Dave Bailey is Head of Marketing, Americas at Arkadin, a global provider of cloud communications. The company helps businesses advance their digital transformation by delivering next-generation solutions including unified communications, video conferencing and virtual events. In our interview, we discussed a framework for creating meaningful customer engagements and how this supports sales efforts.

**How does marketing at Arkadin create meaningful customer engagements?**

Customers and prospects today are bombarded by marketing messaging and advertising. To cut through the noise, we focus our marketing on a concept we call E3: Engage, Entertain, Educate. This means our marketing doesn’t talk a lot about our company or our solutions. Rather, we always try to give the customer something of value in the form of content that engages, entertains or educates. Once we have earned the customer’s interest and mindshare, we can slip in some light messaging about our company’s value proposition.

Every time we talk to a customer, we utilize E3. If we focus on our products instead of what our customers finds interesting, they will tune us out and we will fail.

“To cut through the noise, we focus our marketing on E3: Engage, Entertain, Educate”

To support this, marketing had to adapt. Using our E3 concept, we focus on educating prospects about the latest developments and advancements in the cloud communications field.

For example, most IT decision makers are aware of Microsoft’s shift in focus from Skype for Business to Microsoft Teams, but few understand what this means for their company.

We offer our prospects a wide range of webinars, videos, white papers, eBooks and infographics to teach them how Teams can be used as a feature-rich enterprise phone system and collaboration platform. As we educate, we improve our position as a trusted IT advisor and potential partner.

**How has marketing at Arkadin evolved?**

In the last two years, the company has evolved from a seller of B2B communications products to a holistic, consultative solutions provider that transforms the way our customers conduct business.

For example, last year we developed and rolled out a program called “Smart Sales Rep” to all of our sales teams in North America and Latin America. It teaches reps exactly how to benefit from the programs and tools that marketing provides to them. It featured a prescriptive daily plan for reps that includes activities like sharing marketing content on social media, creating target lists and utilizing prospect scoring models.

**What is your team’s role in developing thought leadership?**

Again, we think of thought leadership as an extension of our E3 strategy. We have some incredibly talented engineers and solutions experts with tons of very technical institutional knowledge. Our challenge is to translate this into easy-to-understand content that engages our customers.

Webinars are a great way to accomplish this. We focus on topics that help customers solve very specific challenges or problems. Adding in humor or an interactive activity such as a participant survey means the webinar meets the E3 concept.

**How do you build and evaluate your marketing technology stack?**

A constant challenge for every marketer is the balancing act between what is possible and what is helpful. We want to provide Sales with tools and data that are helpful, but which don’t overwhelm them. No matter how innovative a tool is, if reps don’t use it, it’s wasted investment.

Right now our stack is very focused on predictive analytics, customer insights and sales automation. But we continually reevaluate to make sure our priorities are what the Sales team needs and will actually use.

**What’s an example of a successful sales support program at Arkadin?**

Working closely with the Sales team is my number one priority. I tell my team, “If what you’re doing is not helping a sales rep find a target or close a deal, then stop doing it.”

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After the initial training, the program shifts to a lot of two-way communication. We continue to tell the sales team what we’re doing for them, but they also have to tell us if it works, what they like and don’t like. We’ve received a ton of feedback and this helps us adjust the program going forward.

**How do you ensure the marketing team continues to improve?**

We try to avoid the mindset of “If it works, keep doing it.” Instead, we attempt to make our successful programs bigger, better and more relevant to our customers. In many cases, we do this by appending supplemental data to our existing programs.

If we can use predictive analytics or customer insights to refine a marketing message, it becomes even more attractive to our customers.

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