

13 HIGH-TECH CEOS OFFER THEIR PREDICTIONS FOR 2017



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2017 Predictions from LeadMethod CEO Justin Johnson

Channel Revenue Optimization in 2017

In 2017 suppliers that start to leverage data and metrics to optimize their channel partner relationships will see huge gains. Strong results will come when suppliers start to proactively manage and communicate with their channel partners in order to drive more revenue.

Understanding channel partner engagement with leads and opportunities is critical. For example, research conducted by LeadMethod shows that more than 70% of channel partners do not regularly follow up on leads and opportunities that are shared with them. That amounts to a significant number of missed sales.

Why it Matters

"Suppliers that embrace process change and software investments to better engage their channel partners will see significant growth in 2017. We recommend three core strategies: Understanding Channel Engagement, Creating a Process for Channel Feedback, and Providing Training and Sales Coaching"



Justin Johnson CEO [LeadMethod](#)

And what about the feedback from channel partners on leads and opportunities? Did any of the leads turn into opportunities? Did any turn into sales? Suppliers consistently tell us that less than 20% of their channel partners provide them with feedback. A partnership can't work properly when the 2-way communication between suppliers and their channel partners is completely broken.

But, it's no surprise, channel partners are not given an effective tool to give feedback on what happened to the leads. So, there is a major disconnect between suppliers and their channel partners on lead status and sales pipeline analysis.

Suppliers that sell through channel partners must start to focus on the core metrics and activity that contributes to making the most of the partner relationship. Just having channel partners is not enough to maximize revenue potential, the relationship must be built on solid engagement and activity metrics to ensure growth.

Suppliers that embrace process change and software investments to better engage their channel partners will grow by more than 20% in 2017. We recommend three core strategies: Understanding Channel Engagement, Creating a Process for Channel Feedback, and Providing Training and Sales Coaching.

Understanding Channel Partner Engagement

Understanding channel partner engagement is critical in order to measure the effectiveness of partner relationships. Suppliers need to know if and how often channel partners are engaging with leads, opportunities, and repeat clients. For example, suppliers need to clearly understand if leads are being contacted by channel partners, and how fast the initial contact is happening. Also, is the lead being nurtured in a timely and effective way. Having a scorecard of these metrics is critical for measuring the effectiveness of each channel partner and identifying areas that need improvement.

Creating a Process for Channel Partner Feedback

Two-way communication with channel partners is essential for success. But it's so much more than just an annual sales meeting or a quarterly status check-in call. Partners need a process and tool to quickly and easily provide feedback on leads, opportunities, and projects that they are working on.

The process and software must be easy to use and work with channel partner business processes and systems. LeadMethod, for example, is a channel lead management software program that makes it fast and easy for channel partners to provide feedback on leads and opportunities and integrates with all major marketing automation and CRM programs, making the solution really easy for the channel partner.

Providing Training and Sales Coaching

Suppliers have always struggled to engage their channel partners for training, sales coaching and product information. Suppliers offer their partners information on their website, catalog, intranet and some even offer an online partner portal. But partners have to login to a system and take the time to go hunt down the information when they need it. So, because partners don't know where to find a lot of the supporting sales material, they just rely on the knowledge that they have picked up of the products and that often creates challenges and misinformed conversations with clients.

Suppliers need to position sales materials, product information and training when channel partners need it most - when they're following up on a hot sales lead. We call this Partner Sales Enablement, giving partners the right information at the right time so they can close more deals.

In summary, suppliers that embrace process change and software investments to better engage their channel partners will see strong growth in 2017. We recommend three core strategies: Understanding Channel Engagement, Creating a Process for Channel Feedback, and Providing Training and Sales Coaching.

About Justin Johnson and [LeadMethod](#)

Justin Johnson is CEO of LeadMethod, a channel revenue optimization software company. Justin was recently interviewed by Sales Pipeline Radio. Here is the Podcast on 'The Many Challenges of Channel Sales Enablement and Engagement'.

Justin Johnson appeared on Sales Pipeline Radio with Matt Heinz. [The many challenges of channel sales enablement & engagement with Justin Johnson](#)

2017 Predictions from Commence Corp CEO Larry Caretsky

In 2017, we will continue to see significant growth in the utilization of technology to improve business performance. Businesses of all sizes will utilize software solutions like CRM to automate the front office business processes that impact sales execution and customer service. There are three areas that I believe will experience accelerated growth in the next 6-12 months.

About Customer Service

"Companies must make customer service easy for potential buyers by using automated programs that provide answers to frequently asked questions and on-line knowledge base and on-line chat if the purchaser requires human intervention."



Larry Caretsky, CEO of [Commence Corp](#)

Marketing, customer service and e-commerce.

There is nothing new here other than the fact there is now a much greater focus on automating these areas than ever before. Marketing has evolved from old school magazine advertisements, trade show and bulk e-mail to the digital world. Customers today want to buy from companies they have heard of, brands that they trust and hear from others about their buying experience with your firm. This means companies will need to promote their products using electronic media, social sites, display ads and mobile phones. They will also begin to focus on deeper analysis of customer buying trends i.e. what's working with their new digital advertising campaigns and what's not.

Customer service is also evolving.

Customers today are more demanding than ever and often decide on purchasing a product based on how quickly and efficiently they can get answers to their questions. Companies must make this easy for potential buyers by using automated programs that provide answers to frequently asked questions and on-line knowledge base and on-line chat if the purchaser requires human intervention. In addition, the customer has truly become king in today's digital world and will expect to book on line service calls based on their availability and not the availability of the service provider. Those that provide this service will have a significant advantage over those that do not.

Lastly, look for e-commerce to boom as well.

I am not referring to traditional business to consumer or B to C, e-commerce that has been around for a decade or more, but instead business to business B to B, e-commerce.

In fact, this area has been silently growing year after year particularly for companies in the manufacturing sector that are seeking ways to expedite order fulfillment and better manage inventory and their sales channel. This is being done via automated systems that manage new orders and monitor product delivery.

It's an exciting time to be in the technology space which is evolving faster and faster and there are some wonderful opportunities to take advantage of this changing landscape. Mr. Caretsky can be reached at [Commence Corporation](#)

Mr. Caretsky was interviewed on SLMA Radio: [Clearing up the Confusion of Sales Enablement: Caretsky Listen While You Work!](#) and [SLMA Radio: Marketing Enablement?](#)

2017 Predictions from CallidusCloud CEO Leslie Stretch

A/I: Efforts to create a machine learning-based tool to help sales people will speed ahead, but will be met with mixed results because the emphasis will be on the A/I platform rather than the data. Without a rich set of data from a variety of sources, these platforms will offer limited insights of limited effectiveness and will force salespeople to switch back and forth from the A/I platform to traditional computer-based data sources. Until these A/I tools provide context, they may be more trouble than they are worth to the average salesperson.

What Matters



"Sales and marketing believe they're operating efficiently even as the technologies they use – which are often disconnected – continue to re-build data silos and reinforce misalignment. 2017 will be the year when more leading CROs and CMOs start acting more like CIOs by recognizing this trend and taking steps to combat it through greater investment in integration or through the use of better integrated technology stacks."

Leslie Stretch, CEO of [CallidusCloud](#)

IoT: 2017 will see the Internet of Things become an increasingly important topic for salespeople to understand as the technology quietly insinuates itself into more deals. Don't expect a big bang; IoT is already in use in some form or another by 65 percent of companies. As it becomes more widespread, the need for sales to be able to articulate its value to the customer will grow significantly.

Commissions: As measurement of sales performance has become more nuanced and has identified more areas where sales behaviors can be modified, sales managers have discovered they have more levers to use to drive better sales outcomes.

We all know the value of customer experience, for example. Compensating salespeople for their roles in influencing the customer experience for the better helps motivate them to emphasize improving the buying experience. We expect businesses to start aggressively using post-sales surveys to assess the customer experience impact of individual salespeople and to build that measurement into compensation plans.

At the same time, there's little desire to make commissions plans more complex or to make them infinitely granular. Consequently, gamification techniques will become a real and practical part of the compensation landscape, allowing managers to influence more behaviors without overstressing comp plans.

Marketing: Sales and marketing believe they're operating efficiently even as the technologies they use – which are often disconnected – continue to re-build data silos and reinforce misalignment. 2017 will be the year when more leading CROs and CMOs start acting more like CIOs by recognizing this trend and taking steps to combat it through greater investment in integration or through the use of better integrated technology stacks.

Sales Operations: As customers continue to become more empowered by their ability to research purchases on their own, and as customer expectations from salespeople change, sales ops will find 2017 as the year when content management reaches its breaking point without a comprehensive enablement strategy. Because of its growing criticality to sales, responsibility for enablement will shift from marketing to sales ops. The winners will be the teams already thinking about how to best organize and deliver the most pertinent content to very specifically-defined customer types.

Sales Enablement: Delivery of the right sales content for each customer at the moment it is needed is now table stakes. In an information-intensive era, sales enablement is now vital to salespeople as well and any modern platform should offer targeted access to training content, and should provide analytics to help managers better understand the impact and adoption of sales training materials. Enablement should become the central nervous system of your sales organization.

Analytics: Pundits are already seeing 2017 as a big year for business intelligence tool kits. That's a good investment – but they're just tool kits. The trend we see is toward analytical applications that bring in a lot of data and then make it easy for line-of-business people to explore it quickly without the need for writing code or spending a lot of time constructing reporting or analytic processes from components. These solutions will democratize the examination of business data so that it's more important that businesses think about what they want to learn and less important that they have the technical know-how to do the analysis.

Predictive Technology: Companies willing and able to embrace the first generation of predictive tools for sales will recognize an immediate jump in profitability compared to their slower peers. This will be caused by the increase in accuracy in setting quotas, planning territories, and anticipating training needs that predictive technologies will bring, which will result in greater efficiencies across the entire business.

Predictions from Leslie Stretch, CEO of [CallidusCloud](http://CallidusCloud.com) (NASDAQ: CALD)

2017 Predictions from DemandLab's CEO Rhoan Morgan

2017 will be the year of customer journey and engagement. But not by the means or teams we traditionally think of. This will be driven by new capabilities born out of our age of digital transformation and it is no longer an aspirational goal for companies – it's a must do. It's key to advancing business goals, driving revenue and remaining competitive.

The goal of this initiative is to bring marketing, sales and service together through joint interests in increasing revenue, expanding customer lifetime value and deepening the customer relationship.

Why 2017 will be Different



“The goal is to bring marketing, sales and service together through joint interests in increasing revenue, expanding customer lifetime value and deepening the customer relationship... companies must break down business team silos to design superior customer journeys and better manage customer experience by restructuring teams (or introducing new teams).”

Rhoan Morgan, CEO of [DemandLab](#)

What will all of this do? Lower the cost of transactions while operating at volume or scale that was previously unheard of. As information moves into the digital realm, we can apply digital versions of tools, decision making and automation in such staggering amounts at so little cost that a human can barely comprehend it all. This is a 1+1=3 problem that has the potential to bring tremendous value to companies.

To do this, companies must break down business team silos to design superior customer journeys and better manage customer experience by restructuring teams (or introducing new teams). This will not be in the hands of a single team, rather we see a cross functional team that will include IT and finance in addition to the usual suspects. They will focus on enterprise architecture; master data management; and proper analytics to create and drive exceptional customer engagement experiences – and on the terms of today's B2B and B2C customer (their expectations are the same!).

Companies need to keep their eyes on these foundational pieces while also incorporating strategies around mobile, exciting tech like geo-location beacons, artificial intelligence, automation, and very advanced analytics. And lest we forget the customer – we must orchestrate all of this while keeping the customer front and center: their needs, their terms, their time, their attention.

The multiplier effect, when done well, will certainly accelerate revenues for companies this year and beyond. Rhoan Morgan was a guest on SLMA Radio. Listen here. [How Leading Companies Increase Revenue in today's Hyper Competitive Environment!](#)

2017 Predictions from ClickPoint CEO Gabriel Buck

Adapting to Rapid Changes and Meaningful Integrations Are the Key to Success in 2017

Software-as-a-Service providers, especially in the sales category face mounting pressure and stiff competition. What will software and service companies do to overcome these obstacles in 2017 and set themselves apart in a crowded market? More importantly, what will a company that relies on [sales lead management](#) or sales solutions be looking for in 2017 to give them a competitive edge? What does this all mean for salespeople who use these applications?

Why it's Important

“I think you will find more software companies creating alliances and partnerships to offer best of breed applications that are fully integrated. You have already seen this happen with major CRM players that have deeper integrations with marketing automation platforms, communication, and lead management systems. I know of telephony providers that have integrated with customer communication platforms, anticipating the increased demand of lightning fast communication in non-traditional channels.”



Gabriel Buck CEO [ClickPoint Software](#)

Build Meaningful Integrations

In other words, sales enablement software providers will be forced to look at deeper and more meaningful integrations. Enterprise customers that buy sales and marketing software make their selections based on integration capabilities and this demand has created an opportunity for the companies that embrace it. There is not an effective, single solution that does it all. Enterprise clients now rely on best of breed solutions for: email nurture, lead scoring, data appending, CRM, lead management, cloud communication, and more.

Invest in Anticipatory Customer Support

Technology is only as good as the service that supports it. Software companies in the sales sector, as well as salespeople, will need to focus on anticipatory customer support, not the same old reactive support of yesteryears. Customer support, timely communication, and hands on experiences with your products and service are what customers will demand in 2017. Staying ahead of the curve will require a deep understanding of your customer, how they want to be serviced, and the best communication route at the right time to respond to their needs.

Salespeople Adapting Rapidly

Customers purchasing in both B2C and B2B verticals want answers now, more content, and to get their hands on the things they want to purchase before they commit. Salespeople in both B2C and B2B markets are having to learn new methods of communication and collaboration with their prospective customers.

Buying cycles have completely changed for the better or worse, depending on how you look at it. Salespeople are now required to adopt new applications that help them spot buyers interested at the right time, not just buyers with interest. What will salespeople need to do in 2017 to keep ahead of the curve?

- Salespeople will need to master multiple communication platforms
- Salespeople will need to cross sell through alliances
- Salespeople will need to share opportunities and focus on timely communication rather than lead ownership

The good news is that there is opportunity in every obstacle. Sales is transforming to offer better service, and sales software is enabling rapid communication through collaborative integrations. The customer will win, and a better sales process will emerge in the end. How we get there is just part of the journey, and the companies and salespeople who are most flexible and adaptable will emerge as the big winners in 2017.

About ClickPoint Software

ClickPoint Software provides cloud-based Lead Management Software hosted on Microsoft Azure. The ClickPoint solution utilizes sales best practices to ensure leads are called quickly, salespeople are following up on leads, and leads are efficiently nurtured to closed deals. ClickPoint is committed to engaging customers and partners with amazing onboard and post implementation support. From its headquarters in Scottsdale, Arizona, ClickPoint has been helping companies both large and small close more leads in less time. Learn more about ClickPoint by visiting www.clickpointsoftware.com

Gabriel Buck was interviewed on Sales Lead Management Radio [How to Implement Sales Lead Automation & Double Sales in 30 Days by Gabe Buck. Listen While You Work!](#)

2017 Predictions from Workbooks CEO John Cheney CRM at the heart of Customer Experience (CX).

Increasingly consumers and businesses alike are assigning real value to exceptional Customer Experience. If you have a great experience with a supplier, you develop trust and brand loyalty; if not, you don't buy more and you're likely to tell friends and colleagues.

By 2020, it is predicted that Customer Experience will be the leading brand differentiator when it comes to a buying decision, leaving behind criteria such as product and price. Customer Experience is not the latest hype, it drives revenue growth and is slowly taking centre stage.

What's Important

"CRM is moving towards a true suite of capabilities that can support the 'Customer Experience' and bring sales, marketing, service and customer support together. Vendors will need to evolve and if they don't, their value will diminish and they will soon become irrelevant. CRM must evolve to 'Customer Experience' or become a mere back-end database."



John Cheney, CEO of [Workbooks](#)

Organisations must change the way they look at their strategy and technology stack. Some people say CRM is no longer cool... Well, I think it is exactly the opposite! CRM truly lies at the heart of a great Customer Experience and is the only source of a competitive advantage. But yes, the perception of what CRM is and the CRM vendors landscape will evolve. And the pace of change will accelerate in 2017.

Point solutions such as sales automation (rather than CRM suites) will find it difficult to compete and consolidation in the market will step up. Those solutions offer a too narrow or departmental view that does not enable the holistic, seamless and consistent Customer Experience organisations are thriving for. CRM must help organisations engage in a meaningful way along the entire customer lifecycle. CRM must provide feature-rich business / admin tooling and processes that span the customer journey, from the first time a customer engages to the point of advocacy; capabilities need to infuse decisioning in customer facing interactions, across the entire organisation and at all customer touch points.

For customers, everything needs to be seamless, frictionless. Your customers want to see that your organisation understands who they are and where they are on their purchasing process. They want to be served the right information at the right time. CRM needs to enable organisations to be relevant and timely, to engage in a personalised way. As a result, Marketing Automation functionalities will become more prominent. And we are not just simply talking about

Email Marketing but also functionalities such as website visitors tracking, nurturing campaign management etc. CRM will need to be able to track all interactions and activities in a way that facilitates segmentation, decision making, tailored automation and much more. In many businesses, Marketing is taking the lead on Customer Experience and is also driving IT investment to support it. CRM vendors will need to adapt to ensure that their technology better addresses the needs and requirements of marketers. CRM business cases and initiatives will be more and more driven by the marketing team.

Organisations are aiming for meaningful, relevant, timely engagement with their prospects and customers. They want to create personal relationships and maintain an ongoing dialog. They aim to offer what the customer really wants - based on the knowledge of what the customer is interested in, asked for, already bought. Organisations want to provide attentive and quick support. CRM can enable all of this and more. CRM is moving towards a true suite of capabilities that can support the 'Customer Experience' and bring sales, marketing, service and customer support together. Vendors will need to evolve and if they don't, their value will diminish and they will soon become irrelevant. CRM must evolve to 'Customer Experience' or become a mere back-end database.

Mr. Cheney was interviewed on CRM Radio on August 24th. [John Cheney - Workbooks CRM: Why Salesforce isn't for Everyone: Listen While you Work!](#)

2017 Predictions from Brainshark CEO Greg Flynn

The Year of Higher Quality Sales Interactions

Today's executive buyers [feel](#) that 80% of the sales meetings they take are a waste of time, even though sellers have more information and technology at their disposal than ever before. Senior sales leaders [say their biggest problem](#) is reps struggling to have "business conversations." With those key issues in mind, it should come as no surprise that 45% of sales reps [don't hit their quota](#).



Why it Matters

"Research shows that firms providing optimal coaching to salespeople realize rates of annual revenue growth 16.7% greater than firms that do not provide any coaching to their salespeople."

Greg Flynn CEO of [Brainshark](#)

As companies strive to close more business in 2017, I predict we will see more of them take the initiative to improve the *quality* of their sales interactions. Here are a few ways how.

Sales leaders will realize more isn't always better.

Many sales leaders feel the only way to close more deals is by having more conversations, more prospects and a larger pipeline. But these tactics don't guarantee a bigger pipeline will be filled with good leads. In fact, it's often just the opposite – bigger pipeline gets jammed up with poor leads and makes it more difficult for reps to advance even the best opportunities. The key to increasing sales productivity isn't just about having more conversations or a larger pipeline; it's about having more personalized and helpful interactions.

It's been shown that top-producing sales reps spend more time planning prior to calls. Instead of just purchasing tools to increase rep efficiency and give salespeople more time, companies should focus on helping salespeople hone their product, industry and customer knowledge. Only then will they be able to better engage with buyers and have valuable business conversations. Practice doesn't make perfect. *Perfect practice makes perfect.*

Organizations will ensure value propositions are personalized and communicated consistently.

In one [study](#), a company that spent three hours per month coaching reps achieved 107% of its sales goal. [Additional research](#) shows that firms providing optimal coaching to salespeople realize rates of annual revenue growth 16.7% greater than firms that do not provide any coaching to their salespeople. These valuable coaching interactions help reps master their message, product details and the competitive landscape. That mastery enables them to earn the trust of prospects and add value to their conversations.

Every organization has new hires, new products and a changing competitive landscape. Without coaching, it's difficult for sales managers to know if new reps are ready to interact with customers and prospects. It's also difficult to know if experienced reps are appropriately communicating value propositions. More companies will start enabling managers to better coach sales reps and have more powerful customer interactions.

Sales onboarding, training and coaching will finally be recognized as revenue drivers.

Analytics increasingly prove these activities are shortening new reps' time-to-first-sale, empowering reps to have more effective sales conversations and closing more deals. Although sales goals are mostly quantitative, sales is still very much an art. It's about building relationships, establishing trust and helping customers reach their objectives. When we meet these needs, we will also achieve our sales goals.

I look forward to a year of better sales conversations for both salespeople and buyers alike.

Greg Flynn is CEO of [Brainshark, Inc.](#), a leading provider of sales readiness software that equips businesses with the training, coaching and content creation capabilities to achieve sales mastery and outsell the competition.

2017 Predictions from LeadMD CEO Justin Gray

I predict that 2017 will be the death of the “hack”.

Marketing over the last decade has relied on the [first mover advantage](#). A new channel arises starting with email and then Twitter and Facebook and then Instagram and Snapchat – it’s been all about being first to a greenfield space.

As a replacement for personalization there’s been a focus on finding less competition for headspace. Those channel fads are getting shorter and shorter until ultimately the game of whack-a-mole has gotten old to the point where buyers are no longer willing to give their attention up so readily.

Why it's important

“Good enough” is no longer good enough as 2017 ushers in the quality focus we’ve all been touting for too long but not producing, and the organization as a whole must be prepared to accept that more effort, more highly skilled employees and more investment are all critical ingredients when producing quality.”



Justin Gray - CEO of [LeadMD](#)

We’re already seeing the trend emerge with ABM, and it will continue – 2017 is no longer about shortcuts. The profession of marketing arises in the coming year as we see a focus on craft and expertise. “Good enough” is no longer good enough as 2017 ushers in the quality focus we’ve all been touting for too long but not producing, and the organization as a whole must be prepared to accept that more effort, more highly skilled employees and more investment are all critical ingredients when producing quality.

Justin Gray was interviewed on SLMA Radio [Why Only 13% of Marketing Automation Programs are Successful](#) and [Marketing Automation: Quick Wins in 30 Days](#)

2017 Predictions from Velocify CEO Nick Hedges

The biggest changes for sales tech in the coming year will follow those that we've already seen in consumer tech and media. Not too long ago, people had only a few options for communicating: phone calls, emails and face-to-face conversations. However, the mobile revolution and an explosion of social media channels has created a new breed of short-form, staccato communications – texts, tweets, Snapchat messages, etc. – that have superseded many of the conversations that used to happen by phone or email.

Why it Matters



"...New developments in artificial intelligence will lead to the automation of short-form communication (text, chat and social channels), in which machines can adequately respond to simple inquiries from customers. However, the human touch will remain incredibly valuable for sales, especially at an enterprise level..."

Nick Hedges, CEO of Velocify

While the sales industry has been heavily reliant on people working across traditional channels to reach prospects, new developments in artificial intelligence will lead to the automation of short-form communication (text, chat and social channels), in which machines can adequately respond to simple inquiries from customers. However, the human touch will remain incredibly valuable for sales, especially at an enterprise level, and this is where advances in virtual reality platforms will have the greatest effect.

Real salespeople still need to explain the value of their offering directly to buyers, but instead of flying out to the customer site or setting up a video call (which is honestly not much of an improvement on a phone call), they will take prospects on a virtual tour of the solution that is immersive and stunningly engaging."

About [Velocify](#)

Velocify® is the leading sales acceleration platform. The company helps more than 1,500 sales teams sell more by bringing speed and control to the entire sales process. Velocify helps sales teams prospect with more precision, accelerate lead engagement, and implement optimized workflows, ultimately helping sales teams find and convert more leads. Velocify has recently been recognized as one of the fastest growing companies in North America by Deloitte and Inc. For more information, please visit Velocify.com or follow the company on Twitter @Velocify.

Mr. Hedges was interviewed on SLMA Radio:

[Pessimism and Optimism in Leads360-2012 Report from CEO Nick Hedges](#)

2017 Predictions from Ipswitch CEO Joe Krivickas

Securing the Hybrid Cloud Takes Center Stage in 2017 By Joe Krivickas, Ipswitch CEO

Today's business environment requires agility – which in turn means implementing a cloud infrastructure to enable that very agility. This is not surprising for the modern enterprise, as a recent [Gartner report](#) even outlines why IT organizations must adopt and master the use of cloud services across the enterprise to be successful in 2017.

But the idea of transferring workloads to the cloud isn't entirely new for organizations that have been grappling with increased [IT complexity](#) in recent years. The appeal of a fast and flexible elastic cloud environment has been drawing in IT teams who want to free up or discard costly on-premise resources in order to get their jobs done quickly and efficiently.

While cloud infrastructure offers these key incentives, many enterprises have been hesitant to entirely replace their legacy systems. This is for the simple reason that they believe on-premise [IT infrastructure](#) ensures greater compliance, availability and security that some of the most data-sensitive industries must uphold (e.g., HIPAA, PCI and SOX). That is why in 2017, we will see the rise of the safe and secure hybrid cloud, an approach that gives enterprises with sensitive data the best of both worlds – confidential information stored on-premise securely and compliantly along with the ability to store encrypted or less sensitive data in the cloud with no concerns about scalability, deployment and maintenance.

What's Happening



“In 2017, we will see the rise of the safe and secure hybrid cloud, an approach that gives enterprises with sensitive data the best of both worlds – confidential information stored on-premise securely and compliantly along with the ability to store encrypted or less sensitive data in the cloud with no concerns about scalability, deployment and maintenance.”

Joe Krivickas, CEO of [Ipswitch](#)

The benefits of hybrid cloud infrastructures are undeniable, but the security risks hybrid environments can introduce need to be taken seriously, as even the smallest network vulnerability can lead to dire consequences. Case in point: The Ponemon Institute [recently calculated](#) that the average cost to respond and remediate a network data breach averages companies over \$3 million. This is why we will also see more organizations in 2017 implementing flexible and comprehensive monitoring solutions to analyze network traffic patterns. They will also offer end-to-end visibility into applications (e.g. remote desktops or secure file services), availability (e.g. windows servers, virtual machines, firewalls or load

balancers) and connectivity (e.g. internet-facing links, VPN tunnels to remote offices or interface status/statistics) to help prevent unwanted breaches or unsolicited eyes from taking a peek at sensitive data.

We'll also see an increase in partnerships with third-party vendors to help enterprises secure processes without the problem growing beyond a company's ability to handle it. Companies will seek out partners who are well-equipped to manage the breadth of various regulation requirements – and who are also able to provide them with the tools they need to show compliance to auditors, so that no component of what they choose to solve their business problem becomes the weak link.

A hybrid cloud approach, coupled with proper security measures, will transform organizations in 2017, helping IT teams to simply “get the job done” in a timely and cost-effective manner. In fact, for any business wanting to succeed in today's fast-paced digital economy, a secure hybrid cloud networking approach is the only way for enterprises to stay relevant to their customers and partners in 2017, and compete with industry newcomers for years to come.

Joe Krivickas can be reached at [Ipswitch](#).

About Ipswitch

Today's hard-working IT teams are relied upon to manage increasing complexity and deliver near-zero downtime. Ipswitch IT and network management software helps them succeed by enabling secure control of business transactions, applications and infrastructure. Ipswitch software is powerful, flexible and easy to try, buy and use. The company's software helps teams shine by delivering 24/7 performance and security across cloud, virtual and network environments. Ipswitch Unified Infrastructure and Applications Monitoring software provides end-to-end insight, is extremely flexible and simple to deploy. The company's Information Security and [Managed File Transfer](#) solutions enable secure, automated and compliant business transactions and file transfers for millions of users. Ipswitch powers more than 150,000 networks spanning 168 countries, and is based in Lexington, Mass., with offices throughout the U.S., Europe, Asia and Latin America. For more information, please visit <http://www.ipswitch.com/>, or connect with us on [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

2017 Predictions from PointClear CEO Dan McDade

Predictions for 2017? This year will mark the beginning of the era of *accountability*.

Sales and marketing can no longer operate in the status quo environment where leaders and team members are unaccountable for their actions. Competitive organizations can't tolerate the current reality where (according to CSO Insights):

- Just 42% of marketing generated leads are accepted and worked by sales
- Less than 60% of sales reps make quota
- The #1 sales execution challenge is the lack of qualified leads

To thrive in the coming year and beyond, marketing and sales must account for their activity, accept responsibility for revenue results and disclose results in a transparent way.

Why it's Important



"To thrive in the coming year and beyond, marketing and sales must account for their activity, accept responsibility for revenue results and disclose results in a transparent way."

Dan McDade CEO of [Pointclear](#)

Specifically, marketing must:

- Be accountable for the quality of leads delivered to sales
- Be open to taking leads back and nurturing them until they are "sales-ready"
- Measure the impact of their investments by measuring revenue driven by that activity
- Sales must:
 - Be accountable for effective lead follow-up
 - Work each and every lead to win/loss or return to marketing for nurturing
 - Forecast realistically and accurately

In short, Accountability = Account-Based Marketing.

Account-Based Marketing, where sales and marketing strategically target high-value accounts, has accountability built in. The two organizations work together to approach decision-makers in a highly personalized, coordinated way, to move the account successfully through the pipeline. They use the right tactics, at the right time, with the right channels, to create the personal interactions that move the revenue-generation meter.

Chief characteristics of the accountable sales and marketing organizations of tomorrow are:

Mutually agreed-upon market definition and segmentation is in place—to make sure all involved understand the organization’s customer acquisition goals.

There’s a common lead definition between sales and marketing to avoid the you-never-follow-up-on-our-leads/you-never-give-us-good-leads scenario that encourages irresponsibility (the opposite of accountability).

Multi-touch, multi-media, multi-cycle processes are leveraged to multiply results.

Full cycle nurturing of all leads are part of the process—to potentially triple sales results from marketing programs.

A **judicial branch**, an objective authority that mitigates disagreements between marketing and sales, arbitrates situations where unqualified leads make their way to sales and/or sales chooses not to follow up on qualified leads.

A **Test-Improve-Measure** culture continually elevates sales and marketing accountability and drives revenue.

Accountability is not about punishment or blame. It’s about helping others reach their goals through purposeful, sustainable action. It’s about end-to-end success. It’s almost 2017, and the new era of accountability is here.

You can reach Dan McDade at: www.pointclear.com

Dan McDade has been interviewed on SLMA Radio several times: [SLMA Radio Show - Phil Fernandez & Dan McDade](#) and [Expert talk about the STUPID mistakes bloggers make!](#)

2017 Predictions from Fusion Marketing Partners' CEO Chris Ryan

As our [2017 B2B Marketing and Lead-to-Revenue Survey Report](#) shows, many CEOs don't believe that marketing has made a significant contribution to revenue and therefore, the marketing function is both under-funded and under-valued.

In the coming year, I recommend that forward-thinking sales and marketing teams seek knowledge from industry experts, challenge existing business models and use lead-to-revenue (L2R) strategies to attain optimum revenue performance.



Why It's Important

"Many CEOs don't believe that marketing has made a significant contribution to revenue and therefore, the marketing function is both under-funded and under-valued."

Chris Ryan, CEO [Fusion Marketing Partners](#)

L2R is a marketing and sales framework that optimizes people, processes and technology in a synchronized manner to produce higher revenue, shortened sales cycles and improved close rates. Lead-to-revenue spans every activity from initial marketing outreach, to lead nurture, sales engagement and close. L2R success is measured by revenue and profitability metrics. Eight components need to work in harmony to support the L2R framework:

1. A powerful brand strategy
2. An effective sales model
3. Efficient L2R processes
4. Strong offers
5. Compelling and relevant content
6. Total alignment between marketing and sales
7. Solid technology infrastructure
8. Focus on critical KPIs

My prediction for 2017 is that B2B companies will place more attention on creating a comprehensive and effective L2R framework, with the goal of achieving both greater and revenue performance and sales and marketing alignment.

Christopher Ryan, CEO, [Fusion Marketing Partners](#), and author of *Winning B2B Marketing*

Mr. Ryan was interviewed on SLMA Radio [Trends in B2B Marketing and Lead-to-Revenue Research Report - 2017](#)

2017 Predictions by ActiveConversion's CEO Fred Yee

2017: The Year Sales and Marketing Technology Leaves It's Mark On the Industrial Sectors

The political changes taking place in the United States in 2017, controversial or otherwise, will usher in a new era of domestic manufacturing. The result will be increased optimism in the North American industrial sectors, but also increased competition for business. Sales and marketing practices are continually evolving, but new conditions will lead industrial companies to embrace sales and marketing technologies at a rapid rate.

Why it's Important



"Small and medium sized industrial businesses will begin to recognize and embrace the role of technology and cloud-based solutions. The result will be more industrial companies selling directly, due to the ease and accessibility of online sales and marketing tools."

Fred Yee CEO of [ActiveConversion](#)

As the competition begins to adopt new technologies, old school notions of selling only to 'customers I know' will begin to feel outdated. Small and medium sized industrial businesses will begin to recognize and embrace the role of technology and cloud-based solutions. The result will be more industrial companies selling directly, due to the ease and accessibility of online sales and marketing tools. As well, an increased number of industrial businesses will expand their boundaries, realizing that it is possible to reach a larger market with improved sales and marketing capabilities.

With increased competition, and an impressive amount of sales and marketing technology available, 2017 is sure to leave a lasting impression on sales and marketing practices in the industrial sectors.

Mr. Yee was interviewed on June 20th: [How to use Marketing Automation to Follow a Longer B2B Sales Cycle](#)

About the Sales Lead Management Association

The SLMA has 8,000 worldwide members, and its website includes 300-plus articles from 60 industry authors. Activities throughout the year include an active 'opinionated' blog, recognition for the '20 Women Leaders to Watch in Sales Lead Management,' and the SLMALive Radio Program, currently with 351 episodes and 88,500 listeners. SLMA Radio is one of seven marketing and sales shows for at-work listeners on the Funnel Radio Channel. For more information about SLMA call Sue Campanale at (360) 933-1259.

The Sales Lead Management Today Blog that originally published these predictions as of this printing has had 88,471 Life time page views and 716 posts.

The SLMA is a division of the [Funnel Media Group](#).



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