

Second Quarter, 1996



The Marketing Gearbox: Integrating Products, Sales, and Services (Abstract)

By Frank V. Cespedes

A very thorough account of the traditional roles within the corporate marketing structure - product management, sales management, and customer service - followed by a strong argument in favor of better coordination and integration, or "concurrent marketing." As change accelerates in the marketplace, Frank Cespedes says, the traditional sequential alignment of marketing responsibilities must be rejected in favor of synchronization. The answer is to work toward meshing the product, sales and service units into a marketing "gearbox" to foster inter-group interaction more often, more quickly and in more depth.

With the traditional model, product management is the instigator of marketing information flows within companies, which tends to leave the sales and service areas out in the cold, or at least subservient. In the new marketing environment, Mr. Cespedes notes, this has led to increasing inter-departmental conflicts. The old model must be abandoned and replaced by a set of structures, systems and processes that emphasize mutual dependencies among product, sales and service units.

Mr. Cespedes spent 15 years as a faculty member of the Harvard Business School and is the author of six books, including "Concurrent Marketing: Integrating Sales, Service, and Product Management (Harvard Business School Press, 1995). His article is a summary of this work, which was based on a field study of firms in the computer, consumer goods, telecommunications and medical products industries.

Reprint No. 96203