The Sales/Marketing Integration Gap: The Joint Impact of Environmental, Firm, and Functional Drivers on Realized Versus Desired Integration

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Abstract Marketing and sales have distinct thought-world differences that often inhibit their ability to work together. As a result, firms promote integration between the two groups with the ultimate aim of improving relationship effectiveness and customer performance. This study introduces the concepts of realized integration and desired, or future, integration and the difference between the two (the integration gap). Through the lens of self-categorization theory, this study examines how both functional and firm behaviors interact with several internal and external environment factors to impact both types of integration. The study shows how these factors impact both realized and desired integration in several ways, providing a more complete view of the relationship between the two. Finally, the study finds that desired integration can negatively impact relationship outcomes reducing the positive benefits of the realized level of integration. As a result, managers need to not only promote integration but also manage the integration gap by increasing levels of realized integration or decreasing levels of desired integration.

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