

# Hannon Hill Corporation

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Makers of the Award-Winning Cascade Server content management software

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## Separate, but Equally Important: the Sales and Marketing Relationship

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In a general sense, Marketing refers to any activity that increases awareness about a good or service, and moves those goods or services from the supplier to the consumer. However, dependent upon the good or service your company offers, the methods you use to accomplish “marketing” that good or service must be anything but ambiguous. Key factors such as your product lifecycle, product costs, and the commitment a consumer or business must make to purchase your good or service should all be considered when deciding what Marketing endeavors to pursue. These factors must also be considered when analyzing where Marketing ends and Sales begins.

As Marketing Director at Hannon Hill, I often find myself and our department having to take anything but the typical approach when it comes to selecting Marketing activities to pursue, and subsequently, when passing the torch to the Sales team. At Hannon Hill, our primary product, Cascade Server, is an enterprise Web Content Management solution. Providing a CMS system that can be locally installed for many users has its perks. At the same time, this makes investing in Cascade Server a more significant buying commitment than something like choosing which new office printer to get. Selecting a CMS is a process, and because no work is done in a vacuum, there are different teams of people and resources contributing to both the product and the buying decision throughout the marketing “lifecycle.”

Let’s say for example, you’re interested in purchasing a new condominium; multiple people and ideas will likely be involved in your buying decision. You’ll need to think about which areas of town hold their value, your current budget, whether it’s in a good school-district, etc. But let me ask you something: despite the fancy fliers and internet ads, ultimately if you don’t trust the guy or gal taking you on a tour of your “dream-condo,” will you buy? To borrow a line from one of my favorite childhood toys, the Magic 8-Ball, my guess is “Outlook Not So Good.”

Both Marketing and Sales teams run into this same problem. Buyers don’t like to feel like they’re being ‘schmoozed.’ Proof of this lies in the recent trend towards social media tools; buyers trust other buyers. They trust people that have nothing to sell them, gain nothing from “marketing” their experiences, and are simply helping others help themselves.

Failure to realize that your Marketing and Sales teams can accomplish this same task is the fundamental shortcoming I most often see and read about. Although every

organization's marketing strategy and overall marketing lifecycle is unique, several factors remain constant:

1. It is Marketing's job to choose the right message. Your marketing department has experience and insight into what makes your company and product special. Let them develop the creative aspect. Let your team decide how to best approach its target audience.
2. No matter what message you choose, make sure it's consistent. I often find myself watching commercials and seeing essentially the same product, same visual, and same message, tweaked ever so slightly, and being called "Niche" marketing. Identify the *true* benefit of what you offer. Although the needs your product meets and your message will change based on your audience, your product should essentially perform the same basic functions for all niches.
3. Your Sales team should be responsible for the 'trust'-factor. This is especially important for organizations selling a product or service that requires a substantial financial and/or time commitment.

This boils down to three main responsibilities for your Marketing team: identifying what makes your organization unique (do you use a differentiation approach?), tailoring the marketing message to accurately convey your company's 'special sauce,' and bringing in qualified and highly-interested prospects for your sales team to build a relationship with. Throughout the prospect-nurturing process, it is the job of your Sales team to stay committed to the message Marketing is conveying, foster a consistently open line of communication with prospects/clients, and to follow-up, regularly and *personally*.

Despite how easy it is to send a mass email, why not take the extra 5 minutes and follow-up with a prospect on a personal-level? While you may argue that there isn't enough time in the day to give each prospect the full attention he or she deserves, I would beg to differ. Try putting a little extra time and energy towards a personalized experience and *nurture* your prospects through their decision-making process. The extra 5 minutes now will pay off in added sales dollars, trust and credibility later, in addition to the knowledge that your customers are happy with their buying-decision -- something that many Marketing and Sales teams can't truly say very often.

## **Category**

- Commentary

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