Optimizing business growth: The impact of integrated sales and marketing teams with strategic training programs

by

Claire Wingert-Dudley

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Major Professor
Dr. Logan Britton

ABSTRACT

The synergy between sales and marketing teams plays a pivotal role in driving sustainable and profitable business growth. This thesis explores the strategic benefits of integrating these siloed functions, with a particular focus on the impact of cross-training and collaboration initiatives. Through the analysis of original survey data collected from 150 sales and marketing professionals across various industries, this research examines how structured training programs and sales-marketing alignment influence key performance indicators.

Using regression analysis, the study finds that organizations investing in continuous training and fostering interdepartmental collaboration report improvements in profitability, operational efficiency, and customer satisfaction. While training investment emerged as a statistically significant predictor of positive business outcomes, collaboration showed less direct influence when measured independently. Employee engagement and retention were found to be positively facilitated by job satisfaction, which itself was shaped by the presence of ongoing coaching and regular training touchpoints.

The findings underscore the importance of a strategic approach to team integration, suggesting that companies that align their sales and marketing functions improve internal cohesion and overall financial impact. This thesis contributes to a growing body of evidence that collaboration and capability-building are key drivers for long-term growth and competitive advantage.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive business landscape, organizations are recognizing the need for additional collaboration between certain functional areas. Sales and marketing, traditionally operate as separate entities. Typically, sales focuses on converting leads into customer, customer management, and closing deals. Marketing is focused on identifying customer needs, brand awareness, and generating demand and leads. These two teams directly impact revenue growth and customer engagement of the organization. However, in most companies there is a lack of alignment between these teams that results in inefficiencies, miscommunication, and missed opportunities. In many companies, sales and marketing teams operate in siloes, where they operate independently with minimal collaboration. These mistakes ultimately decrease a business' bottom line. Changing consumer demands, requires a more integrated approach to sales and marketing. Sales and marketing integration refers to the strategic alignment and merging of both teams through shared goals, processes, and use of tools and data. Customers expect seamless experiences across all touchpoints with a company, whether they interact with a sales representative, visit the website, or engage with a marketing or social media campaign. Disconnected efforts between sales and marketing lead to inconsistent messaging, poor lead management, and lost sales- all of which contribute to a decline in profits. Companies that align their sales and marketing teams typically convert leads quicker, enhance the customer experience, and achieve and maintain overall revenue growth.

In addition, professional development and training programs play a critical role in ensuring that both teams have the latest tools, knowledge, and skills to adapt to market changes. The fast-paced nature of industries necessitates regular training to keep teams agile and competitive. Organizations that invest in comprehensive training programs see improved team performance, greater innovation, and long-term business success (Mustafa 2024). The significance of this thesis lies in its potential to address two interrelated issues that are imperative for business success. Businesses that fail to align their sales and marketing teams face several challenges, including inefficient lead-conversion processes, misaligned goals, and lower customer satisfaction. Studies show that companies with strong sales-marketing alignment experience higher growth rates and improved business performance (Business Money 2024). There is an opportunity for improvement within companies that do not have these teams aligned.

In addition to having both teams integrated, companies should provide comprehensive training programs for both sales and marketing teams. If the sales and marketing teams were cross trained and equipped with up-to-date knowledge and skills, they are more likely to perform effectively. This improved performance would better meet customer expectations and contribute to the overall success of the business. Continuous training improves teamwork and collaboration.

This thesis addresses not only the strategic benefits of aligning these two functions but also the long-term value of sustained cross-training programs. The importance of this thesis topic is justified by the role that both sales, marketing, and effective training, play in increasing business growth. This thesis will provide practical business solutions by exploring the benefits of integrating sales and marketing teams that are supported by comprehensive training programs. It will provide insights on best practices, success factors, and challenges, which will enable businesses to foster a culture of collaboration and continuous learning.

In summary, this research is important because it addresses two major challenges that businesses face in today's competitive environment: aligning sales and marketing teams and developing a comprehensive training program for these teams that will increase the bottom line. The findings from this study can provide actionable recommendations that can help businesses overcome obstacles, improve team synergy, and achieve sustainable growth.

1.2 Overall Objectives

This research will explore the crucial role of integrating sales and marketing teams to drive business growth and examine the added value of implementing comprehensive training programs within organizations. By investigating successful case studies and analyzing empirical data from company surveys, the goal is to provide insights into the strategic benefits of aligning sales and marketing efforts, with an emphasis on the long-term benefits of continuous training for team effectiveness and sustained growth.

1.3 Research Objectives

The research should show how organizations can improve profitability, individual talent, employee engagement, and retention. The objectives from the survey were to:

- Examine the business growth impact of integrating sales and marketing teams,
- Evaluate the role of training programs in improving collaboration between sales and marketing
- Analyzing the long-term impact of continuous training on employee engagement and retention

- Determine the financial impact of integrating sales and marketing with proper training programs.

The research will examine the overall impact that organizations have on employees when they provide strategic training programs and focus on integrating teams.

1.4 Research Thesis

The main objective of this thesis is to explore the strategic advantages of integrating sales and marketing teams through continuous training, focusing on how collaboration can boost overall business success. Three sub-objectives would be to assess the long-term impact of sales training on team performance, investigate key performance indicators (KPIs) related to collaboration between sales and marketing and examine case studies showcasing successful business growth due to integrated strategies. The alignment of sales and marketing teams is crucial in modern business environments. When these two teams work in tandem, they can maximize revenue, improve customer engagement, and drive sustainable growth. Moreover, continuous training programs ensure that the teams are equipped with up-to-date knowledge, which leads to better adaptability and success in an evolving market.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Sales Prospecting Framework: Marketing Team, Salesperson Competence, and Sales Structure

Recent business developments have led to a proposed sales prospecting framework that emphasizes the synergy between the marketing team, salesperson competence, and sales structure. The marketing team's role in lead generation and sales planning, combined with the salesperson's ability to close deals and the support of sales platforms and customer relationship management (CRM) systems, are crucial for improving firm performance. Despite advancements, challenges remain in lead conversion rates, sales cycle times, and the integration of sales tools, which can impact salespeople's efficiency and the firm's overall success (Vieira 2020). With changes in the business landscape in recent years due to social media sales, consumers' online purchases and in-store pickup, inbound marketing activities, big data and analytics, and artificial intelligence, firms have embraced salespeople to truly engage with their customers (Vieira 2020).

Salespeople employ sales knowledge and tactics to transform prospects into customers generating profitable customer relationships over the years. Industry reports have suggested that total spending on lead generation tools has increased worldwide and that sales-supporting platforms drive efficiency gains in sales activities (Vieira 2020). By revising previous sales research and empirical evidence, three key elements were identified as necessary to change for the sales prospecting framework. The three elements stress the importance of the marketing team, salesperson prospecting competence, and sales structure. The end goal is to present how these elements are important for sales prospecting and how they are related to sales performance. A marketing team focused on customers orientation can identify new leads and help qualify them into prospective buyers, leveraging salesperson competence, planning the sales approach, and using processes and resources to convert them into loyal customers (Vieira 2020).

2.2 The Impact of Sales Training on Performance and Development

Sales training plays a crucial role in enhancing productivity, confidence, and efficiency within sales teams. By equipping employees with essential skills and structured strategies, training programs empower salespeople to perform effectively in their roles (Business Money 2024). One of the key benefits of sales training is the improvement of communication skills, which are vital for successful interactions with clients and colleagues. Additionally, training introduces sales professionals to diverse selling tactics and negotiation techniques, enabling them to close larger deals and enhance customer satisfaction (Business Money 2024).

Beyond skill development, sales training reduces employee turnover rates by demonstrating the company's investment in professional growth. Employees who feel supported in their career development are more likely to remain engaged and committed, fostering a positive work environment. Moreover, structured training ensures consistent messaging across sales teams, strengthening brand credibility, building customer trust, and enhancing the company's reputation (Zafar 2024).

Effective sales training empowers teams to take initiative, completing tasks without the need for direction (Business Money 2024). Training directly contributes to revenue growth by improving a salesperson's ability to engage prospects and convert leads into customers (Business Money 2024).

Another significant advantage of sales training is its impact on deal closure rates and financial performance. Training programs equip sales teams with advanced negotiation skills, objection-handling techniques, and closing strategies, ultimately increasing their chances of success (Business Money 2024). Exposure to real-world sales scenarios during training allows employees to adapt to diverse customer needs, leading to higher customer satisfaction and stronger client relationships (Zafar 2024).

Researchers conducted a study to demonstrate that employee training and development programs enhance organizational functions. Using the Kirkpatrick model, the study measured training effectiveness and involved employees from the quality department. Data collection was analyzed with SPSS 20, and questionnaire reliability (Cronbach's alpha > 0.7) confirmed strong validity (Borate 2014). A paired sample T-test revealed that employees found the training effective.

Empirical research supports these benefits. A study measuring the effectiveness of employee training programs used the Kirkpatrick model, which evaluates training impact across four dimensions: reaction, learning, behavior, and results. Data analyzed through SPSS 20 confirmed strong validity (Cronbach's alpha > 0.7), and a paired sample T-test demonstrated that employees found the training effective (Borate 2014). The study further revealed that training improved employee skills, performance, and alignment with organizational goals, reinforcing the idea that training and development programs are valuable investments for companies (Borate 2014).

Lastly, sales training contributes to long-term brand consistency and trust. When all employees communicate a unified message to customers, it not only enhances customer perception and loyalty but also creates a competitive advantage for the organization. By aligning sales techniques, communication strategies, and customer interactions, companies can maximize revenue, improve employee satisfaction, and achieve sustained business growth (Business Money 2024).

2.3 Sales and Marketing: Integration

Integrating sales and marketing is crucial for any organization's success, impacting customer satisfaction, trust, loyalty, and long-term relationships (Madhani 2015). This collaboration aligns goals, improves communication, and resolves conflicts, leading to enhanced business performance, competitive advantage, and increased customer lifetime value (CLV). Studies show that effective integration boosts profitability, market responsiveness, and adaptability, overcoming functional boundaries and fostering a customer-focused approach (Madhani 2015). Ultimately, sales and marketing integration is a key driver for financial and operating performance, ensuring promises made are delivered and customer needs are met efficiently.

The sales and marketing interface has a direct and significant impact on customers and the revenue-earning potential of the organization. Collaboration between sales and marketing may be important in reducing inter-functional conflict and creating high performance. There is a need to have collaboration between sales and marketing to alleviate their behavioral conflicts. Both sales and marketing may be following their own agendas, creating conflict, coordination problem, and ultimately great tension between the two groups (Madhani 2015). These issues can negatively characterize the interface between sales and marketing and may lead to conflict that is detrimental to collaboration (Madhani 2015).

Both sales and marketing serve customers, with sales traditionally performing tactical tasks such as contacting customers, executing marketing strategies, and closing the sale, while marketing provides support to salespeople and builds a consistent brand image (Matthyssens 2006). The success of an organization requires seamless integration of its functional teams. The overcoming of functional boundaries and the development of cross-functional teams as important facets of customer focused organizations (Homburg 2012). Collaboration between sales and marketing in B2B setting and found that it is positively related to enhanced business performance (Madhani 2015). Empirical studies confirm that collaboration between sales and marketing has a positive and significant impact on both market orientation and business performance (Madhani 2015).

Sales and marketing are distinct functions within an organization and usually have different goal orientations (Homburg 2012). The sales-marketing interface may exhibit many negative features and are characterized by poor coordination, miscommunications, conflict, noncooperation, signs of frustration, distrust and dissatisfaction with the other group's performance, disharmony, and poor understanding of each other's roles, which inhibits achieving the benefits of collaboration (Jobber 2002). With sales and marketing collaboration, firms will outperform competition; create added value as well as customer satisfaction.

2.4 The Role of Sales and Marketing Integration in Improving Strategic Responsiveness to Market Change

A proposed model suggests that close interaction and collaboration between sales and marketing lead to better market intelligence and strategic responses (Lyus 2011). Lyus' pilot survey supports the hypothesis that integration improves the ability to gather market intelligence and adapt to market changes. Smaller organizations tend to show higher integration and responsiveness. The study highlights the importance of sales and marketing working together to stay competitive and responsive in today's fast-paced market (Lyus 2011).

Increasingly, companies are exploring the advantages of integrating sales with marketing, an approach which has been positively linked with improvements in business performance. This explores a specific aspect of the connection between sales and marketing integration and better performance; specifically, whether the integration of the sales and marketing functions in B2B organizations facilitate the development and implementation of successful new strategies in response to market change. While organizations are under pressure to change, their salespeople are in turn under pressure to implement the necessary strategies in the marketplace to ensure these changes happen. The salesforce is instrumental in both the formation and implementation of strategic plans. Through their connection with the market, they are most aware of new developments from competitors and changing customer needs. This information can be accumulated and analyzed by the marketing function to develop appropriate strategic responses, which the sales function then needs to translate into action. The marketing function will not be able to perform adequately unless it is sufficiently connected with what is happening in the marketplace (Lyus 2011). It has been noticed that marketing departments sometimes have a low level of knowledge of the market and products, and that there is insufficient sharing of information between sales and marketing (Homburg 2012).

So, if sales and marketing do not integrate adequately, they cannot observe and react to changes in the market. A high level of integration between marketing and sales could make the organization very responsive to market dynamics. Salespeople that have built up good relationships with their customers are better positioned to learn about competitors' products, pricing and projects, as well as customers' new projects, long-term behavior and preferences (Lyus 2011) . The salesforce is a key component of the change process as it informs the organization of external opportunities and threats. There are three definitions of integration: interaction, where there is communication and information is exchanged between the two functions; collaboration, where resources are shared and cross-functional teams work towards shared goals, and composite, which is a hybrid of the two (Lyus 2011). Genuine integration of sales and marketing can be distinguished from simple coexistence and communication. There is now some convincing empirical evidence that integrating sales and marketing positively affects business performance (Lyus 2011).

2.5 Sales and Marketing Integration: A Proposed Framework

Businesses respond to competitive pressures, shortening product life cycles, and heightened customer demands by flattening their organizations and stimulating more teamwork between functional areas (Rouzies 2005). Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) reflects this trend in marketing, emphasizing the coordination of marketing communications activities. Coordinating sales and marketing functions improves the effectiveness of both areas. Senior executives identify sales and marketing integration as crucial for improving sales performance and addressing major organizational issues. Structural differences, incentives, and work environments further contribute to the challenges in integration. Conceptual Framework: The framework includes structural approaches, process/systems, culture, and people to improve integration and firm performance (Rouzies 2005). Developing a collaborative culture and shared objectives is crucial for successful integration. Strategic training programs can address mind-set differences and improve cooperation (Rouzies 2005).

2.6 When Sales and Marketing Align: Impact on Performance

Companies can benefit from aligning their sales and marketing teams. Both sales and marketing have critically important roles in the revenue generation portion of business (Peterson 2015). Typically, these two functions experience conflicts due to different goals and customer engagement strategies. The primary reasons for conflict are that sales focuses on immediate sales and customer satisfaction, but marketing focuses on long term growth strategies (Peterson 2015). Salespeople often feel like the marketing team doesn't understand markets or customers whereas the marketing team doesn't feel like the sales team follows strategic guidelines that would increase revenue (Peterson 2015).

By analyzing a survey with over 800 respondents from different industries, it was revealed that alignment within the sales and marketing teams will improve performance across eight key areas (Peterson 2015). Overall, the impact of alignment of the two teams would see improvements in the following eight key areas: Growth in qualified leads, higher conversion rates, new accounts acquisitions, improved forecasting, better customer retention rates, growth in sales, revenue/margin growth, and growth in overall sales (Peterson 2015). When the sales and marketing teams work together, there are overall better outcomes for businesses. The author recommends that company leaders should prioritize sales and marketing, ensuring both functions collaborate effectively to drive performance. In addition, the author believes if organizations implement systems that encourage both teams to collaborate, that will minimize conflict (Peterson 2015).

2.7 Unleash Breakthrough Profits by Unifying Your Sales and Marketing

By collaborating, sales and marketing can boost each team's overall impact (Gardner 2017). Sales teams can provide valuable insights into customer needs, but the marketing team can help prepare salespeople with information and message consistency. Message consistency helps with brand uniformity and helps customers to align with products and services. It has been demonstrated that when the marketing team makes the promotional content for sales meetings, customer engagement and sales increase (Gardner 2017). To improve involvement with both teams, sales teams should be asked to provide more information and feedback about customer interactions (Gardner 2017). This would enhance the overall marketing strategy because of the added insights from the sales team. Overall, combining both teams can increase consistency, improve customer engagement, and drive higher profits (Gardner 2017).

There is a large potential for achieving profitable business results from employee training because it raises employees' standard of performance and efficiency (Phillips 2016). When organizations support employees' learning and development, organizations can increase their ROI and performance improvement (Phillips 2016). Cost profiling is also associated with employee development because many corporations incorporate training costs have some of their operational costs reduced over time due to increased efficiencies (Zafar 2024).

2.8 Sales and Marketing Integration: Enhancing Competitive Advantages

Collaboration between the sales and marketing teams is vitally important for businesses. With improved collaboration, businesses can strengthen competitive advantage (Madhani 2016). Sales and marketing typically lack cooperation due to differences in culture, poor communication, and different goals (Madhani 2016). Sales teams focus on aligning short-term tactical activities- like customer contact and closing deals. The marketing department focuses on goals with long -term strategic projects that build the company's brand.

When collaboration between sales and marketing in B2B settings has been studied, it was found that it positively related to enhanced business performance (Madhani 2016) . Research has shown that effective collaboration between sales and marketing is strongly influenced by several key factors: supportive senior leadership, reduced conflict between departments, improved communication, a culture of organizational learning, and strong market intelligence systems (Madhani 2016). Empirical studies have confirmed that collaboration between sales and marketing has a positive and significant impact on both market orientation and business performance. This lack of cooperation typically results in turf wars, lack of role clarity and misalignment of strategic objectives (Madhani 2016).

Both teams have separate roles, and it is important to leave their roles separate. It is not necessary to physically combine both teams to improve communication and collaboration. Instead, senior leadership needs to meet the following key drivers: leaning orientation, job rotation, cross- functional teams, performance and reward matrix, organization culture, market orientation and organizational strategy (Madhani 2016). Once those key drivers are met, then leadership can begin to work on integrating both teams. To improve company performance, integration is essential. The following model for integrating sales and marketing is recommended: outlining sales and marketing activities, defining processes and parameters, and the focus should be on how marketing can benefit sales and how information flows back to the marketing team. If companies can improve collaboration at any level, there will be an immediate boost to the bottom line (Madhani 2016).

2.9 Sales and Marketing Integration: Enhancing Customer Value

Typically, integrated teams lead to higher revenues, better customer retention and a growth in sales. Both teams typically operate in silos, which leads to conflicts and poor coordination. The most common issues between the two teams are different priorities, separate identities, and lack of cross-functional understanding (Madhani 2021). In addition, both teams have different roles, but their end goals should be the same- driving shareholder value. Sales are often focused on short-term goals like increasing sales and customer interactions. Marketing is focused on long-term, strategic market-wide activities that will increase the brand’s reputation. By integrating both teams, companies will experience enhanced customer satisfaction, retention, and better bottom lines (Madhani 2021). Overall, effective integration leads to greater company performance.

CHAPTER III: THEORIES

3.1 Organizational Learning Theory

Organizational Learning Theory (OLT) is the theory of how different organizations grow and innovate to better respond to consumers and shareholders. Essentially, OLT claims that if organizations want to remain competitive in the marketplace, they must grow through continuous change. Some of the key elements of OLT are single and double loop learning, knowledge creation and transfer, mental models, learning culture, and feedback loops (March 1988).

Single-loop learning is the process of detecting errors and making immediate corrections without understanding what caused the initial error (March 1988). This can be problematic because this is not correcting the actual mistake but rather providing a quick solution. Double-loop learning is the process of finding an error and then investigating the cause. Typically, this process emphasizes innovation and long-term process changes to avoid subsequent errors in the future. Knowledge creation and transfer typically occurs when the organization is heavily dependent on creating new knowledge that drives value. This could be through research and development, hiring, or improved training processes. Although this is a valuable tool, once the knowledge is created, it must be spread throughout the organization to really be impactful (March 1988). With the mental model's approach, employees have ingrained assumptions or beliefs that guide their decision making (March 1988). This element of OLT can be extremely problematic as the organization grows and develops; these individuals might not change their viewpoint. Additionally, hiring employees based on ingrained assumptions or beliefs does not guarantee future success. Another aspect to OLT, is the learning culture. Organizations that foster learning, curiosity and reflection empower employees to learn from successes and failures (March 1988). This element of OLT is important for all organizations, as typically, there are new styles and processes of completing tasks. The last key element of OLT is feedback loops. Feedback loops are important for organizations because they allow them to discover what worked and what did not work (March 1988).

Training programs can be an important piece of the knowledge creation and transfer process (March 1988). Strategically training sales and marketing teams would allow for the alignment of training and sharing of knowledge. Sales professionals would be able to share best practices for selling or consumer insights from the marketplace. The marketing team would be able to help the sales team align their overall message to encourage unity across all customer touch points. By creating a training program that cross trained both professions, each team would be better equipped to drive shareholder value because they would be aligned on goals and customer strategies. Overall, OLT suggests that providing ongoing training and development can increase individual and organizational knowledge that will increase overall company value (March 1988). Cross training the sales and marketing team would also implement double-loop learning. Instead of continuing to question the division between the two teams, organizations would investigate the problem and provide a solution. The problem would be lack of alignment and communication between sales and marketing and the solution would be cross training or team integration (Haamann 2018). By aligning both teams, organizations would be able to create a cross-functional team that would generate better insights and results. In addition, OLT suggests that a key element for sustained business growth is establishing feedback loops (March 1988). With an integrated sales and marketing team, that would be achievable. The sales team would be able to provide consistent and reliable information to the marketing team about customer feedback to products. The marketing team would be able to adjust their strategic marketing plan or even adjust product marketing plan to improve sales targets. Integrating both sales and marketing requires a learning culture where employees can share knowledge and best practices with other teams (March 1988). OLT emphasizes that a learning culture is continuous and would need to continue to evolve (March 1988). Providing ongoing training and encouraging collaboration with an alignment of strategies would be the quickest way to implement a learning culture (Haamann 2018).

OLT provides a better understanding of how organizations choose to grow and adapt. Applying different strategies of OLT, can show how integrating sales and marketing teams can drive business growth. Organizations who foster a culture of learning and knowledge sharing will continue to grow while other firms will become stagnant.

3.2 Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory (HCT) is the summary of skills, knowledge and traits of humans that are crucial for production and that are acquired through education and training (Fleischhauer 2007). Investments in HCT are expected to increase overall business returns to exceed costs like tuition and on the job training (Fleischhauer 2007). The theory is rooted in the idea that these investments will increase the individuals' overall productivity and therefore increase the firm's revenue (Fleischhauer 2007). More research has been found that links human capital and financial performance to the importance of training employees (Zafar 2024). Overall, organizations benefit can benefit from investing in human capital due to increased efficiency and competitiveness (Fleischhauer 2007).

According to HCT, training programs are a key part of increasing knowledge (Fleischhauer 2007). Training programs typically require investment from the company but can increase overall revenue by having a more efficient and impactful team (Fleischhauer

2007). Increasing training for employees enables them to acquire new skills, improve collaboration, and adopt more efficient and effective working practices. This would lead to more sustained business growth for a longer period. Employee developmental outcomes are beneficial to also reducing organization expenses which can come from higher rates of turnover or less competency (Zafar 2024). Using training programs to build capabilities that enhance business performance and decrease waste help bring down operating costs (Zafar 2024). Training programs also have shown to boost employee commitment to companies and morale both of which have shown to boost financial performance (Zafar 2024). This is due to more employees achieving promotions and development of their careers within the company rather than securing promotions outside of the firm (Zafar 2024).

HCT also emphasizes the importance between human capital and overall firm performance (Fleischhauer 2007). When a firm invests in the development of both sales and marketing, the firm can leverage both teams to generate more value. Both teams would have aligned strategies and goals which would increase customer satisfaction. Integrating both teams is a strategic move that would require more departments to work collaboratively. To have successful integration of both teams, training programs would be imperative to ensure long term success. Integrating both teams would lead to better resource allocation, improved processes, and a better market impact. HCT also stresses the importance of continuous development (Fleischhauer 2007). By investing in training, firms are committed to developing employees which enables employees to remain adaptable to market conditions. According to HCT, when employees feel like organizations are invested in their growth and development, employees are more likely to be engaged (Fleischhauer

2007). By investing in strategic training programs, companies are more likely to retain top talent (Fleischhauer 2007).

HCT provides a strong foundation for why integrating sales and marketing teams is important. Investing in human capital, through strategic training programs, makes firms more efficient and improves revenue.

CHAPTER IV: METHODS

4.1 Data and Methodology

Understanding the dynamics between sales and marketing teams requires more than theoretical assumptions. To explore the dynamic between the two teams, the present study used a mixed-methods approach by incorporating original survey data and company specific analysis. Two prominent agriculture companies, Bayer and Merck, were selected as case studies to examine how the integration between sales and marketing functions influences business performance. These companies were selected because both are publicly traded, employees from both companies responded to the survey and both are from similar industries. Both organizations currently operate without cross-functionally trained or strategically integrated sales and marketing teams, offering a valuable baseline for comparison against best-practice recommendations.

To understand the relationship between sales and marketing teams, a survey was developed to capture the experiences of professionals working within these roles. The survey focused on three key areas: the current state of collaboration, the presence and effectiveness of training programs, and whether increased collaboration contributes to improved business outcomes.

4.2 Company Analysis: Bayer and Merck

To support the quantitative portion of the research, an in-depth analysis was conducted on Bayer and Merck. These organizations were chosen due to their operational similarities and because neither currently cross train between sales nor marketing teams. This made them the best choice for exploring the potential benefits of strategic collaboration and training.

Financial and operational data for both companies were sourced from 2024 annual reports (Merck & Co Financial Highlights Package 2024), investor briefings (bayer.com 2025), and industry databases (statista.com 2025). These sources provided key performance indicators such as revenue growth, net income, earnings per share, and segment-level financial performance. In addition to financial data, qualitative insights were gathered from employee survey responses within both companies. This dual approach enabled an assessment of how gaps in team integration and training infrastructure may be influencing broader organizational performance.

4.3 Survey Methods

To broaden the scope beyond company-specific insights, the study collected survey responses from 150 professionals across various industries, roles, and company sizes. The survey was open for one month and was distributed across multiple platforms such as social media sites, National Agricultural Marketing Association members, Kansas State University's Masters of Agribusiness Alumni, and targeted emails to professional networks. The instrument was created in Qualtrics and deemed exempt from the K-State Institution Review Board (IRB). Both the full survey instrument and the IRB exemption documentation can be found in **Appendix A** and **D**, respectively. The survey explored themes such as team collaboration, the structure and frequency of training programs, employee engagement, and perceptions of business performance outcomes. To ensure that the survey would gather the right information, the questions were based on four econometric objectives.

The first objective investigates the impact of integrating sales and marketing teams on business growth. This relationship is modeled using self-reported collaboration scores, industry type, and company size as independent variables, with business growth indicators such as revenue increase, lead conversion rates, and customer acquisition cost serving as dependent variables.

The second objective evaluates the role of strategic training programs in enhancing collaboration between sales and marketing functions. Specifically, the presence of formal training programs and their perceived effectiveness are analyzed alongside company size to assess their influence on reported collaboration improvements.

The third objective explores the long-term impact of continuous training on employee engagement and retention. In this model, training frequency and access to ongoing coaching are assessed in relation to job satisfaction, with the aim of understanding how capability-building efforts affect employee longevity and motivation.

The fourth objective seeks to determine the financial impact of integrating sales and marketing functions in combination with strategic training investment. Financial performance is proxied by the number of business outcomes reported as positively influenced, such as profitability, ROI, and revenue growth. In this model, collaboration scores, estimated training investment, and perceived business value are used as explanatory variables.

Together, these four models form the analytical framework of this study, offering a comprehensive view of how organizational structure, team alignment, and training investments influence both employee and business performance. By combining company-specific context with broader, cross-industry insights, the research aims to provide data-driven recommendations for aligning sales and marketing functions in support of long-term growth.

A total of 150 responses were received, the majority of which came from sales and marketing professionals, with a small percentage representing adjacent functions such as customer support and consulting. Respondents largely perceived that collaboration between sales and marketing had a positive impact on business performance. Many linked stronger alignments between the two teams to increased revenue, enhanced customer satisfaction, and shorter sales cycles. Additional areas of improvement included operational efficiency and employee morale. When asked to identify specific outcomes improved by collaboration, top responses included lead quality, revenue growth, market positioning, and overall customer experience.

Respondents also provided suggestions for how collaboration could be improved. Common themes included the need for regular joint strategy sessions, shared KPIs, and clearer communication between teams. A recurring recommendation was the implementation of structured training programs that support cross-functional collaboration, particularly through scenario-based training, advanced CRM skills, and integrated onboarding programs. While some organizations reported success with mentorship and third-party coaching initiatives, many respondents highlighted a lack of long-term follow-up or ongoing coaching that limited the lasting impact of these efforts.

Additionally, participants noted that poorly structured or overly frequent collaboration could become inefficient. Several respondents emphasized the need for intentional integration supported by clear structure, rather than an excessive number of unproductive meetings. One participant reported that collaboration had to be scaled back within their organization because it became too time-consuming without appropriate coordination.

CHAPTER V: RESULTS

5.1 Company Analysis Results

In 2024, Bayer reported total revenue of €46.6 billion, representing a 2.2% decline from the previous year (bayer.com 2025). The company posted a net loss of €2.552 billion and experienced significant underperformance in its Crop Science division, contributing to a reduction in EBITDA and continued negative earnings per share (bayer.com 2025). In contrast, Merck demonstrated strong financial performance, achieving a 7% increase in global revenue and growth within its pharmaceutical division (merck.com 2025). These financial trends mirror the patterns uncovered in survey responses from employees at both firms. While both companies leverage CRM systems and digital analytics, responses revealed gaps in communication between field sales and marketing teams, and a lack of formal training programs aimed at improving cross-functional collaboration. The entire financial performance for both Bayer and Merck can be viewed in **Appendix B**.

5.2 Survey Results Overview

These findings directly support the regression models developed for this thesis. For example, in Objective 1, which explores the relationship between sales-marketing collaboration and business growth, company size and collaboration score emerged as key predictors. Objective 2, which evaluates the role of strategic training in improving collaboration, as both companies reported a lack in consistent training infrastructure. The absence of coaching, mentorship, and scenario-based programs appears to correlate with lower collaboration improvement scores in the data. In Objective 3, training frequency and coaching availability were modeled as predictors of job satisfaction and employee retention. Survey responses from Bayer and Merck employees suggest that underinvestment in these areas may be limiting employee engagement and tenure. Finally, in Objective 4, which investigates the financial impact of collaboration and training, training investment emerged as a statistically significant predictor of positive business outcomes. This is consistent with Merck's stronger performance, both financially and in employee-reported indicators, suggesting a link between strategic capability-building and profitability.

Table 5.1: Respondent Demographics and Role Distribution

Company Size		Revenue Code	
Mean	3.096153846	Mean	3.576923077
Standard Error	0.2166863	Standard Error	0.156185086
Median	3	Median	4
Mode	5	Mode	5
Standard Deviation	1.562547134	Standard Deviation	1.126266674
Sample Variance	2.441553544	Sample Variance	1.268476621
Kurtosis	-1.6007052	Kurtosis	-1.356256394
Skewness	0.026911806	Skewness	-0.113514679
Range	4	Range	3
Minimum	1	Minimum	2
Maximum	5	Maximum	5
Sum	161	Sum	186
Count	52	Count	52

Commented [LB1]: Units of Revenue and Company Size?

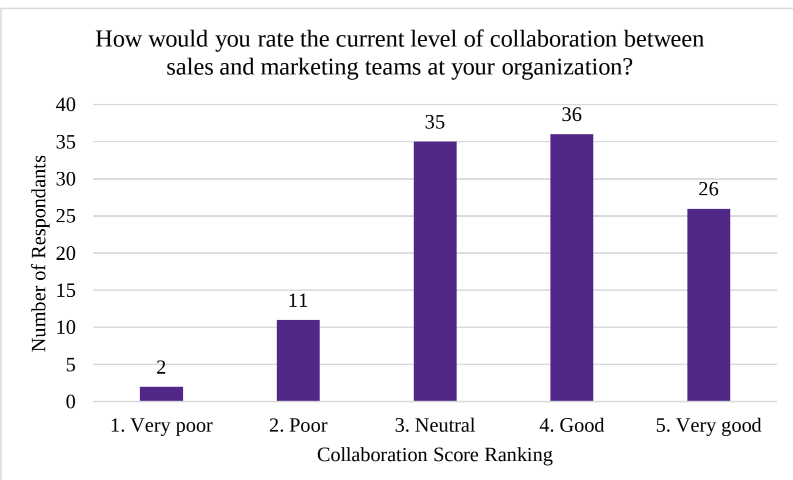
Table 5.1 summarizes respondent information by company size and revenue. The average company size fell within the 2,000-5,000 employee size which correlates with the mean of 3.096. The most frequently reported company size was 10,000-20,000+ employees. There is a slight right sided skew of the distribution and the standard deviation of 1.56. Similarly, the average company revenue fell between $1B-$5B, but the most commonly occurring was $5.1-$25B range. These patterns suggest that even though the data is slightly skewed towards larger organizations, there is a good range of firms in different sizes and revenues. This variety strengths the regression analysis because it shows that how different firms operate with different levels of sales and marketing collaboration.

5.2 Regression Analysis of Survey Results

Survey responses represented a range of company sizes and revenue levels, with a slight skew toward larger organizations. The average company size fell between 2,000 and 5,000 employees, while the most frequently reported size was between 10,000 and 20,000 employees. Revenue data showed a similar trend, with the average falling between $1 billion and $5 billion, and the most common bracket reported as $5.1 billion to $25 billion. The standard deviation for both variables indicates a healthy spread across mid-sized and large enterprises, offering a well-rounded foundation for analyzing how organizational scale influences collaboration, training practices, and business performance outcomes. This distribution supports the validity of the sample for regression analysis, as it captures sufficient variation in key organizational characteristics needed to test the relationships defined in the research objectives.

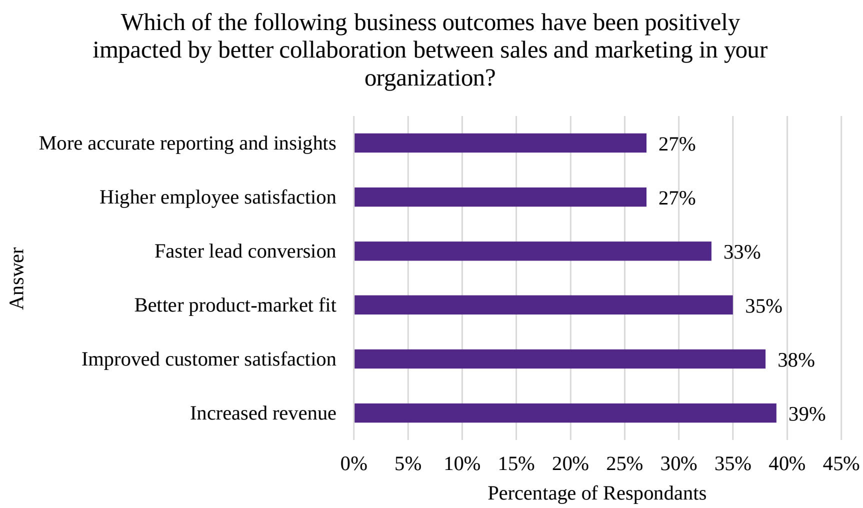
Commented [LB2]: I would mention Table 5.1 within the text. You might highlight again that the data are categorical in Table 5.1.

Figure 5.1: Collaboration Scores Across Respondents



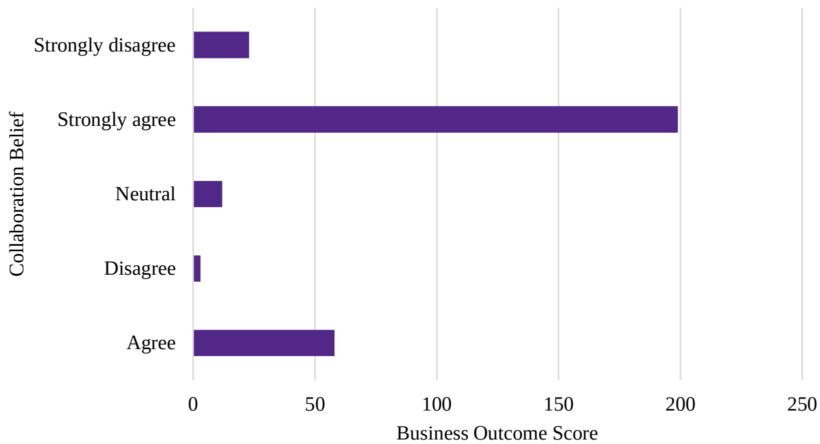
Most respondents rate the current level of collaboration between sales and marketing teams as either neutral, good or very good. This indicates that some respondents do not see a need for improvement. The number of neutral responses does indicate that the collaboration level is not negative or positive enough to make a definable impact on the participant.

Figure 5.2: Frequency of Reported Business Outcomes Impacted by Collaboration



When asked to choose several business outcomes that have been positively impacted by better collaboration, many respondents choose, increased revenue, improved customer satisfaction, and a better product-market fit.

Figure 5.3: Sum of Business Outcome Score by Collaboration Belief

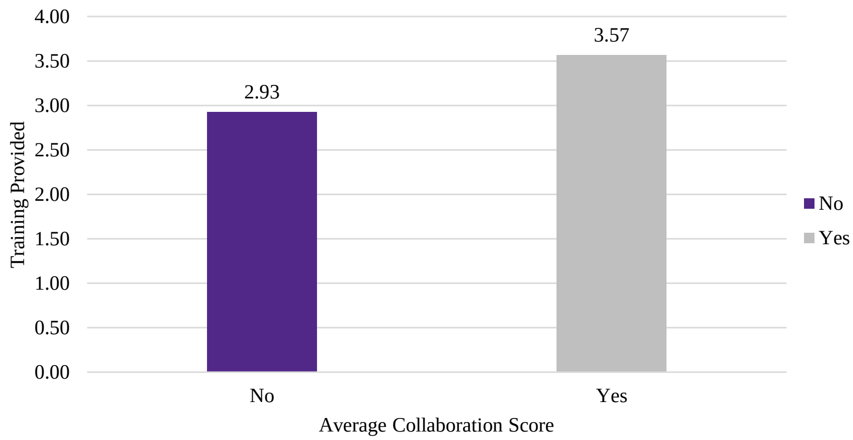


An analysis of the survey data reveals a strong relationship between respondents' belief in sales-marketing collaboration and the number of business outcomes they reported as positively impacted. Business Outcome Score, calculated as the count of outcomes selected by survey respondents, was used as a quantitative measure of perceived business impact. Respondents who selected "Strongly Agree" when asked whether collaboration improves business performance reported the highest average Business Outcome Scores, indicating a broader range of positive effects linked to collaboration. This suggests that stronger alignment and confidence in cross-functional collaboration correlates with greater perceived business benefit.

Figure 5.4: Cross-Tab Analysis: Training vs Perceived Improvement

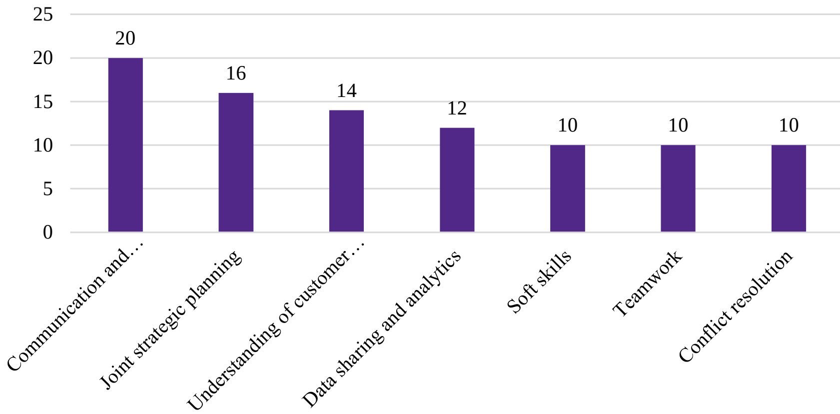
A cross-tabulation of the data revealed a positive association between the presence of formal training programs and perceived improvements in collaboration between sales and marketing teams. Among respondents who reported that their organization provides formal training, a majority also indicated that collaboration improved following the training. In contrast, those who reported no training were less likely to note improvements.

Figure 5.5: Collaboration Area Score by Training Status



To further examine the relationship between training and team integration, a collaboration area score was calculated for each respondent by counting the number of functional areas where they reported active collaboration between sales and marketing. Respondents who received training reported a higher average collaboration score compared to those who did not, suggesting that training may broaden the scope of collaboration across departments.

Figure 5.6: Training Emphasis Response



Survey responses on training emphasis revealed that organizations are currently prioritizing tactical skills over strategic alignment when it comes to developing their sales and marketing teams. Frequently emphasized areas included platform-specific training, such as CRM systems, general onboarding and product knowledge. There was comparatively little emphasis on training that fosters cross-functional collaboration, shared strategic planning, or scenario-based alignment exercises. This suggests that many training programs remain siloed within departments and may not fully prepare teams for the kind of integrated collaboration that drives broader business outcomes.

Figure 5.7: Training Emphasis Cross Compared to Business Success Metric

A comparison between the training areas emphasized by organizations and the metrics used to evaluate collaboration success reveals a significant misalignment between business success metric and training emhasis. While respondents frequently cited business outcomes such as revenue growth, marketing ROI, lead conversion rate, customer retention, and sales cycle length as key performance indicators, these same categories were not identified as primary focuses in current training efforts. In fact, the top five metrics used to assess success did not appear at all among the areas most emphasized in training. This is why "Training Emphasis" does not appear on the graph because the key areas that were listed as business outcomes are not included in training programs. This disconnect suggests that while companies are measuring high-impact business results, they may not be equipping teams with the targeted skills or development opportunities needed to influence those outcomes.

Commented [LB3]: There is no blue on this graph, so you will want to either take out the legend or if there is a second series, go and add the data back.

Table 5.2: Regression Results for the Impact of Integrating Sales and Marketing Teams on Business Growth

SUMMARY OUTPUT

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.316006
R Square	0.09986
Adjusted R Square	0.060293
Standard Error	0.466052
Observations	96

ANOVA

	df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*
Regression	4	2.192749	0.548187	2.523833	0.046229
Residual	91	19.76558	0.217204		
Total	95	21.95833			

	Coefficients	*Standard Error*	*t Stat*	*P-value*	*Lower 95%*	*Upper 95%*
Intercept	0.749228	0.25541	2.933431	0.004242	0.241887	1.25657
Collab Level	-0.01108	0.049741	-0.22269	0.824277	-0.10988	0.087727
Industry Type	-0.01664	0.022682	-0.73369	0.465024	-0.0617	0.028413
Company Size	0.141786	0.050398	2.813315	0.006008	0.041676	0.241896
Company Revenue	-0.12228	0.045618	-2.68044	0.008728	-0.21289	-0.03166

The regression model aligned with Objective 1, examining the impact of integrating sales and marketing teams on business growth, explains approximately 10% of the variance in business growth ($R^2 = 0.100$), based on 96 observations. For this model, the dependent variable, Business Growth Variable, was defined as how many growth-related outcomes respondents selected on survey responses from question 27 of the survey "how do you measure the success of collaboration between sales and marketing". Respondents were prompted to select all of the choices that they believed were important. The independent variables were collaboration level, industry type, company size and revenue. The model is statistically significant at the 5% level, indicating that, collectively, the predictors explain more variance than a model without them. However, its overall explanatory power remains limited, suggesting that other important factors influencing business growth were not captured in this model. Company size and company revenue emerged as the only significant predictors. Larger companies reported greater business growth, while higher revenue firms tended to report lower growth. Contrary to expectations, collaboration level between sales and marketing teams did not have a statistically significant effect on business growth. Similarly, industry type did not show a measurable impact. These findings suggest that while collaboration is often perceived as beneficial, its direct influence on growth may be more complex and potentially moderated by other organizational factors not included in this model.

Table 5.3: Regression Results Evaluating the Role of Strategic Training Programs in Enhancing Collaboration Between Sales and Marketing

SUMMARY OUTPUT

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.888676
R Square	0.789746
Adjusted R Square	0.768814
Standard Error	0.201849
Observations	104

ANOVA

	df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*
Regression	6	14.99758	2.499596	73.62048	0.00
Residual	98	3.992809	0.040743		
Total	104	18.99038			

	Coefficients	*Standard Error*	*t Stat*	*P-value*	*Lower 95%*	*Upper 95%*
Intercept	0.008558	0.084189	0.101648	0.919243	-0.15851	0.175627
Training Provided	0.808083	0.046521	17.3701	0.00	0.715763	0.900404
Training Impact	0.0178	0.01982	0.898082	0.371343	-0.02153	0.057131
Company- Small	-0.0575	0.060988	-0.94274	0.348133	-0.17852	0.063533
Company- Medium	-0.04411	0.064257	-0.68642	0.494072	-0.17162	0.083409
Company- Large	-0.11695	0.065346	-1.78964	0.0766	-0.24662	0.012731

To evaluate the role of strategic training programs in improving collaboration between sales and marketing teams, a multiple regression analysis was conducted using training presence, perceived training effectiveness, and company size as predictors of collaboration improvement. The dependent variable was sales and marketing collaboration score from question 13 on the survey, where respondents were asked to rank on a scale from 1-5 improvements in collaboration. The model demonstrated strong explanatory power, with an R^2 of 0.790 and an adjusted R^2 of 0.769, indicating that approximately 79% of the variance in reported collaboration improvement was explained by the model. The overall model was statistically significant ($F = 73.62$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that the set of predictors meaningfully contributed to explaining changes in collaboration outcomes.

The most impactful and statistically significant predictor was the presence of training. Respondents who reported that their organization provided structured training were, on average, 0.81 points more likely to report improved collaboration, holding all other factors constant. This finding underscores the powerful effect that simply implementing formal training programs can have on perceived cross-functional alignment. The self-rated effectiveness of the training was not a significant predictor ($p = 0.37$), suggesting that the existence of training may be more influential than individual perceptions of its value in driving collaboration gains. Company size did not have a consistent or statistically significant effect. While there was a marginal trend indicating that employees in medium-sized firms were slightly less likely to report collaboration improvements compared to those in large or enterprise organizations ($p = 0.077$), this result was not conclusive. Overall, the results from this model highlight the critical importance of providing structured training programs to enhance interdepartmental collaboration, especially between sales and marketing functions.

Table 5.4: Regression Results Evaluating Long-Term Impact of Continuous Training on Employee Engagement and Retention

SUMMARY OUTPUT

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.951709
R Square	0.90575
Adjusted R Square	0.901903
Standard Error	0.28097
Observations	103

ANOVA

	df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*
Regression	4	74.34845	18.58711	235.4472	0.00
Residual	98	7.736498	0.078944		
Total	102	82.08495			

	Coefficients	*Standard Error*	*t Stat*	*P-value*	*Lower 95%*	*Upper 95%*
Intercept	0.24417	0.144689	1.687554	0.094677	-0.04296	0.531301
Training Frequency	0.511078	0.036251	14.09824	0.000000	0.439139	0.583018
Ongoing Coaching	0.444735	0.041109	10.81852	0.000000	0.363156	0.526314
Job Satisfaction	-0.0215	0.029379	-0.73182	0.466022	-0.0798	0.036801
Training Received	-0.05262	0.069315	-0.75914	0.449591	-0.19017	0.084933

To evaluate objective 3, a regression model was developed that included a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent had received any training. This objective was evaluating the long-term impact of continuous training on employee engagement and retention. The dependent variable, employee engagement and retention score was calculated based on respondents' rankings of Question 13, "How have company sponsored training programs impacted the following aspects of employees?". The model is highly explanatory, with an R^2 of 0.90575 and an adjusted R^2 of 0.901903, indicating that approximately 90.6% of the variance in engagement scores was accounted for by the independent variables. The overall model was statistically significant ($F = 235.45$, $p < 0.001$), which confirmed the relationship between training variables and employee engagement.

Among the coefficients, training frequency and ongoing coaching availability had statistically significant effects on engagement. Specifically, a one-point increase in training frequency was associated with a 0.51-point increase in engagement, while a similar increase in ongoing coaching corresponded with a 0.45-point gain. These results suggest that consistent and strategic training programs are key drivers of long-term employee commitment and motivation.

In contrast, job satisfaction and the dummy variable for training received were not statistically significant. This indicates that the presence of training does not independently impact engagement. The overall quality and consistency of training, especially when paired with ongoing coaching, produces measurable improvements. These findings underscore the importance of strategic, continuous training programs, reinforcing that employee engagement is most effectively influenced through sustained developmental efforts.

Table 5.5: Regression Result Evaluating the Financial Impact of Integrating Sales and Marketing in Combination with Strategic Training Investment

SUMMARY OUTPUT

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.200692
R Square	0.040277
Adjusted R Square	0.006798
Standard Error	1.756593
Observations	90

ANOVA

	df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*
Regression	3	11.13662	3.712207	1.203066	0.313583
Residual	86	265.3634	3.085621		
Total	89	276.5			

	Coefficients	*Standard Error*	*t Stat*	*P-value*	*Lower 95%*	*Upper 95%*
Intercept	1.284724	0.930316	1.380955	0.170871	-0.56468	3.134131
Collaboration Score	0.126361	0.183002	0.690492	0.491744	-0.23743	0.490157
Training Investment	0.355773	0.205438	1.731781	0.086898	-0.05262	0.76417
Training Received	-0.12914	0.416527	-0.31004	0.757278	-0.95717	0.698887

To evaluate Objective 4, the dependent variable, Business Outcome Score, was constructed as a proxy for financial performance by counting the number of business outcomes respondents identified as positively impacted. Respondents were asked to select all of the business outcomes that were positively impacted by better collaboration between sales and marketing. Independent variables included collaboration score, training investment and a dummy variable for whether formal training was provided.

The model demonstrated low explanatory power, with an R^2 of 0.04 and an adjusted R^2 of 0.007, suggesting that only 4% of the variation in business outcome scores could be explained by the predictors. The overall model was not statistically significant ($F = 1.20$, $p = 0.314$), indicating that the included variables did not collectively predict financial outcomes better than chance. However, training investment was marginally significant ($p = 0.087$), suggesting a positive relationship between the quality of training and improved business outcomes. Collaboration and training program scores were not statistically significant, implying that quality and strategic delivery of training may matter more than its existence alone.

These results reinforce that financial impact is not solely driven by structural integration or surface-level training, but by the depth, relevance, and execution of strategic development initiatives. Future research could benefit from additional organizational variables, such as industry type, team structure, or leadership involvement, to better isolate the drivers of financial success in integrated sales and marketing environments.

5.3 Survey Results: Key Takeaways

The data reveals that training remains one of the most critical gaps in effective sales-marketing collaboration. About 70% of respondents, reported that their organizations do not offer structured training programs focused on cross-functional integration. Even among companies that do provide training, many programs lack important components such as follow-up coaching, real-world application, and long-term engagement strategies, limiting their effectiveness. One consistent theme throughout the responses was the importance of data-driven decision-making. Participants emphasized the need for both sales and marketing teams to be trained together on CRM systems, analytics platforms, and digital selling tools. These shared skills not only improve efficiency but also help establish a common language across departments.

In addition, the role of leadership and organizational alignment emerged as a major driver of successful collaboration. Respondents consistently cited the need for clear communication, shared KPIs, and executive-level support. Companies with strategic, leadership-backed collaboration frameworks were far more likely to report positive outcomes. While tools like CRMs were noted as helpful in some cases, other organizations lacked CRM systems altogether which highlighted an area for improvement in sales-marketing integration. Finally, the results suggest that while collaboration is essential, it must be balanced with operational efficiency. Excessive or poorly structured meetings can hinder productivity which highlights the need for efficient collaboration. Together, these insights suggest that successful integration depends on willingness to collaborate, training, tools, leadership, and structure to make that collaboration meaningful and sustainable.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Emerging Technologies

Emerging technologies such as CRM systems and Artificial Intelligence (AI) play a role in optimizing business growth by enhancing the integration of sales and marketing teams through strategic training programs. CRM platforms, like Salesforce and HubSpot, centralize customer data, enabling sales and marketing professionals to collaborate by sharing insights on customer behavior, preferences, and purchasing history. This fosters alignment in campaigns and targeting high-value leads, which drives growth. AI-powered tools such as predictive analytics, chatbots, and lead scoring algorithms can automate repetitive tasks which allows teams to focus on nurturing customer relationships. Training programs designed to integrate these technologies ensures that these teams not only adopt these tools effectively but also develop the skills needed to leverage their full potential. By bridging knowledge gaps, these programs enhance team collaboration, improve customer connectivity, and ultimately drive sustainable business growth.

Emerging technologies are being used to capture consumer attention and improve experiences (Forbes Magazine 2024). While technology can be flashy and impressive, it must be able to meet consumers’ needs. AI can be used to answer consumers' questions or resolve issues quicker (Forbes Magazine 2024). Leveraging AI can also allow consumers to create immersive experiences that increase sales- this could be from virtual try-on experiences or product demonstrations (Forbes Magazine 2024). Using AI in this manner improves the consumer experience and it helps drive decision-making. This helps the consumer visual the product better, which can increase sales. Once consumer take advantage of immersive experiences, companies can use that data to create personalized ads, shopping guides or experiences. These insights can be sorted with a CRM system and marketing and sales professionals can determine how better to refine their product or messaging to increase revenue.

6.2 Strategic Training Program Template

To foster collaboration between sales and marketing professionals, I have developed a sample strategic training program based on my research. This program has an emphasis on aligning goals, improving communication and skills. The entirety of the strategic training program template can be found in **Appendix C**. To develop the outline of the program, I used industry research, survey insights and personal experience.

The overarching goal of the program is to enhance customer engagement, increase revenue and drive company sales. This program is designed for a medium sized corporation with a total employee size between 5,000-10,000, with 100 of the total employees being sales or marketing professionals. The duration of the training program will be 6 months, but it would be a phased approach. The program would have different classes of professionals, each with the same number of employees from each group. The classes would be instructed in phases and would be composed on in person workshops, virtual sessions, and self-paced modules. The company has the option to decide which parts of the program will be conducted in person or virtually, but phases 2 and 3 are typically held in person. For phase 1, outside trained facilitators would be used, and phase 2 and 3 would have trained facilitator support, but would require company executives to lead the workshops and projects.

The findings presented in this chapter demonstrate the multifaceted relationship between sales-marketing collaboration, strategic training programs, and business performance. Through a combination of financial benchmarking, survey data, and regression analysis, this study offers evidence that structured training and organizational alignment can meaningfully influence collaboration outcomes and long-term business growth. While some models showed limited explanatory power, each regression revealed at least one significant predictor. For many of the models, it was training investment and job satisfaction. These results reinforce the idea that effective collaboration must be supported through investment in people, systems, and frameworks.

Survey insights further emphasized that companies often measure success through key performance indicators like revenue growth and lead conversion. However, few companies align their training programs with those outcomes. This disconnect presents a clear opportunity for organizations to refine their training efforts to better support goals. Qualitative responses highlighted the importance of executive support, balanced collaboration structures, and CRM adoption.

Both the quantitative and qualitative results present a compelling case for integrating sales and marketing teams, with the support of targeted training, which can drive measurable improvements in financial performance.

6.3 Limitations of Survey Data

The survey data collected for this study focused on sales and marketing integration and company training programs. With self-reported data, a key limitation is personal perception versus company KPIs. Individuals relay their personal perceptions rather than objective company performance metrics. In addition, the survey data was focused on sales and marketing integration broadly without distinguishing between B2B and B2C companies or between service or product-oriented companies. For future research, it would be helpful to have data separated into these segments. There could be additional implications for the level of collaboration within different types of companies, which would provide a deeper understanding of overall sales and marketing integration. Another limitation was not all survey respondents answered every question. Requiring responses in future surveys would strength the dataset.

6.4 Recommendations for Firms Looking to Improve Sales-Marketing Collaboration Based on Survey Results

For organizations aiming to strengthen the relationship between their sales and marketing teams, this research suggests several strategies based in data and employee insights. First, companies should prioritize the development of structured, scenario-based training programs that integrate both departments. These programs should go beyond onboarding and include real-world situations.

Additionally, it is important to align KPIs across teams. When sales and marketing are evaluated against shared business goals, they are more likely to operate as strategic partners rather than siloed units. Supporting this alignment requires the adoption of CRM systems and tools that centralize customer data and enable better cross collaboration.

Leadership involvement plays a crucial role in collaboration. Executive sponsorship helps set the tone from the top, ensuring that collaborative behaviors are recognized and encouraged. It is also important to balance collaboration with productivity. Excessive meetings or undefined collaborative efforts can lead to inefficiency. To address this, firms should implement structured frameworks that outline when and how collaboration should occur.

Finally, companies should focus on enhancing communication channels and building regular feedback loops. Whether through joint team meetings, shared strategy documents, or integrated digital platforms, communication must be consistent and purposeful. Ongoing evaluation of collaboration efforts ensures that organizations can adapt, improve, and sustain collaboration over the long term.

Together, these recommendations offer a roadmap for companies that seek to not only improve internal alignment between sales and marketing but also drive stronger, more measurable business outcomes as a result.

The survey responses clearly demonstrate the critical role collaboration plays in business growth and operational efficiency. The desire for practical, scenario-based training and aligned KPIs reflects a need for deeper integration and structured development programs. The recognition of shorter sales cycles and improved lead quality underscores the tangible benefits of collaboration.

This study highlights the critical role of integrated sales and marketing teams in optimizing business growth, with a particular focus on how strategic training programs can enhance collaboration. The survey results reveal that while many organizations recognize the benefits of sales-marketing alignment significant challenges remain. These include inconsistent collaboration, lack of structured training, and limited data-sharing across departments. Companies like Bayer and Merck provide valuable case studies on how data-driven decision-making, CRM integration, and technical sales enablement can foster stronger cross-functional collaboration. However, even in these well-established firms, gaps in training and long-term engagement strategies highlight the need for more structured development programs.

This research underscores that businesses seeking to improve sales and marketing collaboration must invest in customized, ongoing training programs, implement shared KPIs and communication channels, and leverage technology for seamless integration. By addressing these key factors, companies can create more agile, efficient, and customer-centric teams, driving sustainable business growth in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

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APPENDIX A

Survey Questions and Format

Survey: Sales and Marketing Collaboration and Training Programs
Introduction: Dear Participant,
Thank you for participating in this survey. Your responses will help us better understand how sales and marketing teams collaborate within organizations and the role of training programs in enhancing that collaboration. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete.
Please note that your responses will remain anonymous and will be used solely for research purposes.

Section 1: Demographics and Background Information

- **What industry does your company operate in?**
  - Technology
  - Manufacturing
  - Cooperative
  - Retail (seed or chemical sales)
  - Financial Services
  - Services (agronomist, veterinarian, etc.)
  - Supply (feed, farm goods, etc)
  - Other (please specify) ______
- What company do you work at? (Optional)
- How many employees work at your company?
  - 1-500 employees
  - 500-2,000 employees
  - 2,000-50,00 employees
  - 5000-10,000 employees
  - 10,000-20,000 employees
  - 25,000+
- What is the approximate revenue of your company?
  - Under $1M
  - $1M- $10M

- $11M- $50M
- $51M-$100M
- $100M-$500M
- $501M- $1B
- $1B- $5B
- $5.1B- $25B
- $25.1B+

- What is your current job title or role?
- **What is your current role?**
    - Sales Professional
    - Marketing Professional
    - Other (please specify) ______
- **How long have you been in your current role?**
    - Less than 1 year
    - 1-3 years
    - 4-10 years
    - 11-20 years
    - 20+ years

Section 2: Collaboration Between Sales and Marketing Teams

5. **How would you rate the current level of collaboration between sales and marketing teams at your organization?**
    - 1 - Very poor
    - 2 - Poor
    - 3 - Neutral
    - 4 - Good
    - 5 - Very good

6. **How often do your sales and marketing teams engage in formal meetings to discuss strategy and goals?**

- Never
- Rarely (once per quarter or less)
- Occasionally (monthly)
- Frequently (weekly)
- Constantly (multiple times per week)

7. **Which of the following areas involve collaboration between your sales and marketing teams?** (Select all that apply)

- Lead generation
- Customer segmentation
- Content creation and messaging
- Product launches and promotions
- Customer feedback and insights
- Reporting and analytics
- Other (please specify) ______

8. **How effective is the collaboration between sales and marketing in achieving shared business goals?**

- 1 - Very ineffective
- 2 - Ineffective
- 3 - Neutral
- 4 - Effective
- 5 - Very effective

9. **Please describe as best you can why you ranked effective collaboration as you did in Question 8**

Section 3: Training and Development Programs

10. Does your organization provide formal training programs focused on collaboration between sales and marketing teams?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

11. Who most often provides these trainings?

- Primarily my own organization
- Primarily consultants
- An equal combination of own organization and consultants

12. **If yes, how often are these training programs conducted?**

- Once a year
- Twice a year
- Quarterly
- Monthly
- Ongoing

13. **To what extent do you believe these training programs have improved collaboration between the two teams?**

- 1 - No improvement
- 2 - Minimal improvement
- 3 - Moderate improvement
- 4 - Significant improvement
- 5 - Extremely significant improvement
- Not applicable (no training programs)

14. What do you believe contributes to the effectiveness of training programs?

15. What do you believe is missing from training to make the training more effective?

16.Which areas of training are most emphasized in your organization? (Select all that apply)

- Communication and alignment of goals
- Joint strategic planning
- Understanding of customer journey

- Data sharing and analytics
- Soft skills (e.g., teamwork, conflict resolution)
- Other (please specify) ______

17. Which CRM program does your organization use?

- _______________
- Do not know.

18. What SAP program does your organization use?

- _______________
- Do not know.

19. What additional training or development programs do you believe would benefit the collaboration between sales and marketing teams?

- Open-ended response

Section 4: Business Performance and Outcomes

20. Do you believe that improved collaboration between sales and marketing teams leads to better business outcomes in your organization?

- Strongly disagree.
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree.

21. Which of the following business outcomes have been positively impacted by better collaboration between sales and marketing in your organization? (Select all that apply)

- Increased revenue
- Improved customer satisfaction
- Faster lead conversion
- Better product-market fit
- Higher employee satisfaction
- More accurate reporting and insights
- Other (please specify) ______

22. How do you measure the success of collaboration between sales and marketing teams? (Select all that apply)

- Revenue growth
- Lead conversion rate.
- Customer acquisition cost
- Customer retention rate
- Sales cycle length.
- Marketing ROI
- Other (please specify) ______

Section 5: Final Thoughts

23. In your opinion, what are the biggest barriers to effective collaboration between sales and marketing teams in your organization?

- Lack of communication
- Misaligned goals and KPIs
- Insufficient training
- Limited resources or technology
- Cultural differences between teams
- All of the above
- None of the above
- Other (please specify) ______

24. What recommendations would you give for improving sales and marketing collaboration in your organization?

- Open-ended response

APPENDIX B

Company Analysis:

- **Bayer:** Some regional and field-level sales teams still operate independently, without regular engagement with marketing.
- **Merck:** The disconnect between some sales teams and marketing suggests that formal training programs could improve overall effectiveness.
- **Both Companies:** While they have CRM systems and analytics tools, there are opportunities to improve real-time data sharing between sales and marketing teams.

Key Takeaways for Sales & Marketing Integration

1. Business Growth KPIs

- Bayer & Merck respondents linked improved sales-marketing collaboration to revenue growth, shorter sales cycles, and higher lead quality.
- However, inconsistent collaboration across regions and departments limits scalability of these benefits.

2. Sales & Marketing Team Integration KPIs

- Both companies use CRM tools, but sales-marketing collaboration is stronger in HQ and structured teams than in field-based roles.
- Inconsistent communication remains a barrier to maximizing collaboration benefits.

3. Strategic Training Program KPIs

- Respondents at both companies highlighted a lack of structured training programs for cross-team collaboration.
- Long-term coaching, scenario-based training, and mentorship programs could improve effectiveness.

4. Customer-Centric KPIs

- Both companies emphasize technical sales support (scientific and data-backed marketing), which strengthens customer engagement.
- More direct communication between field sales and marketing teams could enhance customer experience.
-

5. Technology Adoption & Utilization KPIs

- Bayer and Merck both leverage CRM tools, data analytics, and automation, but some sales teams lack training in fully utilizing these resources for collaboration.
- Investing in AI-driven analytics and digital integration could further streamline sales-marketing alignment.

Final Insights

- Bayer and Merck both operate with strong cross-functional teams but have opportunities to expand structured training, standardize collaboration at all levels, and improve data-sharing processes.
- More consistent integration across all sales teams—not just in structured HQ roles—could enhance efficiency and business outcomes.

Key performance indicators (KPIs) for Bayer and Merck based on their 2024 financial results:

1. Revenue Growth Rate:

- **Bayer:** In 2024, Bayer reported total sales of €46.6 billion, a decrease of approximately 2.2% from €47.6 billion in 2023. (bayer.com 2025)
- **Merck:** Merck's full-year 2024 worldwide sales were $64.2 billion, reflecting a 7% increase from $60 billion in 2023. (merck.com 2025)

2. Net Income:

- **Bayer:** The company reported a net loss of €2.552 billion in 2024, which is a slight improvement compared to a net loss of €2.941 billion in 2023. (bayer.com 2025)
- **Merck:** Specific net income figures for Merck in 2024 were not detailed in the available sources. However, the company did report a 7% increase in overall sales for the year. (merck.com 2025)

3. Segment Performance:

- **Bayer:**
  - *Pharmaceuticals:* Generated €18.1 billion in revenue in 2024. (Mikulic, statista.com 2025)
  - *Crop Science:* Experienced a 3.6% decline in sales during the third quarter of 2024, significantly impacting the company's overall performance. (Taggert 2025)

- **Merck:**
  - *Pharmaceutical Sales:* Increased by 7% to $57.4 billion in 2024. (merck.com 2025)

4. Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization (EBITDA):

- **Bayer:** EBITDA before special items decreased by 13.5% to €10.123 billion in 2024, down from €11.706 billion in 2023. (bayer.com 2025)

5. Earnings Per Share (EPS):

- **Bayer:** Reported a negative EPS of €2.60 in 2024, slightly improved from a negative €2.99 in 2023. (bayer.com 2025)

APPENDIX C

Program Phases:

Phase 1: Assessment and Goal Alignment

Goal: Establish a baseline understanding of both teams, skill gaps and align goals

Activities:

- 360 Assessment (to be completed before program starts):
  - Surveys and interviews with team members to identify pain points- lead by outside trained facilitators.
  - Analyze data to uncover areas of misalignment.
    - Data will be used to tailor workshop to brainstorm ways to address pain points.
- Kickoff Workshop:
  - Overview of program
  - Present key metrics for success
  - Set shared integrated goals from sales and marketing executives to show alignment
- Strategic Goal Alignment
  - Joint session with team leaders to finalize shared objectives.
  - Establish KPIs and a unified vision of success.

Phase 2: Core Skills Development

Purpose: Build the foundational skills needed for integration, such as communication, data sharing and customer journey mapping.

Activities:

- In Person Workshops
  - Building Bridges: Effective communication between sales and marketing
  - Customer Journey Mapping: Understanding how customers interact across touchpoints.
  - Data- Drive Decision Making: Using CRM and marketing analytics to align strategy. Both teams have to identify, pull and analyze real company data together and present a solution to the group
  - Industry Case Studies: case studies that show problems with sales and marketing teams, and participants need to provide specific feedback and next steps on how to address the issues
- Collaborative Tools Training
  - Train teams how to use shared tools like HubSpot, SalesForce, etc. for seamless data integration.
  - Establish a process for reporting lead quality, sales follow up and ROI metrics.
- Role-Switching Exercise
  - Sales team participates in creating customer personas, campaign messaging, customer focused presentation and product generation.
  - Marketing team participates in sales calls, cold calling, and account management.

- Collaborative problem-solving sessions where sales and marketing must co-create campaign strategies

- Live Customer Challenge Simulations
  - Teams apply training knowledge to solve actual sales-marketing issues within the company

Phase 3: Cross-Functional Projects

Purpose: Enable teams to apply their training in real-world scenarios, fostering collaboration and accountability.

Activities:

1. **Project Teams**
   - Divide participants into 5 cross-functional teams (sales + marketing).
   - Assign a live project, such as launching a new product or penetrating a new market segment.
   - Deliverables include a go-to-market strategy, lead generation plan, and sales pipeline report.
2. **Feedback Loops (Ongoing):**
   - Weekly progress check-ins with team leads and program facilitators.
   - Teams present interim results to leadership for feedback.
3. **Customer Connectivity Workshop:**
   - Focus on aligning messaging and delivery to improve customer experience.

- Case study analysis of companies that excel in customer-centric integration (e.g., Apple, HubSpot).

Phase 4: Evaluation and Continuous Learning

Purpose: Measure the program's effectiveness, share results, and establish a roadmap for continued collaboration.

Activities:

1. **Final Presentations:**
   - Teams present their project outcomes to leadership.
   - Evaluate success based on KPIs like lead conversion rate, campaign ROI, and customer feedback.
2. **Post-Training Surveys:**
   - Assess changes in collaboration, skill levels, and attitudes toward integration.
   - Establish a 3-month and 6- month follow up assessment to measure lasting impact of program and to find gaps
   - Develop a peer accountability system, where team members regularly check in with a designated training partner to apply learned concepts
   - Requirement for leaders to provide structured feedback on how the training has impacted KPIs after 6 months
3. **Continuous Learning Plan:**
   - Establish monthly joint sales-marketing strategy meetings.

- Provide access to ongoing training (e.g., LinkedIn Learning, workshops).
- Create a mentorship program were senior sales and marketing professionals' coach newer employees.
- Quarterly Leadership roundtables where executives lead a cross functional team through different discussions to evaluate effectiveness and identify any additional pain points

Expected Outcomes

1. **Increased Revenue & Shorter Sales Cycles:** Improved lead quality, follow-up efficiency, and faster conversions through better collaboration.
2. **Enhanced Customer Engagement**: Aligned messaging across sales and marketing creates a more seamless customer experience.
3. **Stronger Long-Term Impact:** Structured post-training follow-up ensures sustained collaboration and continuous improvement.
4. **Better Sales-Marketing Alignment**: Real-world applications, such as role-switching exercises and live customer challenges, strengthen mutual understanding and cooperation.
5. **More Inclusive Participation:** Engaging field sales teams and improving CRM proficiency help bridge operational gaps between teams.
6. **Clear Metrics & Accountability:** Regular KPI tracking ensures alignment, measures success, and drives ongoing improvements.

APPENDIX D

TO: Logan Britton Proposal Number: IRB-12628
RE: Proposal Entitled, "Sales and Marketing Collaboration and Training Programs."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects / Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Kansas State University has reviewed the proposal identified above and has determined that it is EXEMPT from further IRB review. This exemption applies only to the proposal - as written – and currently on file with the IRB. Any change potentially affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation and may disqualify the proposal from exemption.

Based upon information provided to the IRB, this activity is exempt under the criteria set forth in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, **45 CFR §104(d), category:Exempt Category 2 Subsection ii.**

Certain research is exempt from the requirements of HHS/OHRP regulations. A determination that research is exempt does not imply that investigators have no ethical responsibilities to subjects in such research; it means only that the regulatory requirements related to IRB review, informed consent, and assurance of compliance do not apply to the research.

Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, the University Research Compliance Office, and if the subjects are KSU students, to the Director of the Student Health Center.

Electronically signed by Lisa Rubin on 02/10/2025 2:46 PM ET