

# The great divide

## Using value conversations to create a bridge

Firms are composed of departments, functions, regions and divisions. It is, therefore, not uncommon to find information silos, mini kingdoms and turf perimeters leading to breakdowns in communication, tensions, clan behaviors and functional ideologies.

While we might expect challenges between research and development and marketing, finance and sales, manufacturing and quality, firms also can have strong cultural divides between marketing and

sales. You might think these commercial functions think and act alike, but in many firms, marketing and sales suffer from the “great divide” phenomenon.

It can lead to sales not adopting marketing programs and doing a poor job at executing marketing strategies. The sales force complains that marketing works in a silo, isn’t close to the field and doesn’t understand customers. Their view is that corporate marketing looks down on sales from an ivory tower.

Marketing, in turn, complains that sales doesn’t get it, isn’t sophisticated enough and doesn’t embrace a marketing excellence program.

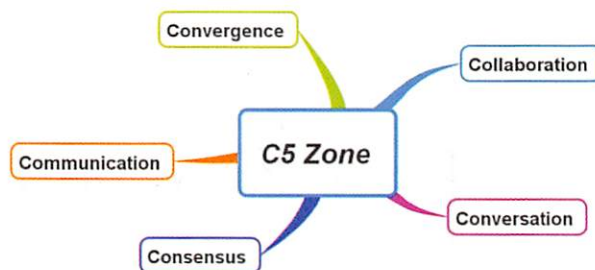
### Get at the same table

If you work in a company suffering from this divide, there’s a serious cultural problem. Top leaders have to better understand middle management issues, accountability and alignment mismatches, as well as impediments related to organizational design.

They also need to identify projects where sales and marketing teams can sit in the same room, working collaboratively to build something together and put customer value at the forefront. There is no better exercise than to discuss value propositions and conduct a deep dive into customer value analysis.

### Build toward consensus

Collaborative and mindful discussions on the topic of value can generate breakthroughs, helping your organization



move toward a team-based commercial culture. Collaboration is one of the Cs of what I call the C5 Zone:

1. It starts with establishing **communication** between functional leaders to get people talking regularly, including emails, quick phone calls for projects, team dinners, etc.
2. Then, sales, marketing, R&D, finance and accounting employees start **converging** toward a common goal and project success. The project manager and executive sponsors must ensure silos are broken and strong alignment is created to foster exchanges.
3. From convergence, people move toward **collaboration**. They start using the same language, get used to working together and begin discussing customer value, which leads to practical actions. They create, validate, modify, test hypotheses and experiment together. Since value is a new concept, it’s a level playing field.
4. Now, excellent **conversations** have occurred. Silos are broken, uncertainty disappears, relationships improve and team-based success starts. Candid and constructive conversations of the meaning of value, the definition of value proposition and the measurement of value drivers create shared vision, accomplishments and beliefs.
5. This leads to group **consensus** and alignment. Marketing and sales build value models together with commonly defined and validated data that takes the customer’s view into account.

So, how to get started? Start with a multifunctional pilot project. It helps to focus on a small project that may expand to other regular business activities. Once people connect and experience success together, they become unstoppable. The power of an aligned team is incredible. ●



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