



The Birthday Cake of Complexity

Description

After my discussion with Paul helped me put the idea of hiring some salespeople on hold, I was very eager to outline as many elements of a first class B2B sales & marketing program as possible so I could figure out where we actually should start. I hired consultants, interviewed other CEOs, read books and devoured blogs- each of which had a slightly different take on the challenge and offered a divergent set of steps, projects, personnel, systems and tools required for an effective B2B sales and marketing program. All were meaningful and relevant, but collectively they were overwhelming.

Paul and I packaged up many of these activities into distinct layers. For example: we had an insight layer to help us determine an overall strategy. In that layer we had items like: Voice of the Customer Analysis, Macro Market Review, Competitive Analysis, and Current Business Analysis. Another layer was in regard to Sales Enablement. In that layer we had: Incentive Compensation and Quotas, Recruiting and Retention, Sales Training and Development and Tools & Technology. Marketing and Customer Outreach each had their own additional layers. In the end we had six layers which, when stacked on top of each other, resembled a killer birthday cake.

The problem with the birthday cake, however, was that it had 24 specific projects or disciplines that needed to be tackled or built. In other words, hiring sales people was one of 24 separate steps I might take to start ramping up growth. I was starting from scratch with no B2B sales or marketing personnel. While I've been known to be a pretty fast learner with capacity for working hard, there was no way I could tackle all 24 of these items, even if I hired agencies and consultants. In fact, I suspected I could have spent a year doing nothing else and still not make enough progress..., and I had a company to run! Furthermore, we didn't have budget for half of these initiatives, I had squirreled away enough budget for a handful of hires. Oh, and of course, the clock was ticking... we needed to launch our growth program yesterday. I had learned a lot... but was now actually more overwhelmed by the challenge than when I started. While hiring a few salespeople may not be the best first move ([Hiring Salespeople](#)), at least it was actionable. This new exercise left me at a loss of how to tackle the problem.

After stepping back, I realized that the question was not how was I going to miraculously find enough resources to tackle all 24 items on the birthday cake – I wasn't, at least for a while. The real question

was where to start...and to figure that out, I needed to decide what type of offense we were going to run. ([link](#))

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