



Marketing vs. Sales – Where Should CEOs Invest to Drive Growth in 2026

This introductory slide sets the stage for a strategic discussion on how CEOs can balance marketing and sales investments to drive business growth in 2026.

Our Sales Coach

Ken Cheo, President



OUR SALES COACH
RESULTS GUARANTEED

SmartFinds Marketing

Melih Oztalay, CEO



smartfinds marketing

The CEO Growth Dilemma



Sales Challenges

CEOs are struggling to drive consistent revenue growth and achieve their sales targets.



Marketing Perspective

CMOs are under pressure to generate more qualified leads and improve marketing ROI.



The Alignment Opportunity

Aligning sales and marketing efforts can unlock new growth potential for CEOs.

This session will explore how CEOs can navigate the sales vs. marketing dilemma and engineer growth through proven alignment strategies.

Session Roadmap





From Visibility to Measurable Growth

As the digital landscape evolves, CEOs must look to AI and conversion rate optimization (CRO) as key drivers of measurable growth.

SmartFinds Marketing has seen remarkable success with its AI-powered marketing strategies, achieving a 198% increase in lead generation for a major client. By leveraging advanced AI algorithms and optimizing the customer journey, businesses can transform visibility into tangible, data-driven growth.

How Marketing Drives Alignment

Data-Driven Marketing

Leverage data analytics to gain insights into your target audience and their buying behavior, enabling you to create personalized and relevant marketing campaigns that align with their needs.

Content Marketing

Develop a content strategy that educates and informs your prospects, positioning your company as a thought leader and building trust. This pre-qualifies leads and creates alignment with the sales process.

Press Release Marketing

Utilize strategic press release distribution to generate media coverage and industry recognition. This enhances your brand visibility and credibility, driving pre-qualified demand for the sales team.

Integrated Campaigns

Coordinate your marketing efforts across multiple channels, including digital, social, and traditional media. This ensures a consistent brand message and creates a seamless experience for your prospects, driving alignment with sales.

Closed-Loop Reporting

Establish a feedback loop between marketing and sales, tracking the performance of your campaigns and the quality of leads generated. This data-driven approach enables continuous optimization and alignment.

Why CEOs Must Lead Marketing Integration

Marketing-Sales Alignment

Measurable Outcomes

Leadership Commitment

Cross-Functional Collaboration



Bridge to Sales

Melih Oztalay's marketing expertise has laid the groundwork for pre-qualified demand. Now, Ken Cheo from Our Sales Coach will share how sales teams can capitalize on this momentum and drive measurable growth.



Expectations



Set Market Based Growth Goals

CEOs are under pressure to deliver sustainable double-digit growth. Outline clear revenue and profit targets for 2026.



Align Sales and Marketing

Historically siloed teams must work together to create a seamless customer experience.



Drive Operational Excellence

Streamline processes, leverage data and technology to maximize efficiency and ROI.



Gain Competitive Advantage

CEOs need to understand the market landscape and differentiate their offerings.

This session will provide CEOs with a clear roadmap to align sales and marketing, leverage data and technology, and drive sustainable growth in 2026.

Status Quo

Transactional Approach

The traditional sales process has been focused on individual transactions, with sales teams making cold calls and sending generic pitches to potential customers.

Disconnected from Marketing

Sales and marketing have often operated in silos, with little alignment or coordination, leading to a disconnect between the two teams.

Lack of Buyer Insights

Sales teams have relied on limited customer data, making it challenging to truly understand buyer needs and tailor the sales approach accordingly.

Reactive Selling

The traditional sales process has been reactive, waiting for customers to express interest before engaging, rather than proactively identifying and addressing their needs.

Limits Growth Potential

This disconnected and reactive approach has limited the potential for sustainable, long-term growth, as it fails to create a seamless buyer experience.

New Status Quo

1

Awareness: Customers discover your brand and offerings through marketing channels like content, ads, and social media.

2

Consideration: Potential buyers research and compare your solutions to competitors, engaging with your website and nurturing content.

3

Evaluation: Leads engage with sales, reviewing pricing, features, and fit for their specific needs.

4

Decision: Buyers make a purchasing decision, often after multiple touchpoints and interactions with both marketing and sales.

5

Advocacy: Satisfied customers become brand advocates, promoting your solutions and driving referrals.

6

Retention: Ongoing engagement, upsell, and cross-sell opportunities to maintain and grow customer relationships.

Sales and Marketing Has Changed

The world of sales and marketing has undergone a dramatic transformation. Buyers are now more informed, empowered, and in control of the purchasing process. Traditional sales tactics that relied on aggressive pitches and closing techniques are no longer effective in today's landscape. Instead, a modern, buyer-centric approach is required to drive sustainable growth.



Decision Has Been Made

57% of Decision Made

Research shows that over half of the buying decision is made before a prospect even engages with a sales representative. This highlights the critical importance of effective marketing and demand generation to influence the early stages of the buyer's journey.

Marketing Leads the Way

To succeed in this new landscape, sales teams must work in close alignment with marketing to leverage pre-qualified, marketing-generated leads that are further along in the decision-making process.

Trust and Authority Earned

By the time a prospect reaches out to sales, they have already formed initial perceptions and opinions about your company. Effective inbound marketing helps establish your brand's credibility and trustworthiness, smoothing the path for sales conversations.

Timing and Qualification

Understanding the right time to engage and having the proper qualification criteria is crucial. Sales teams must be selective in their outreach to ensure they are pursuing the most qualified and sales-ready opportunities.



Not Willing or Able to Decide



Unqualified Leads

Leads that are not ready to make a decision due to lack of fit or awareness.



Timing Mismatch

Prospects not ready to engage due to their current situation or priorities.



Lack of Trust

Inability to build rapport and credibility, leading to hesitation to commit.



Perceived Risk

Prospects unwilling to take a chance on your solution due to concerns or uncertainties.

By addressing these key factors, sales teams can improve qualification, timing, trust, and risk mitigation to drive higher conversion rates and ROI.

74% — Forrester Study

According to a Forrester study, the close rate when getting to decision-makers when they are at the “consideration” stage is 74%, underscoring the importance of engaging with top-level decision-makers.

In another survey executives said they took an appointment or attended an event based on a well-timed outbound email or call.

As CEOs consider their sales and marketing strategies, understanding this modern data point is critical to driving measurable growth.



Premature Presentation Series

- **Embrace Pain-Driven Selling**
Engage in a consultative sales approach that centers on uncovering and addressing the customer's most pressing problems, rather than just showcasing your product features.
- **Focus on Key Decision-Makers**
Understand the key stakeholders involved in the buying process and tailor your sales approach to their specific needs and pain points.
- **Avoid Premature Presentations**
Resist the temptation to present your full solution before fully understanding the customer's challenges and aligning with their decision-making process.
- **Get Commitment**
Make sure they are committed to change and understand the consequences if they don't.
- **Uncover the Budget**
Find out what they are willing to invest, when and how

Trust and Sales System

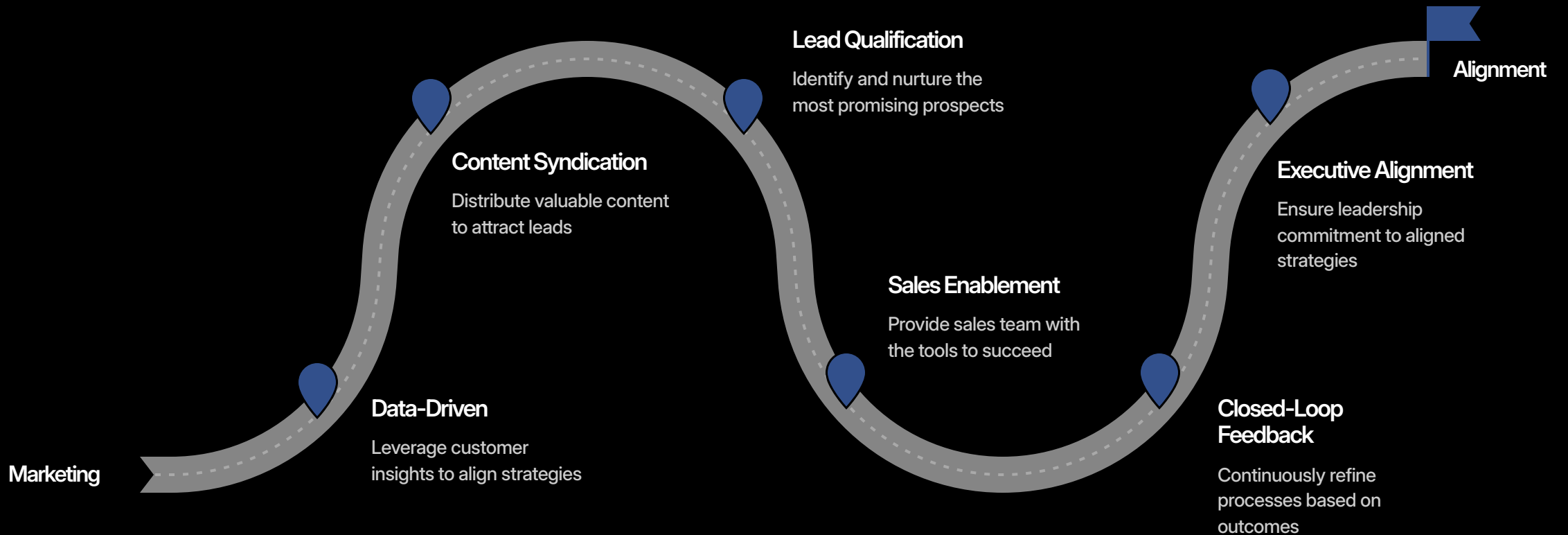
Personalized Engagement

Transparent Communication

Consistent Follow-Through

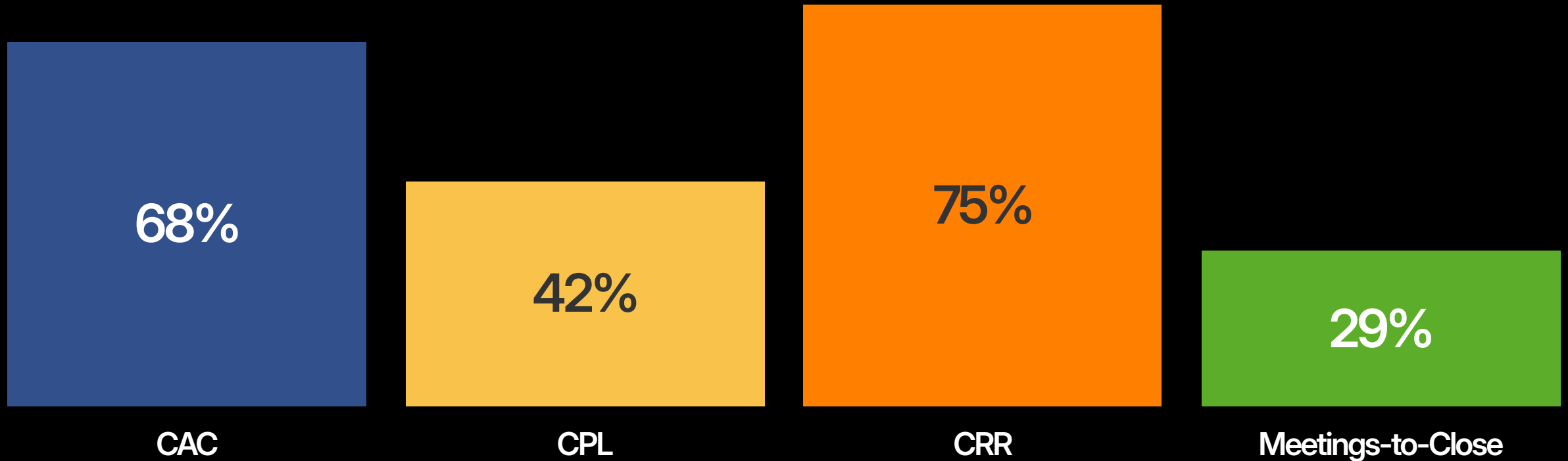
Mutual
Accountability

The Marketing and Sales Alignment Flywheel



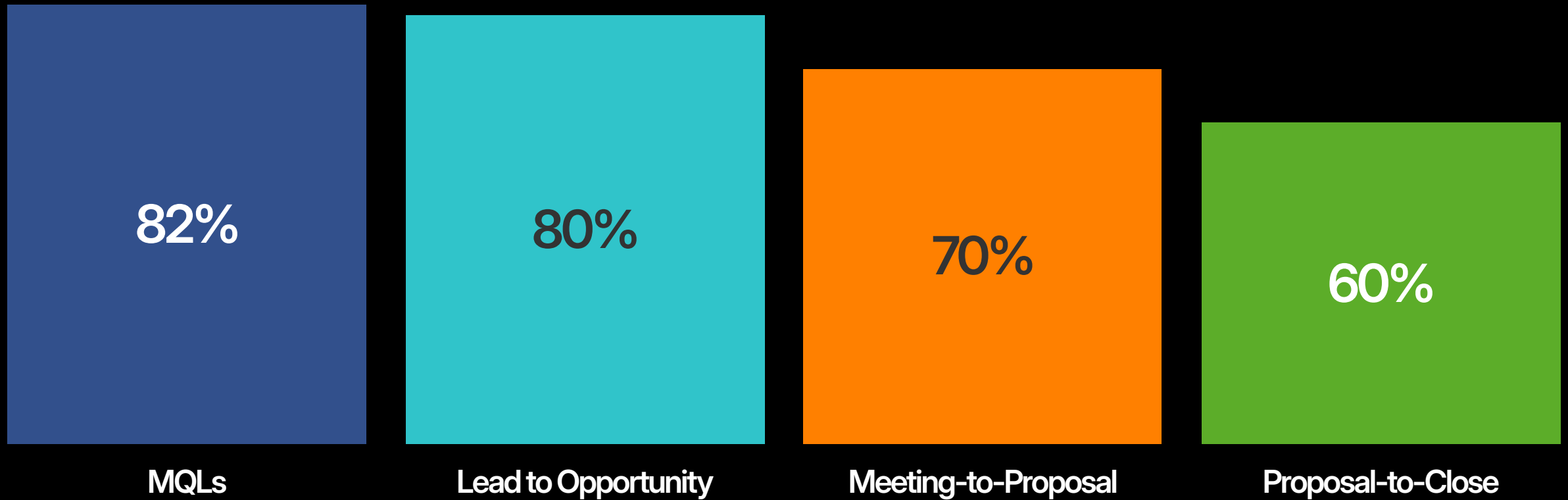
Shared Metrics CEOs Must Monitor

Key Metrics for CEO Oversight

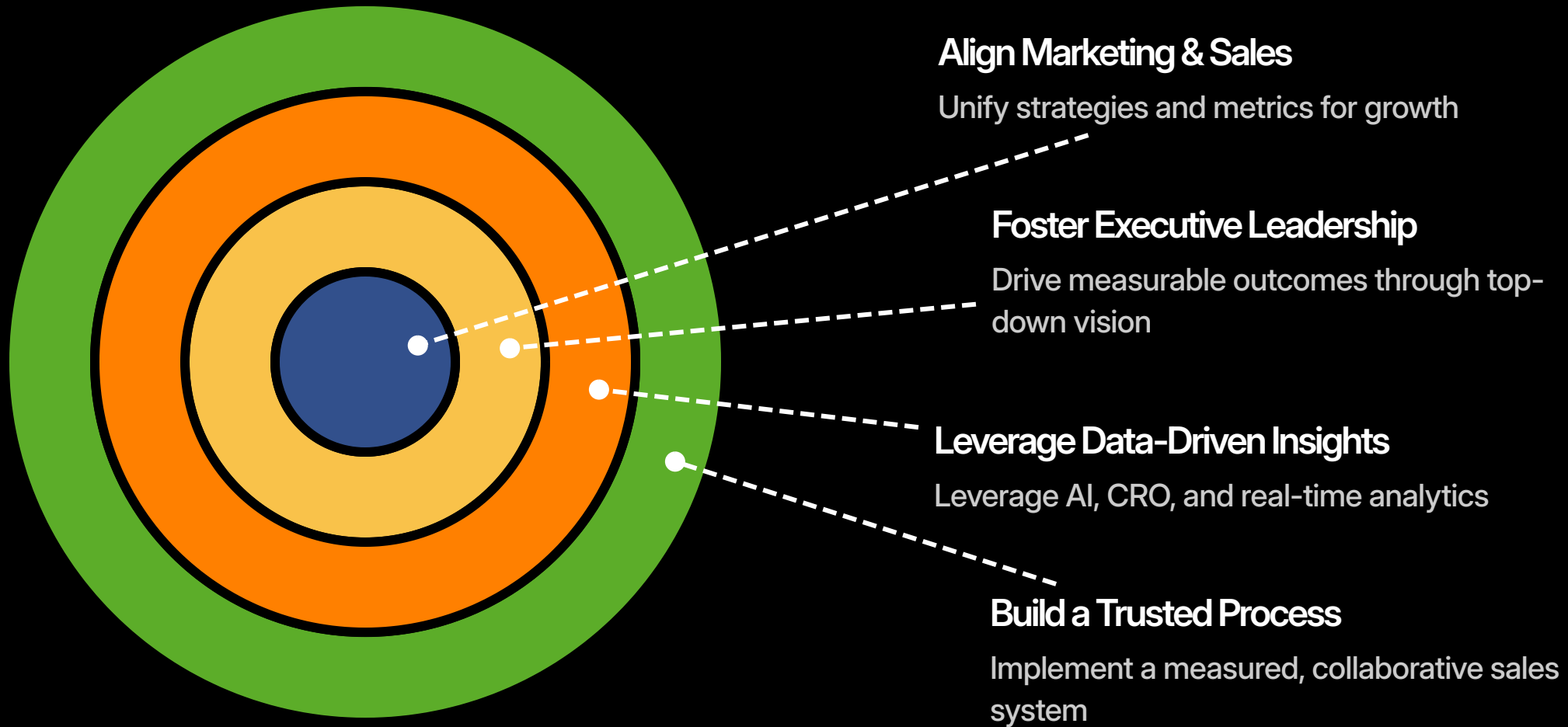


Shared Metrics CEOs Must Monitor

Key Metrics for CEO Oversight



The Unified CEO Playbook for 2026



In conclusion, the unified CEO playbook for 2026 emphasizes the critical importance of marketing and sales alignment to drive measurable growth. By integrating data-driven marketing strategies with a modernized sales process, CEOs can unlock sustainable growth through a shared system of engagement, trust, and measurable outcomes.



THANK YOU



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