of transportation and logistics products and services.

A recent study by CSO Insights underscores this: Rising customer expectations, combined with a complex and constantly changing selling world, are driving the need for sales organizations to evolve their sales processes and enablement to a more dynamic, customer-centered approach.

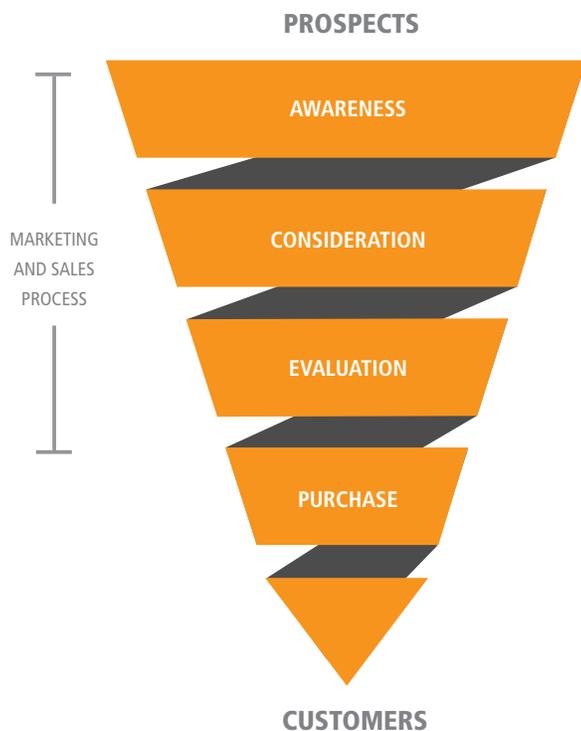
It's time to accept that buyers now hold the power and that this empowerment is only going to grow as accessibility to market information expands.

Historically, transportation and logistics companies have been slower to react to changing customer preferences. But the impact of this paradigm shift is significant, and organizations that don't change clearly will get left behind.

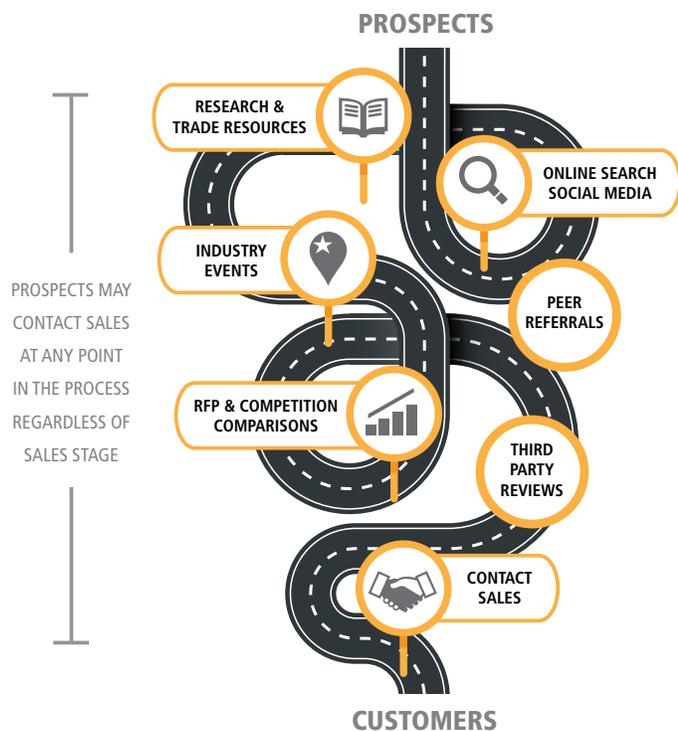
What's Our New Sales Funnel Model?

It used to be a popular business model in our industry: The sales organization had a linear sales funnel where everyone enters the sales process at the top of the funnel and follows a similar buying experience. However, buyers now have immediate and expansive access to more market data, information and business tools. In just a couple of clicks, buyers now can find how other companies have solved similar problems, get recommendations on which partners/providers can best help them, compare overall products and services, get relevant reviews, and even receive quick proposals and pricing. In most cases, they can do all of this easily — sometimes without even needing to speak live with a single sales rep. Certainly this industry continues to be one based on relationships, but this dynamic is quickly changing.

TRADITIONAL SALES FUNNEL



THE NEW SALES PROCESS



Recent studies show that B2B buyers are more than 60 percent through their “buying journey” before engaging in communication with a sales rep. More and more buyers are adopting this online self-serve approach because it’s more efficient to troubleshoot their own problems and needs without being sold to, get answers online to their buying questions, and most importantly, form opinions in a non-biased way without the influence of direct sales.

These changes in the buyer’s journey mean dramatic changes in the buying and selling processes. Buyers now can enter the sales pipeline at various points in the buying process. Some buyers may engage sellers at the beginning of their search because they read an article in *Inbound Logistics*, *Transport Topics*, or the *Journal of Commerce* that links to the seller’s solution and downloaded some gated content. However, other buyers will have done more research and already made comparisons of products and services from the different solution providers before even engaging in conversations with the seller. There could be other buyers who have already selected their preferred provider or carrier through research and reviews, and have already connected with sellers for the first time to negotiate pricing.

And to make things even more complicated, how buyers enter the sales pipeline might not be indicative of where they are at in their own buyer’s journey. Just because a buyer requested pricing information on a provider or carrier’s website doesn’t mean they are in the negotiation phase of their buying journey. Or a buyer who downloads a whitepaper might be further down the pipe than their action indicates.

Today’s new model of a sales funnel perhaps may not even be a funnel at all. It could be a comprehensive, complex maze of individual buyer paths intersecting at various sales and marketing touch points.

What Do These Changes Mean for You?

These market changes have serious implications for all sales organizations — whether you’re a 3PL, motor carrier, railroad, ocean carrier, or technology innovator. Primary questions facing sales management include:

- How do we best identify the changing behaviors of our prospects and customers? And what will their buyer’s journey look like in 2018 and beyond?
- Are there ways you can build in more flexibility into your processes and procedures to accommodate more customized buyer journeys?

- How do you better enable and motivate your sales teams to engage buyers appropriately based on where they are at in their individual buying process?
- What role should your Marketing team play in nurturing buyers through their individual journey?

These are just a few of the questions sales organizations that need to be answered to continue to grow revenue and profitability moving forward.

How to Adapt to the New Selling Environment

As mentioned earlier, buyers are taking more control of their purchasing journey and they’re entering and exiting the sales pipeline at various points in the buying process. No longer are buyers necessarily entering the sales process at the top of the funnel and following a consistent buyer’s journey. The new sales pipeline is made up of a complex web of individual buyer paths intersecting at the various sales and marketing touch points.

This new reality is impacting sales in four primary ways:

1. Sales roles are morphing.

In the past, sellers of transportation and logistics products and services were the main source of where buyers went to for information about the company, products/services and pricing. As more valuable decision-making information is readily available in a self-serve format (primarily online), sellers are having to do less around building awareness and consideration and more around “final solution building” and negotiation. The extent of this transformation depends on the complexity of the product or solution, but sales organizations should seriously consider this. If it is the case that sellers are having to do less “selling,” then sales leadership should consider re-evaluating their sales roles, overall sales and marketing structure, hiring profile, and compensation model. An interesting point: Inside Sales in transportation and logistics contributes 41 percent of sales revenue when deployed, according to the 2017 TMSA Sales & Marketing Metrics Study, which is a 2-point decrease from the prior year. Outside Sales contributes 51 percent.

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2. Marketing is becoming a bigger part of sales.

Everyone wants to sustainably grow profit and revenue, but there is a critical element missing in most companies: Alignment. Unfortunately, there always have been challenges around sales and marketing working in concert — a common challenge in many industries. It's no different in transportation and logistics.

Never has alignment been more important than in this new selling environment. In a world where buyers are empowered to determine their own buying path, marketers need to consider the complete end-to-end buying experience. Marketers need to enable buyers to move through the buying process on their own terms by providing rich content and resources that will be relevant to where they are and allow them to progress at their own pace. A recent

report by Aberdeen proves this concept by showing that best-in-class companies are 69 percent more likely than all others to align marketing content with key stages of the sales process.

There's no question that organizational alignment between sales, marketing and operations departments within transportation and logistics companies and their associates reduces friction and accelerates an organization's growth and success. This is such an important goal that the theme of the 2018 TMSA Logistics Marketing & Sales Conference is focused on this "Align for Growth." It takes place June 10-12 at the Westin Cape Coral at Marina Village in Fort Myers, Florida, and will provide attendees with practical ideas on how to overcome the challenges that prevent sustainable growth.

Alignment of Sales, Marketing is Crucial to a Healthy Sales Funnel

Everyone wants to sustainably grow profit and revenue, but there is a critical element missing in many transportation and logistics companies: Organizational alignment between departments and associates reduces friction and accelerates an organization's growth and success. Attend the 2018 TMSA Logistics Marketing & Sales Conference and discover how to overcome the challenges that prevent sustainable growth. It all takes place June 10-12 at the beautiful Westin Cape Coral at Marina Village in Fort Myers, Florida.

Attend this conference to learn how to:

- Help align your sales team through more accurate forecasting, connecting with the right buyers, and using the right marketing content at the right stage of your buyer's journey
- Identify and attract the right buyers seeking your services and products
- Track the right marketing metrics and use them to increase budgets by proving ROI
- Gain C-level buy in and support for sales/marketing initiatives and strategies learned at this conference
- Compensate sales team and track metrics that generate results
- Craft messaging and content to address your buyers' needs and stage of buyer's journey

- Leverage current and future trends impacting sales and marketing
- Align Sales, Marketing, and Operations teams to meet growth goals

This conference features 30-plus educational sessions, best practices, networking and solutions that will help you and your company to effectively align your Sales, Marketing and Operations for aggressive growth. For more information, visit TMSAtoday.org.



About the TMSA Sales & Marketing Metrics Study

The year 2017 marks the Transportation Marketing & Sales Association's third annual sales and marketing metrics study. The study design, results, and analysis are compiled and presented by our research and consulting partner, Sales Outcomes. The Transportation Intermediaries Association (TIA), the Intermodal Association of North America (IANA), and *Transport Topics* magazine promoted participation in this study.

The goal of this study is to help sales and marketing practitioners and business leaders gain a better understanding of key sales and marketing metrics, how the metrics change over time, and best practices for marketing and sales success. The study includes:

- Metrics used to measure performance
- Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Marketing Automation systems use
- Marketing and Sales budget benchmarks
- Quota achievement performance
- How sales new hire positions are sourced

If you'd like a comprehensive Executive Summary of the 2017 TMSA Sales & Marketing Metrics Study and/or view a webinar that outlines the findings in detail, access to both are available at no cost to TMSA members and only \$34.95 to non-members.



To download, visit TMSAtoday.org and click "Sales & Marketing Metrics Study" inside the Quick Links column on the home page.

3. Formal sales processes are no longer enough.

These days, no one can argue that sales organizations with defined sales processes achieve their sales goals more often than sales organizations without a formal sales process. A recent CSO Insights study found that 16 percent more reps hit quota with a defined sales process, according to the *2017 TMSA Sales & Marketing Metrics Study*.

However, as mentioned earlier the world of the buyer's journey has changed. The difference now is that having a defined sales process is no longer adequate for success, "and in some cases may actually hinder sales performance. Recalling that the sales funnel is now more like a complex web of different buyer pathways, buyer journeys are no longer necessarily linear. Therefore, your sales process shouldn't be linear either. Rather, think of your sales process more modularly and in terms of playbooks. Consider developing "plays" based on scenarios such as: If a buyer is identified to be in this sales stage and has done Action X or Action Y, then sellers should do Action Z. This new, tailored approach to the sales process is more dynamic and will enable sellers to meet buyers where they are and give them a more personalized experience.

4. Enablement tools are now more important.

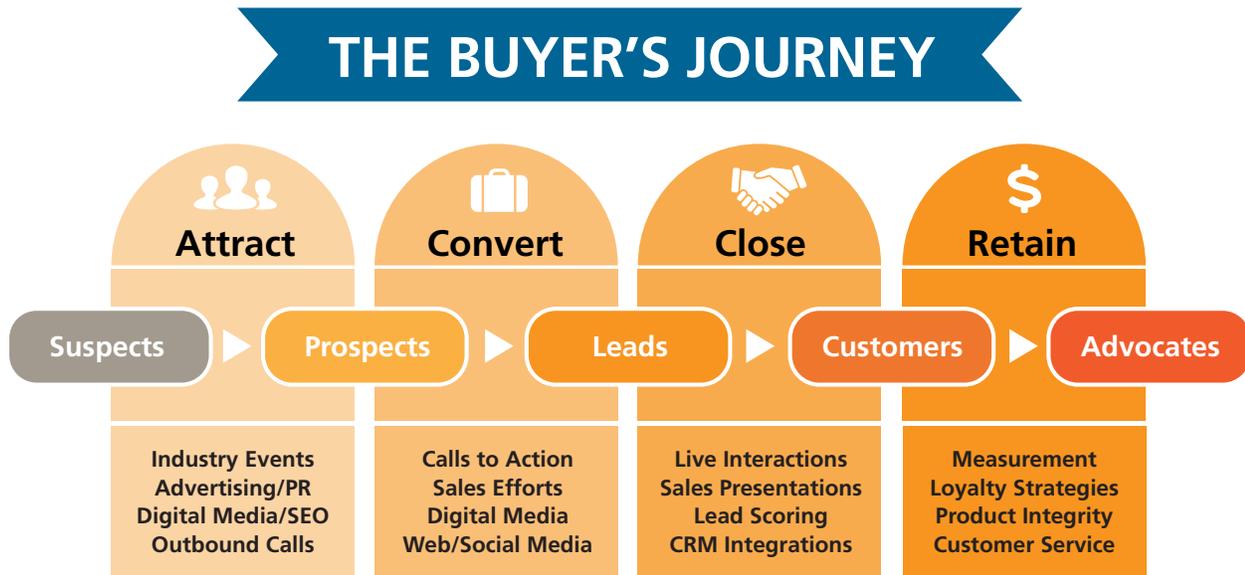
As the selling process becomes more complex, sellers now need tools that help simplify the complexity and still meet rising buyer expectations. That means tools that help sellers quickly understand where buyers are at in their buying journey and help them customize an approach relevant to the situation. Leading sales organizations invest in sales enablement tools because they know it is a big part of improving the performance of the middle-third of their sales force. Enablement technology has advanced significantly in the past five years and most of the solutions are cloud based, snap onto your existing CRM systems, and support dynamic sales processes.

An interesting point of fact: Approximately 60 percent of transportation companies use CRM of some sort, according to the 2017 TMSA Sales & Marketing Metrics Study. About 25 percent said they were considering deploying a new CRM system in the next 12 months — so the use and leverage of technology continues to be an important, growing strategy in this industry.

Is Your Sales Organization Empowering Buyers or Hindering Them?

This special TMSA whitepaper underscores several issues you should consider as you map out the various versions of the buyer's journey of your prospects and customers — and ultimately how your sales funnel will accommodate the related paradigm shifts. It might be time to rethink your sales strategy and operations to better align to how your customers want to buy. Below is the general business model of the “Buyer's Journey,” as developed by TMSA's Education Committee.

For more information, resources, and ideas, join the Transportation Marketing & Sales Association at TMSAtoday.org.



About the Transportation Marketing & Sales Association

The Transportation Marketing and Sales Association (TMSA) provides knowledge, connections, recognition, and solutions to marketing, sales, and communications professionals in the transportation and logistics industries. Member companies include motor carriers, railroads, air carriers, ocean lines, 3PLs, OEMs, passenger transit organizations, media, and suppliers and account for more than \$500 billion in revenue each year. For more information, visit TMSAtoday.org.

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