

THE METRIC CAN BE RIGHT

5 misinterpretations of marketing and sales KPIs

The number can be correct.

And still lead to the wrong decision.

KPIs are a starting point for the next question, not a diagnosis.

KPIs measure outcomes. They do not explain causes.

More leads

Lower CPL

More pipeline

Higher win rate

Shorter sales cycle

A metric never changes in a vacuum. Its meaning depends on what is counted, which cases are included, how the mix changes and what happens before and after it.

KPIs are not a diagnosis. They are the starting point for the next question.

01

More leads = better marketing?

First ask: Are we still counting the same thing?

BEFORE

A lead meant a concrete inquiry with contact details.

TODAY

Newsletter signups, content downloads or earlier contacts also count.

The lead count rises without actual demand necessarily changing.

BETTER QUESTION

Are we truly comparing the same metric as before?

02

Lower CPL = more efficient marketing?

CPL tells you what a lead costs. Not what a customer or relevant pipeline costs.

CAMPAIGN A

CPL: €100

100 leads

20 opportunities

€500 per opportunity

CAMPAIGN B

CPL: €50

100 leads

5 opportunities

€1,000 per opportunity

BETTER QUESTION

Is only the lead cheaper, or is the business behind it cheaper too?

03

More pipeline = more future revenue?

PIPELINE A

€1m pipeline

40% historical win rate

€400k expected revenue

PIPELINE B

€2m pipeline

15% historical win rate

€300k expected revenue

The nominal pipeline is twice as large. Its economic expected value is still lower.

BETTER QUESTION

How likely is this pipeline to become revenue?

04

Higher win rate = better sales?

BEFORE

40 opportunities

10 won = 25%

TODAY

20 opportunities

8 won = 40%

The win rate improves while the number of won deals declines. Every ratio also depends on its denominator.

BETTER QUESTION

What changed in the number, quality and mix of opportunities?

05

Shorter sales cycle = more efficient sales?

BEFORE

90 days

Average deal: €80k

TODAY

60 days

Average deal: €35k

Sales is faster, but it is also selling something different. Fast closed deals appear in the metric while slow open deals may not.

BETTER QUESTION

Which deals are faster, and which deals are missing from the analysis?

THE RULE BEHIND ALL FIVE EXAMPLES

A KPI does not explain itself.

1

What exactly changed?

The number, definition, volume, mix or process?

2

What else should move?

If our explanation is true, which connected metric should change too?

3

Do both teams mean the same thing?

Marketing and sales need a shared interpretation, not separate scorecards.

Good management starts with the right KPIs and a shared view of them.

Which KPIs should marketing and sales manage together?

Operational metrics remain important. Between them, both teams need one shared layer.

- Sales qualified leads
- Pipeline value
- Lead-to-customer rate
- Win rate
- Customer acquisition cost
- Revenue
- Forecast accuracy

MARKETING AND SALES KPIs

See which metrics belong on the shared management level and what they actually tell you.

[Read the full guide](#)