

HIDDEN EDGE × SERAPH SCIENCE



ONE TEAM. ONE TARGET. ONE NUMBER.

Sales and marketing don't need better alignment. They need to stop being two teams. The case for a single commercial function, **one revenue target**, **one commission pool**, **one owner of the customer**.

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01 THE VERDICT

Stop aligning sales and marketing.
Merge them.

“A fence exists between sales and marketing - that’s the crux of the problem. We’ve got misconceptions about what the other side does. And they’ve got the same about us”

Tom Hemmings, CMO, Big Ideas Group

On paper, the relationship has never looked healthier: 82% of C-suite executives say their sales and marketing teams are aligned. Buyers see something else entirely, 69% report inconsistencies between the two functions, a gap that only widens as AI lets buyers research and self-serve long before either team hears from them.

C-SUITE SAY SALES & MARKETING IS ALIGNED



YET BUYERS REPORT INCONSISTENCIES



That gap isn't a communication problem. It's a structural one. Two teams, two targets, two scoreboards, connected by a single fragile handoff: a lead moves from MQL (marketing's judgement that someone is worth attention) to SAL (sales agreeing to take it on). In interview, the same pattern came up repeatedly; a metric everyone reports on and nobody quite trusts.

CXO OPINION

There are four questions a sales process is built to answer. However, CxOs only care about two of them:

#1 what's the business case
#2 and why should I trust you?

We measure many things in sales & marketing, but never trust. That's a gap we need to fill.

Seraph Science Research

TAKEAWAY

When sales and marketing have different targets, they aren't aligned, they're allied. Alliances break under pressure. Alignment means one number, one bonus.

02 WHERE IT BREAKS DOWN

Two teams, two scoreboards: five cracks in the handshake

1 The Handoff Credibility Crisis

The metrics built to bridge the two functions - MQL and SAL - have become the bone of contention. They reward what's easily measured over real buying intent. And the qualification bar flexes with Sales capacity: when bandwidth is tight, it quietly rises, so the "same" number means something different quarter to quarter.

4 AI Accelerating Buyer Avoidance

As AI makes it easier for buyers to research and self-serve before ever speaking to a salesperson, the question is whether that improves lead quality or simply delays and obscures it further. Sonia Figone, WPP, framed the shift as innovation, a reason to redesign engagement, not defend the old version of it.

2 Capacity Outpacing Process

Amy Horne, Hitachi Solutions, described building the UK marketing function from one person to 15. More recently, the move to a global marketing structure has increased the size of the wider team and highlighted the importance of evolving processes, ownership and collaboration to support growth at scale.

5 Ownership Nobody Can Define

Where, precisely, does responsibility hand off between marketing and sales — and who owns that moment once AI-driven journeys make it less linear? Both the interviews and the session's own agenda kept circling this same open question.

3 The Fence Between Departments

Tom Hemmings put it plainly ahead of the session: sales and marketing each carry misconceptions about what the other actually does. The existence of that fence, more than anything either side is doing wrong, may be the real problem.

THE PATTERN

Every crack on this page is a symptom of the same root cause: two teams, reporting two numbers, to two different owners.

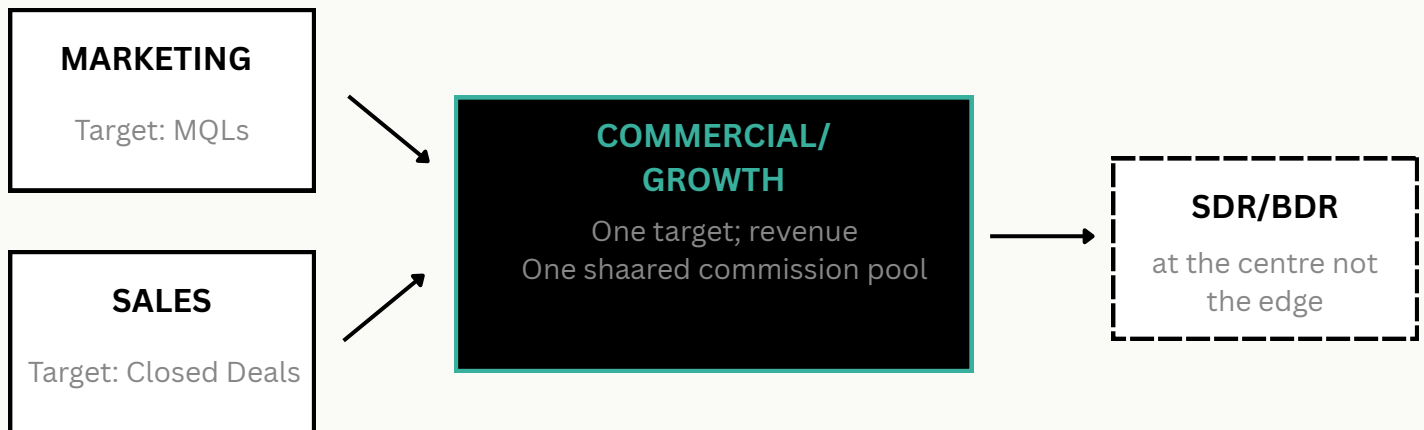
None of the handoff metrics in use today measure trust, and none of them belong to a team that's actually paid on revenue.

Fix the ownership, and most of these cracks close on their own.

02 THE FIX

One commercial team. One number.

The session's clearest structural view wasn't a better MQL definition or a smoother handoff choreography. It was to stop treating sales and marketing as two functions that hand a lead back and forth, and start treating them as one commercial, or growth, unit with a single P&L.



WHAT CHANGES

Same objectives. One shared revenue target. Commission blended across the full funnel, first touch to renewal, so nobody profits from a lead they didn't help close, and nobody hides behind a lead someone else couldn't convert.

Retire handoff metrics like MQL and SAL as gates. Keep them as diagnostics, not scoreboards, useful for spotting where the funnel is leaking, useless as the thing anyone is bonused on.

Put the BDR/SDR function at the centre. The panel's clearest structural view: these roles shouldn't sit inside sales or marketing alone, they belong at the point where the two now merge.

Force the data habit, don't ask for it. One panellist described their organisation geo-tracking sales reps' phones: leaving a client meeting triggered a prompt to update the CRM record, and the rest of the phone stayed locked until it was done. Multi-touch attribution, the closest tool available today, only works if the underlying data is actually complete.

Stop making sales do operations. Too many companies default onboarding and service admin to reps who are good at selling and bad at admin, pulling them from customers and quietly undermining the number the business is trying to hit.

"Sales comes to me and says, what are we doing? And I say, here's the materials."

Melissa, Google — on crossing the line between the two functions herself

03 MEASURE WHAT’S VALUABLE

Measure what’s valuable.
Not just what’s easy.

The closing panel was built around one question: if you could measure one thing about the customer, what would it be? Nobody answered with a better process metric. The answer, across the board, was influence, a harder, more honest signal of real buying intent than a form fill or a handoff metric like MQL or SAL.

EASY TO MEASURE - TODAY	VALUABLE TO MEASURE - INSTEAD
Handoff metrics like SQL and SAL	Influence - genuine buying intent across the account
Lead volume, form fills	Trust - one of the only two things that actually drive a deal
Handoff speed between teams	Data completeness - the thing attribution actually depends on
Activity by channel	Revenue against one shared commercial target

Multi-touch attribution was raised as the closest tool available today, platforms like Salesforce claim to offer it, but panellists were clear it only works if the underlying CRM data is actually complete and current, which is precisely the habit a single commercial unit is built to enforce.

“The balanced scorecard says ‘you can’t manage what you can’t measure, and you can’t measure what you can’t describe’. However, in pursuing measurement, we’ve lost nuance and context along the way.”

James Harris - Founder, Hidden Edge

Final thought. Every statistic behind this session points the same direction: sales and marketing look aligned from the boardroom and feel fractured from the buyer's side of the table. Closing that gap was never about a new dashboard or a better MQL definition, it's about removing the reason the two teams needed a handoff metric in the first place.

Seraph Science is spending this summer studying trust specifically, one of only two things senior executives say genuinely drives a deal, and, like influence, one that almost nobody measures well today.

READ MORE

The full session report – including the complete "Missing Metric" panel discussion and Seraph Science's forthcoming trust research – is on the Hidden Edge site: hiddenedgeclub.com

HIDDEN EDGE

Hidden Edge is a community of B2B marketers and enterprise sales leaders looking for the competitive edge that's untapped and hidden away, built in partnership with Seraph Science. Members get access to peers, speakers and insights that uncover the DNA of enterprise marketing and buyer engagement.

WWW.HIDDENEDGECLUB.COM

The insights in this report were drawn from a private roundtable of senior marketing and sales executives, facilitated by James Harris, Founder of Hidden Edge Club.

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