



A Brief Guide to Field Sales and Marketing

Field sales and marketing, as its name suggests, is a discipline that communicates with a profiled target audience in the “field.” The word “field” generally refers to an environment heavily populated with a brand’s consumer. Field marketers represent brands directly to their target audiences in a variety of ways, including preparing products for a “moment of truth” interaction that occurs at the point of decision when a consumer is in-store ensuring the right product is at the right place at the right price at the right time. Field marketers also communicate brand properties face-to-face in order to educate, inform, initiate trial and influence purchase.

Field marketing can trace its origins back to the 1920s and 1930s when independent retailers were still a major force in retailing and the idea of “self-service” had yet to bloom. Manufacturers sent representatives to leverage the counter space at retailers over which all products were served. Targeting the point of sale evolved through the 1950s and 1960s as marketers like Barney Finn, advertising editor of *Life*, connected mass advertising efforts with the retail experience by displaying ads and placing product representatives in-store to deliver a strong brand message.

The consolidation of the retail market in the 1980s and 1990s, led by Wal-Mart and other “big box” retailers, combined with increased technological sophistication in supply chain management and product flow efficiency, shifted power at the point of sale to the retailer, rather than the supplier. Planograms, or schematic drawings of fixtures that illustrate product placement, were introduced around 1980 and also reduced opportunities for manufacturers to negotiate for space at retail. Manufacturers recognized anew the value of the consumer-centric, point-of-sale efforts to drive volume and profit while improving customer service. More and more companies embraced strategic partnerships with sales and merchandising teams to develop and implement brand experience programs to achieve retail success.

In response to the evolving retail market, the field sales and marketing industry has diversified to encompass more disciplines, such as event management, mystery shopping, auditing and customer acquisition. In recent years, the proliferation of communication channels such as the Internet combined with the advent of personal video recorders (PVR) such as Tivo® has made capturing the ever-limited time of consumers increasingly difficult. Micromarketing is rapidly surpassing mass marketing as an effective means to reach target consumers, and field sales and marketing, focusing on the “moment of truth,” is leading the movement.

Sources: The Direct Marketing Association, Retail Advertising & Marketing Association, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Business Week*, Harvard Business School