

## 4 B2B Sales and Marketing Trends You Need to Watch in 2016

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Welcome to the age of the empowered buyer.

While the Internet has changed the buyer's world, technology is making inside sales more efficient than ever before. CRM and marketing automation are systematizing the sales and marketing process. At the same time, virtual meeting platforms and webinars take the place of physical meetings.

Add to this the fact that inside sales is cost effective, delivers strong ROI and is easy to scale, and you have the recipe for a long-term trend that favors remote selling.

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## **Focus on Lead Quality over Quantity**

Last year, Ascend2 fielded a survey to assess lead generation strategy trends. It included 300 marketing, sales and business professionals around the world. They asked the question, “What are the most important objectives of an effective lead generation strategy?” The answer that rose to first place, with 70% of respondents opting for it, was “improve the quality of leads.”

Falling below in the ratings was the value of increasing the number of leads. Only 54% said this was one of their most important objectives. Clearly, quality trumps quantity.

Why the emphasis on quality, not quantity? Because it correlates directly with conversion rates from leads to sales. It’s not surprising that when responses were tallied, “sales qualified leads generated,” ranked as the most useful metric.

As marketing and sales teams analyze all the metrics now available through their CRM systems and can put numbers on the value of a qualified lead, there is no reason for this trend to abate. Quality leads fuel sales and marketing productivity.

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## **A More Targeted Approach to Email Marketing**

Email marketing gets a bad rap as spammers fill our email boxes with irrelevant, unasked for information. Despite that, there’s no disputing that it works. In the 2016 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America report from the Content Marketing Institute and Marketing Profs, they report that 81% of marketers are using email newsletters, and the majority say they are effective. And that’s just one email tactic.

Email is already effective, and it’s about to get better with increased targeting and personalization.

It’s an age-old fact that adding someone’s name to an email boosts engagement, but with marketing automation tools, personalization can now go much further. It starts with recognizing different needs based on demographics and firmographics. Then, we can also increase email relevance by customizing

messages based on how someone has interacted with the company online and during telephone conversations. Businesses that do this will reap rewards in email performance with higher open rates, click-throughs and conversions.

- **More Consultative, Less Scripted Calls**

More messages than ever before are barraging B2B buyers. Also, as they educate themselves online, they are becoming savvier and more likely to tune out *sales* messages. These realities are fueling the trend towards consultative selling.

The truth is, even though people like to buy, they have never liked being sold to. So the trick is to help them to buy by becoming an advisor, tailoring phone conversations to an individual's needs to help them solve business problems in innovative ways. When you shift your focus to consultative selling, you can deliver greater value to your prospects. Plus, buyers feel that you have their interests at heart which builds trust and deepens relationships.

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