



SALES LEADERSHIP 2016

11 SALES THOUGHT LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVES

Written and Presented by
The Sales Masterminds Australasia Collective



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Introduction

What are some of the ideas that can spark a salesperson's growth and enhance their contribution to the market place?

This is a question every salesperson wants answered.

The answer is that there is no 'Holy Grail'. Instead, we benefit most from exposure to diverse, sometimes oppositional views that make us think not just about the ideas offered to us, but about who we are and why some ideas would work better for us than others. Learning about different perspectives is an integral part of critical thinking and conscious self-development – practices essential for today's salespeople.

Australasia's leading sales experts from the Sales Masterminds Australasian group have collaborated here to share their cutting-edge ideas and strategies to inspire, educate and empower sales professionals. This carefully curated collection of thought-leadership articles is designed to help B2B salespeople catapult their results by immediately implementing and executing the strategies and tactics shared in this book.

You will learn:

- *How to strategically brand yourself*
- *Why it is important to lead yourself*

- *Where the sales profession is heading, and how to stay relevant*
- *What you need to understand about the increasingly fast, ever-changing marketplace*
- *Who is leading the pack*

Salespeople are always looking for fresh actionable ideas, and this book provides them in abundance.

It has been my pleasure to be a contributor and curator of the insights of this group of highly professional and passionate leaders whose intention is to elevate the level of selling here in Australia, NZ and the greater region.

We trust you enjoy browsing the collection and then going deeper into the articles that are most relevant to you. We invite you to take your development as a sales professional further by connecting with those experts whom you feel most aligned to.

Regards

Bernadette McClelland

eBook Curator, Sales Masterminds Australasia



By Purpose: Why Do You Sell?

by Dan Symons

Is this a question you have ever explored?

If you've ever watched the TED Talk video 'Start With Why' presented by Simon Sinek, he identifies one of the truths at the core of sales: Why you sell is far more important than the how and the what.

There is an old marketing adage – don't sell drills, sell holes. Focus not on your product or service, but on what your product or service does since this is what your client purchases.

But is this correct? Does it go far enough? Is your customer buying a drill? A hole? Or, something else?

If you're in retail and a customer comes in to your store, selects a drill and walks to your counter, pays and leaves – you've made a sale. But who did the selling? You had no control over this sale and, therefore, no control over the outcome. Sure, you obtained your customer's money, but can be you assured they will be happy when they get the drill home? Can you be assured they'll come back? You had a transaction with that client, but not a relationship. You sold them something, but didn't sell them.

If, instead, that same customer engages with one of your staff members and asks about which is the best to drill through 1" ply – you would hope your staff member has the product knowledge to guide them to the correct drill and, if well trained, also suggests the right drill bits, safety equipment and other essentials. Again, you've made a sale and, in this instance, your customer this time leaves with some knowledge about how the drill and bits will work properly and, ideally, you've increase your sale value through additional products. You also have the comfort in knowing what you've sold is 'fit for purpose' don't you? It will drill a fantastic hole – exactly what the client needed.

Sure, it will drill the hole in 1" ply – but what was your customer's real purpose? Why were they drilling the hole?

Now - what if you staff member approaches your customer in the power tool aisle and simply asks: "You looking to build something this weekend?" That same customer will probably say to your staff member that their daughter has been pestering them to finally build the Wendy House they promised. They need a new drill.

This is the reason that customer is standing in your business. Not because they want a drill. Not because they want to drill a hole. Not simply because they want to build a Wendy House. But, because they want to see the joy on their daughter's face once it's complete and feel the relief at having honoured a promise.

Your staff member can now really help your customer. They will ask if they have plans. They will advise them they may not need that drill as you can pre-cut and pre-drill all the timber off the plans so it will fit perfectly. They may just need a spanner - do they have one? Have they thought about weather protection as they will want it to last and be safe? What about the foundations, so it's stable? All manner of advice can be given to improve the outcome for your customer and, importantly, their daughter. It is no longer a transaction, it has become a relationship. Your staff member is now invested in your client's outcome.

But, here is the truth. Your staff member has to *want* to ask the question. They have to be driven by the desire to *help your clients*, not sell products. You can't train this intent - your salesperson has to find it.

The adage of 'don't sell drills, sell holes' is correct, though it only goes part of the way to the truth of why we should be selling. In today's era of readily available information on our products and services, clients can quickly assess what 'drill' they need to make their 'hole'. Where salespeople need to focus is not just the hole rather than the drill, but the reason they need the hole in the first place. Your client's purpose - the problem or opportunity that is keeping them awake at night. Helping them solve this is what sales is about.

Success could easily be seen in the first example as the client has purchased a drill from you – you made a sale. But, extrapolate this out. Let's assume that drill wasn't fit for purpose, that it didn't have enough torque to drill the hole they needed. Now, you could assume it isn't your fault because the client made their own decision and purchased without your consultation. But is this fair? You had the opportunity to help them when they walked in to your store. You even hire staff to be on the floor to help clients. Ask yourself whether you had the obligation to help them. That customer buying the wrong drill was your fault, not theirs. And, it can quickly become your problem.

Even if the drill was perfect for the task – do you have any enduring relationship with the customer? Do they feel better for having purchased the drill from you? Do they feel you and your staff contributed to the successful outcome of their project simply because you sold them a drill?

In this example, the purpose was to build a Wendy House, not to drill holes or buy a drill. Knowing this, you can radically change your clients experience with you and your store. By not taking the time to understand this, you simply sell a drill. Taking orders isn't selling, it simple making sales.

Your clients will always have a purpose behind their interactions with you. However, they won't always freely tell you what these are. It isn't your client's responsibility to tell you – you are the professional salesperson. It is your purpose to find out theirs and help them achieve it.

The simple rule of selling, its purpose, is easy - **Help Your Clients**.

It isn't about achieving quotas, commission hurdles, product penetration ratios, minimum margin thresholds. Clients don't care about these things. They care about their challenges and their opportunities, and what you are doing to help them mitigate them and realise them respectively.

Seth Godin referred to it very succinctly:

*'Don't Find Customers For Your Products,
Find Products For Your Customers'*

Start with your customers and work to your solutions, not the other way around. Selling isn't about Drills. It isn't about Holes, nor even Wendy Houses. It is about a daughter's delight. This is why your client is buying from you.

Helping them achieve it is selling by purpose.

This is why you sell.

On Purpose: How Do You Sell?

'Opportunity dances with those already on the dance floor'
H Jackson Jnr

Luck features regularly in sales. Sometimes salespeople do genuinely experience good fortune. A client can just walk in the door and be incredibly valuable to your business as much as that client could be the most difficult one you've ever encountered.

However, far too many salespeople rely on this as a means of making their target. They may have a strong purpose to help clients, but their strategy to get there is simply a matter of crossing their fingers.

They hope luck will shine on them, rather than work efficiently to improve their odds. They only buy one ticket in the sales lottery - or, worse, none - and still expect to win. Luck should make a great month fantastic, but can never be relied upon to hit target.

Successful salespeople are often seen as lucky. Behind the scenes the reality is very different: they often undertake a number of conscious (and, sometimes, unconscious) activities to improve their odds of enjoying 'luck'. They sell intentionally. **On Purpose.**

It is no coincidence that diligent, positive salespeople are repeatedly more successful (or 'lucky') than those that aren't disciplined. Whilst they can't entirely control the sales outcome, they can improve the odds through the right behaviours and mindset. They can stack the deck in their favour.

'Luck' is often used by lower performing sales people as a way of marginalising the success of those better than them. It is way of rationalising that it was just good fortune so it could happen to them without having to address the fact that they may have to change what they do.

This article - Man Finds \$141,000 Gold Nugget - shows a 'seasoned prospector's' fortune in Australia in finding a \$141,000 gold nugget. We, as layman, sit back and say: 'how lucky'. Yet, he is most likely out there at every possible opportunity, has learnt where he is most likely to find gold and has the correct equipment. We want to find that same nugget of gold, we want to be as fortunate. But, are we prepared to invest the same amount of time, effort and cost to 'generate' that good fortune? It's easier to say he's lucky and walk around staring at the ground at our feet hoping we find a nugget than admit if we were prepared to invest, we could enjoy the same 'luck'.

In fact, in this instance, it is more likely to suggest luck had more influence on the size of the nugget he found, rather than whether he found one. He knew where to look and had the right gear. He improved his odds and has probably found gold many times prior, yet we view him as lucky. He was prospecting **on purpose**.

Swap 'gold nugget' with 'ideal clients' and, unfortunately, things aren't that much different in sales. We want to find them - but are we really invested in improving our odds of finding them? Or do we just wish for good fortune? Are we selling **on purpose**?

The reality is, luck is usually a small factor in successful sales people's results. In fact, really successful sales people try to remove luck from their outcomes entirely, or certainly work to provide the right environment to create good luck.

How Can You Improve Your 'Sales Luck'?

The real answer to being sustainably successful in sales isn't luck. It is about healthy disciplines and healthy attitudes. Luck becomes a skill because successful salespeople know how to manifest it. They are successful because they sell on purpose. This involves:

Robust Sales Processes

They set time aside to undertake all the core functions of successful sales activity - whether it is researching new targets, following up prospects, completing administration work. Yes, they schedule time to sell!

A disciplined, consistent and tenacious sales process is followed by all successful sales people. They use their tools (diary, CRM etc) effectively to ensure that they capture all material information, schedule follow ups and execute their sales activity efficiently. Their diary is booked with meaningful activities, and they even schedule their time at their desk. They are almost mercenary about how they regiment their diary to ensure all opportunities are captured.

No or Little Limiting Beliefs

Good salespeople learn from their experiences rather than use them to set future expectations that can hold them back. They remain positive that there is always a successful outcome in the sales process. They are open to new ideas, new relationships and don't judge opportunities and situations until they fully understand them. They don't just see the acorn, they see the oak tree.

They look to improve rather than criticise situations - this isn't to say they don't find fault, they do, but they focus on how they can solve it rather than use this as a reason to give up.

Passion

Good salespeople are passionate about the success of their clients as they understand that, in doing so, their own success should follow. They are selfless. It isn't about selling products and services - it is about helping their clients capture opportunity and mitigate risks. They are genuinely interested in their clients and look to add value to them and their business wherever possible. They are energetic about their work with their clients and those around them.

Network

Successful salespeople build strong networks with like-minded people who can help them and their clients and who they, in turn, can help. They use their network effectively to improve their odds - whether asking for referrals, offering them, obtaining intelligence, seeking testimonials and endorsements or having them work with them to provide an optimal solution. They use their network to solve other problems their clients may encounter to become an enabler to their clients.

Action

Successful salespeople don't wait for the opportunities come to them. They know who their ideal clients are, who they work with and they

actively look to engage with them. Not to seek transactions, but to form relationships. They spend more time in the market than unsuccessful salespeople. They attend industry events, they invite their clients to functions, they connect their clients with those of value. They seek out value for their clients.

Ask

As obvious as it sounds, good salespeople ask for business - outright. They don't leave it unsaid - they say it. They say that they'd love to work with their prospective client and ask them what they need to do to make it happen. They discuss real tangible business with their intermediaries. This isn't about being brassy, this is about letting their prospect and their intermediaries understand explicitly that they wish to work with them.

Learning

Good salespeople learn. They hone their skills and knowledge to improve the value that they can add to their clients and intermediaries. They take the opportunity to ask the humble questions when they don't know something, but realise that they need to. They seek best practice and eagerly consume it and surround themselves with it to improve themselves and ultimately the solutions they can provide their clients. Good salespeople lose like anyone. The difference is that don't use this to form limiting beliefs. They use these losses to fuel future successes. They aren't fearful of asking their clients what they could or should have done to win their business. They look to stay in touch - they realise that you can lose today, but win tomorrow.

Stretch

Successful salespeople don't focus on the downside; they focus on the upside – so, they are more prepared to take risks where the right rewards exist. They don't sit in the comfortable - they push their boundaries and look for newer, better situations rather than languish doing the same thing day-in day-out, getting the same results (even if they already high

performing, they seek to improve this). Their targets are usually higher than those set for them.

It is of little surprise that selling on purpose usually results in increased 'luck'.

As Benjamin Franklin said:

*I am a strong believer in luck and
I find the harder I work the more I have of it.*

Yes, those successful sales people around you may be lucky. However, the fact that they can continue to repeat that luck is due to two things – they are selling by purpose and on purpose.

Insights By:

Name: Dan Symons
Company: Sales Deconstructed
Location: Wellington, New Zealand
Website: <http://www.salesdeconstructed.com>
LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/dansymons>
Twitter: @dan_symons



How Your Personal Brand Can Transform Your Sales

by John Smibert

Sue sat on the edge of the water reflecting on her amazing journey over the last five years. The harbour glistened with the reflection of the city lights.

She was sharing a poignant moment with her partner who had asked her how she felt. She explained that she had strangely conflicting feelings of contentment and restlessness.

Earlier in the evening, Sue had been honoured with an annual award as 'The leading influencer of change in the financial industry.' She had been chosen over dozens of nominees. An amazing achievement - particularly as she did not directly work in the industry. Until recently she was a sales consultant selling security software to financial enterprises.

In the last three years, she had helped her customers drive changes in the way their security risks were managed. Her commitment and persistence in challenging her customers to change had prevented significant losses for them and their industry.

Sue felt a sense of peace, gratitude and fulfilment.

However, there was also a burning desire to do more. She wanted to do her part to change the wider business world for the better. In reflecting on what she had achieved in recent years she knew she had the capability and power to do more.

Nearly five years ago, Sue would never have believed how far she would come. At that time, she was 26 years old and her junior sales role had been made redundant. She was forced to change her job and her company. As a result, she had joined an interstate branch of a small software company who provided excellent niche security software. Soon after joining she felt that she had made a mistake. The company lacked support for the sales team. She was given some product training and told to 'go sell'. Marketing was almost non-existent. She felt she was out of her depth.

After discussions with her sales manager and HR, they recognised their internal shortcomings and she was provided with an external mentor. After she explained her situation, the mentor suggested that she needed to identify how she could become a valuable resource for her target customers. To achieve this, he encouraged her to identify her 'unique promise of value' to her 'target audience'. This audience included senior executives and security analysts in the financial industry. Sue had pondered on this for some time - she had never thought in these terms before - that she personally provided a unique promise of value. She had a Degree in Security Management plus experience in the financial industry. So, she ultimately decided that she needed to build on her background and become an expert in security - an expert who could help the financial industry drive change that would mitigate security risks. She focused on learning about the issues and challenges her target customers were facing and built expertise in this domain. And, in parallel to this, her mentor advised her to build a strong personal brand - she needed to project herself as a domain expert in financial security. Sue was a fairly humble and introverted individual, so this was a little frightening for her but she agreed to take it on - to 'fake it until she made it' as her mentor said.

Together Sue and her mentor created a strategy to achieve this. Firstly, he convinced her 'it's not what you sell - it's how you sell' that will make you successful. And, how you sell needs to be focused on helping the customer drive change that will deliver the outcomes that are important to them, he said. To enable that, Sue needed to become a change agent and a thought leader.

Under the mentor's guidance, Sue identified experts around the world that she could draw on for thought leadership, content and advice. She connected with these people and built relationships. She subscribed to their blogs. She found out when they were speaking and attended events or sourced their content online. In her first 12 months, she shared their content with her target audience. Where possible she attended webinars, seminars and conferences on security and related subjects. She joined a number of online security and financial forums and took an active part in many discussions. Before long she was leading many of these discussions

As a result, Sue gained incredible insight into emerging security risks in the financial industry. Later, she started to write about them and published her own thought leadership articles on LinkedIn. She also published content regularly on her personal blog which became globally recognised.

Soon, she was being asked to sit on panels and to speak at security seminars and conferences.

All the way along this journey to becoming a thought leader, Sue went out of her way to ask her target customers to connect with her on LinkedIn. When they saw her publications and her profile they seldom hesitated to connect and engage with her. She also started to receive unsolicited requests from many target customers who wanted to connect. Security specialists and senior executives in the financial industry were being drawn to her.

As a result, Sue had little problem opening doors. Often, ahead of her customers, Sue easily identified emerging trigger events - industry changes and related security issues - that were developing. On identifying a trigger event that was likely to affect a particular organisation, she

would call to arrange a meeting. Because of the strength of her personal brand she would invariably get a 'yes' - and often, before she even explained why she needed the meeting.

Sue became a true challenger. Early in many meetings, after she had asked a number of insightful questions, her potential customer would become concerned when they understood the imminent risks they faced. Regularly, they would call an urgent meeting with their senior colleagues to discuss the issue with Sue. The result was often that they would create a project to assess the issue and to identify how they might address it - all with Sue's ongoing coaching and counselling.

Sue's company would normally play a role in the solution - sometimes minor, sometimes significant. They would often take the leading role in implementing the necessary security changes. However, it was largely irrelevant to Sue what role her company would play - her primary focus was on helping the customer eliminate security risk. That said, she was 100% confident that the law of reciprocity would ensure that she and her company would get a piece of the action - and indeed, they nearly always did. Sue's close rate on proposals was over 90%.

Three years from starting her new software sales role - at the age of 29 years - Sue was invited onto a financial industry security workgroup which was focussed on mitigating risk in the industry.

Soon after that she was head-hunted by a leading professional services firm to become a junior partner responsible for their emerging security consultancy services.

And now, here she was at the water's edge with her partner, contemplating her past and visualising the future. She had accepted the junior partnership role 18 months ago. Now, she has been recognised with this award - less than five years since she intrepidly started her new software sales role. It had been a whirlwind. She had 'faked it until she had made it', but in reality she had always been authentic. She was now a professionally recognised sales leader who was confident and capable of changing the world - and all this because she strategically developed her personal brand.

How did Sue achieve all this? And what was the mentor's role?

What thought process did the mentor take Sue through in order to create a personal brand that would give her the confidence and standing needed to help her achieve these outcomes?

His key role was to focus Sue on strategy. He emphasised the importance of thinking through her **personal branding and social media strategy**. He explained that tactics without strategy can often do more damage than good. He felt that if she had launched into activities like updating her profile, commenting on groups and forums and sharing content, she was likely to be aiming off the mark and would confuse her target audience - if she got to them at all.

He reminded her of Sun Tzu famous quote in The Art of War "**Strategy without tactics is the slowest road to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat**"

So, initially he had asked Sue to consider these questions:

- What are your overall **goals** and related **objectives**? How are you going to **measure** your progress to your short and long term goals?
- Are you clear as to your **authentic self** - your values and principles, your domain expertise? How should this be communicated?
- Do you have clarity around your '**unique promise of value**' to your '**target audiences**'.
- And for that matter, have you clearly defined your '**target audiences**'?
- What is your strategy to grow well targeted **connections and followers**, to create **value and trust** with those connections and to engage with them on social media in a positive and constructive way?

He went on to explain the reason for each of these questions and what was needed to be done in order to develop a personal branding strategy such as the one that enabled Sue to achieve beyond her wildest dreams.

She thought back to his coaching on each of these questions:

Firstly, her goals and objectives: He was not just talking about this year's sales objective. He was talking about her longer term goals.

He said: "You need to have these goals firmly entrenched in your mind, otherwise you could portray a confusing image or brand. And if you are off the mark then the confusing brand you put out there may not easily be corrected for 5 years or more because in the modern era your brand is digital - on the internet particularly via social media". He went on to say: "We often forget that our social media based personal brand is not easily changed - it is out there in the ether for a long time. To address this we need clear and visualized goals and we should break them down into 1, 3 and 5 year SMART objectives. This will ensure your short term tactics will be validly moving you towards your long term goals while delivering what you need in the short term. It also helps to generate and focus your energy".

Secondly, her authentic self: He emphasised "You are who you are. If you try to pretend you're somebody different you will be found out - the whole world can see it on social media. I am not suggesting that you don't strive to change - that is vital - but let your audience see where you are now and to where you are striving to move - the 'fake it until you make it' part." "There is nothing more refreshingly honest than a person portraying their true self and reaching out to stretch themselves. Your target audience will warm to the real you - the foundation for trust will be laid".

He asked Sue to test this by checking out the LinkedIn profile summaries of a few people she knew well - she quickly identified a few who were not being authentic.

Thirdly, her target audiences: He explained why he used the plural 'audiences'? He emphasised that Sue's primary target will be individuals in her target client businesses - those who can make decisions - often CxO's but not always. He also recommended that Sue include those people in her client organisations who can influence decision-makers.

He then explained that too often this is where many stop thinking. In doing so, they miss the opportunity to achieve significant leverage via those who influence their clients.

He asked Sue to think of those people in other organisations who have influence over her target clients. These could be professional people like accountants, financial advisors, lawyers, business consultants, media personalities and other non-competitive providers. It could also include people who publish content of value for your clients. He recommended that she include all these in her target audiences and she did.

He went on to say she should think about where the people she identified in her target audiences are active - where they have discussions - where they learn - where they get their information. He recommended that wherever they were she needed to be there.

Next, her 'unique promise of value': The mentor explained that we are all unique and we all have something of value to provide for others. He was not talking about Sue's product or service. He was talking about Sue herself. What is it that she personally brings to the table with her clients? What is her unique domain expertise? How does she help people? How does she personally create value for them?

He recognised that defining her 'unique promise of value' to her 'target audiences' would be a challenge. Most people have not put a lot of thought into this. And yet, it is the essential component of any personal brand. It is the essence of what we should communicate in our LinkedIn profiles for example. It is the essence of how we sell - and in the modern era he said: *"How we sell is more important than what we sell"*.

All these questions take time to answer meaningfully. Sue's mentor also recommended that she collaborate with trusted mentors, peers, clients and friends to ensure it is authentic and hits the mark. "Take the time to do it - the return can be significant and your risks will be minimised," he said.

Her strategy: When Sue had thought through these questions, her mentor said: "You be ready to develop your social media strategy."

- He coached Sue to ensure her strategy addressed these questions:
- How will I establish a strong presence on social media to perpetuate my brand?
- How will I connect and engage with my target audiences?
- What social media platforms are they active on? Where and how do I need to be active? Are there non-social media channels should I pursue? How will I leverage across platforms?
- How will I project myself as a person of value and trust?
- How will I create value for my target audience? Will I curate other people's content or will I create my own?
- What forums or groups do I need to be active in?
- What processes will I follow?
- What are my timeframes and how will I measure progress?

Once Sue had her strategy in place she had the framework to specifically decide on the tactics that would help her deploy her wider strategy. She was then ready to move on towards her greater goals without risking her brand.

And, as they say in the classics - "The rest is history".

Take the time to plan and to strategically develop your personal brand - it will be worth it - as it was for Sue.

Insights By:

Name: John Smibert
 Company: Strategic Selling Group and Custell
 Title: Facilitator and Director
 Location: Sydney
 Website: <http://www.strategicsellinggroup.com>
 Blog: <http://www.strategicsellinggroup.com>
 LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/smibert>
 Twitter: @johnsmibert



Are You Adding Value To Your Clients, Or Wasting Time?

by Wayne Moloney

Don sat in Steve's office reflecting on the presentation they had just delivered. He was unsure what to expect from Steve, the company's new sales manager. The presentation had not gone as well as he had anticipated.

Don knew Steve was a seasoned sales manager with an impressive record of success. He had a reputation for delivering great results with minimal investment, and was also recognised for turning around poor performing sales teams. Don, on the other hand, only had a couple of years of experience in sales, and the recent move from less complex product-based sales to delivering services that had the potential to significantly impact the business of the his clients was proving a struggle. He was not making his targets.

Don was surprised when Steve didn't pursue an in-depth analysis of the presentation, but instead asked Don what he thought was his major problem in achieving target. Don explained, "Leads were not a problem. Your predecessor was an 'old school' sales manager who believed sales

was a numbers game and had driven marketing and the sales team to generate high levels of leads to 'keep the pipeline full'. Unfortunately, this creates a high level of activity to service the leads and doesn't allow me as much time as I would like getting to understand the business of the prospects."

"I think you could be right," Steve agreed, "You definitely don't need more leads. And, we know our service deliverable is as good, or better than others in the market. So your problem must lie in your approach to selling."

Don was a bit taken aback and asked Steve to explain what he meant by 'his approach to selling'.

"From what I saw today," Steve explained, "You present well but your proposal missed the mark. You don't understand what your customer values and you are creating a lot of waste in how you approach selling."

Steve leant back and now asked Don how *he* thought the meeting had gone. "At first I was surprised at a couple of people in the meeting. I believed I was across all decision-makers and influencers, but these guys were new and obviously had a different agenda. They showed little enthusiasm for our proposed services despite the fact we are market leaders in this area. Why didn't it resonate with them?"

Don knew this was now a common theme to his sales presentations and was hoping Steve would be able to help him start delivering to expectations. Like most of the sales team, he was putting in long hours, doing it all too hard and not getting the business that should have been expected. He knew Steve had been brought in to make an inefficient sales team efficient!

Steve then quizzed Don on what his value proposition had been, specific for this prospect. He had not seen a common theme in Don's presentation. Don's response was the rote, generic marketing rhetoric used across the company. Clearly, he had not crafted a clear value proposition specific to the prospect's needs.

Steve continued, "If you had spent more time understanding the prospect's business, researching what our competitors were doing, how the market was trending; do you think you would have been able to propose a more personalised solution and get to know both the formal and informal players in the decision?" Don's response was obvious: "Of course."

"So, what you need to be doing," Steve continued, "Is listening to prospects more and working on less opportunities."

"Less!" Don exclaimed, "I need to be working on more to hit my numbers." And, he asked Steve to explain how he expected him to get more sales with less leads.

"Don," Steve said, "Unlike my predecessor, I don't believe sales is like a lottery where the more entries you have, the more chance you have of winning. You need to spend more time on opportunities that offer the best chance of success and you need to be sure you understand EXACTLY what the customer sees as value. It's all about being Lean."

Now Don was completely lost, "What does my physique have to do with winning business?"

Steve laughed and went on to explain that 'being Lean' was how he had achieved his past success, and was what he could see would help Don. "Lean is a concept initially introduced into manufacturing, specifically motor vehicles, to produce more vehicles, more cheaply, with less resources and of a higher quality. But what started as a manufacturing practise with motor vehicles has since been adopted across all industry sectors and all areas of business operations - this sales department will be next."

Steve continued: "In it's simplest form, Lean is about adding value, reducing waste and continually looking for ways to improve business processes."

Steve was a 'student of sales' and kept abreast of all the latest trends. He adopted the best of the new sales methods such as Insight and

Challenger Selling, and then merged them with what was working for him in more 'mature' sales methodologies, such as Relationship and Solution Selling. But he always had a Lean approach to any methodology he adopted. He also knew from work done in turning around sales teams that there were a few key reasons for businesses making decisions not to buy:

- There was no differentiation in what was offered so clients chose on price;
- They didn't like the sales approach, they did not engage;
- They were more confident of others being capable of delivering;
- And, they didn't see the solution presented as meeting their future business needs.

Steve explained these findings to Don and suggested what he witnessed at today's presentation was no different. He suggested all of the issues he raised were related to having a better understanding of *what the customer valued*.

Don was curious and urged Steve to continue. "I believe that for you to 'habitually' hit your targets, you need to focus on delivering a service to your clients that meets and hopefully exceeds their expectations. You want them to be your advocate. You want them to see you, and the company as a partner in their business. To do this, you first have to understand what they value from the services you are proposing and what our services will do for them and their business. You need to understand what is happening in their market, present them with ideas that will help them solve problems, reduce risks or create opportunities. But most importantly, we need to understand what *they* see as value. We need to listen to the Voice of the Customer; something I don't think has been happening here."

Steve explained, "You need to understand, at a customer level and also at the level of each person involved in the decision, what they see as value. The two new guys in today's meeting did not appear to be engaged with how we planned to change their business - they didn't see value as they

defined it. But then, why would they? You hadn't engaged them, and could not know their agendas."

Don couldn't argue with Steve's observation. He knew from experience, and from what the marketing department were providing that he had a generic grasp on what value their services were offering the market but rarely had time to be able to craft this into something specific to each prospect.

Don could see the benefits and it appeared obvious when he thought about it. "So, if we know what our prospects value, we can tailor a solution to deliver that value and we may even need to present our proposals in such a way that we touch the 'hot buttons' of individual departments and people in the organisation."

"Exactly," Steve agreed, "All too often we, as salespeople, think we know what the customer wants. But do you know what your prospects and clients *value*? Like beauty, value is in the eye of the beholder. The same feature of our service and the benefit that it delivers may be seen very differently by different prospects and individuals within that prospect. Ultimately, value is anything your client is prepared to pay for and your goal is to clearly understand this...and this might not just be a financial transaction. Time is one of the most valuable things we have and getting your prospective clients to spend time with you is a form of payment."

Don could see this made perfect sense. But he was struggling to cover all of the leads that were coming to him as it was, wouldn't this just increase his workload? Steve understood and suggested he'd offer some thoughts on how Don could get more time to work this opportunities shortly, but for now he wanted the focus on the value proposition.

"Your *Value Proposition* needs to explain how your offering solves problems, reduces risk, creates opportunity or improves business for your prospect. It needs to be specific to the benefits we deliver and it needs to explain why your prospect should consider you over your competitors. It can be defined as 'the extent to which your client perceives your offering meets their needs or wants, measured by their willingness to pay

for it'. And, of course, this might differ from department to department and from one individual to another. If I use the Lean definition, *Value* is 'anything for which the customer is prepared to pay', and as I said previously, this may be in other than financial terms."

This resonated with Don but he was still concerned about how he could make time to deal with the number of leads being generated and get more involved with his prospects.

Steve laughed, "OK Don, I can see this is going to keep you awake at night, so let's think about creating more time for you to spend with your clients and prospects. As I have already mentioned, you need to be working on less opportunities. So let's look at how you could do this, and get better sales results. It all comes down to *reducing waste* in your sales process. Now, while I'll be looking at this across the sales department, here are a few areas of waste that I find are apply to most salespeople who are struggling to spend the time needed with their best opportunities. Firstly, they are spending time on opportunities with little or no chance of success. Their leads need to be better qualified. Secondly, they are creating leads that aren't or can't be followed up. Then they fail to connect with those that can influence or make a decision. They have meetings with prospects without having clear objectives, and, lastly, their proposals are not specific to the personal and business needs of the decision-makers. Sound familiar?"

"Wow," Don exclaimed, "It's like you've been reading my mind. I think I am guilty of all of those. So, how can knowing these wastes, as you call them, help me have more time to understand what my prospects value?"

"There are a lot of wastes," Steve started, "And, we can discuss these in more detail later, but let's look at the one that I think will help you the most. Stop spending time on opportunities with little or no chance of success. What you need to be doing is getting a better understanding of your opportunity. Don't just work the volume as you've been doing. Focusing on 'real' opportunities will see you working on less opportunities and coupled with a good understanding of what the *customer values*, allow you to craft better solutions and convert more

business. Why? Simply because focusing your sales efforts on the 'right' opportunities means you will not be wasting time on those with little or no chance of success."

Steve continued, "There are a lot of qualification models and we can review these in more detail later, but ultimately, for each opportunity you are working, you need to be continually asking if there is a real opportunity. Does the client have a need we can satisfy, or can we present a business opportunity to them that is compelling and would be of value? You then need to ask yourself if we are able to be competitive. How can we position this against our competitors, and will we have a fair chance of success? And from this, you need to be confident you can win. Lastly, you need to be sure it is business that is worth winning. Will it provide the margins we need? Will it be a lead-in for future business? Will it be a great reference site? If the answer to any of these questions is not 'YES' you need to do more research to determine the viability of the opportunity or walk away."

"This all makes perfect sense," said Don as he thought back to a quote he had read in an old business book he was reading for the first time, Tom Peters and Robert Waterman's 1980's classic 'In Search of Excellence'. What Steve was telling him were 'blinding glimpses of the obvious'.

Steve brought the meeting to a close by explaining: "This is just the beginning, Don. You need to understand what is seen by your clients as value. I want you to be focused on those few things that are critical to them. It will mean you don't waste their time or yours on those aspects that don't represent any value to them. In fact, you'll see how this can differentiate you by creating greater clarity for your clients. Once you understand this, and have a process to make sure you are working with real opportunities, you'll free up time for you to be enjoying the extra commissions you'll be making."

Don was impressed. Steve definitely made him think about sales differently. He hadn't suggested there needed to be a sweeping changes to Don's sales methodology, but had given Don some ideas that could be applied to whatever method he was using. It was about being more

efficient. He thanked Steve for the 'lesson' and was already thinking of how he could apply these concepts to his current pipeline, especially whether each lead was really worth investing in. He knew, had he had this discussion with Steve before making today's presentation, he would have approached it very differently and he couldn't help but think what might have been...

Insights By:

Name: Wayne Moloney
Company: Business Roadmap Pty. Ltd.
Title: Director and Principal Consultant
Location: Sydney, Australia
Website: <http://www.businessroadmap.com.au>
Blog: <http://www.businessroadmap.com.au/blog>
LinkedIn: <https://au.linkedin.com/in/waynemoloney>
Twitter: @waynemoloney



I'm A Loser Baby – My First Ever Loss Review

by Cian McLoughlin

“You are what you do repeatedly. Excellence is not an event, it’s a habit” Aristotle

The first Loss Review I ever conducted taught me a lot, and it was a very humbling experience. I was still working in the corporate world back then, for a large technology vendor and feeling pretty confident about this particular deal. When I heard we had lost, I was devastated and more than a little confused. After almost 20 years as a sales professional, you feel you’ve developed a pretty good sixth sense when it comes to predicting winning and losing deals, but clearly I misread this one completely!

I decided then and there to put into action an idea that had been bubbling away in the back of my brain for a long time. An idea so crazy, so outlandish, I feared my friends and colleagues might banish me from the IT industry forever! From my first stumbling steps in the world of B2B sales, as a wet-behind-the-ears 24 year old, I always had a niggling suspicion that something wasn’t quite right - an ‘emperor’s new clothes’ sensation that we were all ignoring or choosing not to recognise a fact which was blindingly obvious. Surely, at the end of every important sales cycle, win, lose or

draw, we should be trying to find out what we did well, where we fell down and how we could improve next time? And surely, asking our customers and prospects for their feedback and insights as the last step in our sales process, was the easiest and most impactful way to achieve this goal?

It seems like such a blindingly obvious step to take, but in reality only a very small minority of sales-focused companies were doing it back then. Even nowadays, less than 10% of companies consistently analyse their wins and losses, by talking directly to their customers.

When I decided to embark on my first Loss Review, I wasn't even sure if the client would agree to participate. I had no idea how I should structure the conversation, but I simply had to gain some understanding of what had just happened and how I'd ended up sprawled on the canvas at the end of this deal. And thus Trinity's Win Loss service took its first stuttering steps into the world.

The Good

So what did I learn? I might start with the positive lessons, because they were easier for me to stomach at the time and are less painful to remember now. I learned that if you ask in an appropriate manner, customers and prospects will agree to take part in a post-sales review discussion. In fact, most are happy to be asked and are more than willing to share their insights. Assuming you've conducted yourself professionally throughout the sales engagement, you've earned the right to some feedback.

In preparing for this Loss Review meeting, I realised that using the steps of my sales process as a guide was a sensible way to structure the customer debrief conversation.

1. Top of the Funnel: I started by asking questions about how they first made contact with us, how easy it was to access the information they needed, how quickly they were able to find the right individual to speak to in the business, and about how responsive and engaged we were in these initial interactions.

2. **Discovery & Needs analysis:** I then started to probe their views on the quality of our industry knowledge, the depth and breadth of the research we conducted before and on the questions we asked during, our initial discovery meetings with the prospect.
3. **Demo & Proof of Concept (POC):** The next area I decided to tackle was the quality and impact of the solution demonstrations we conducted and our ability to articulate a valuable and plausible solution during the POC.
4. **Legals & Best and Final Offer (BAFO):** The final area I focused on in this Loss Review meeting was how we performed when it came to our best and final pricing proposal and how easy it was to deal with my organisation from a legal and contractual perspective.

As you can see, it wasn't rocket science. In many respects the questions naturally volunteered themselves as I focused on each step of the sales cycle. Questions like:

Q. Could you please rate our performance against the following criteria during the initial stages of our engagement with your organisation?

- Quality of upfront discovery process
- Industry knowledge and expertise which we displayed
- Ability to understand your organisations key drivers
- Ability to effectively engage with your stakeholders
- Knowledge of our solution portfolio
- Understanding of your organisations business environment
- Access to high calibre resources from across our business
- Cultural fit with your organisation

Q. Did you feel as a team we developed a clear understanding of your needs and were able to present a compelling proposal which clearly aligned to these needs?

- Interview question

Q. *On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being lowest & 5 highest) how would you rate our performance according to the following criteria:*

1. Responsiveness
2. Value for Money
3. Customer service
4. Subject matter expertise
5. Thought leadership
6. Quality of people
7. Cultural Fit
8. Knowledge of your Industry
9. Knowledge of our solution offering
10. Quality of past projects

As I prepared for this meeting and researched how other vendors had conducted similar reviews overseas, I realised there were two types of questions I should ask.

Quantitative factual questions, to get specific feedback about key aspects of the sales process, product demo's, pricing, quality of proposal documents, key decision-making criteria etc. I also needed to formulate **a set of qualitative interview questions**, recognizing that every customer engagement is unique. These qualitative questions allowed me to capture the specific learnings from this particular deal; hopefully lessons which I could apply to future sales cycles. That's about it I'm afraid, in terms of positive learnings, it was pretty much downhill from there.

Perhaps the most important lesson this first Loss Review taught me was that I had just been beaten by a better salesperson. Not a better solution, not a more aggressive pricing strategy or a slicker demo, not even an obvious mistake or omission on our side, quite simply I had been out-sold. The executive sponsor of the project, who was a very genuine and decent man, explained the following to me in almost apologetic tones:

The Bad

- He said: "Cian, your competitor told me that yours was a complex solution. He said you'd need an army of people to demonstrate it for us and because it was so complex no single person, not even from the vendor, could explain it on their own.

Five people arrived for your presentation," he continued, "Two people arrived for theirs." **Strike 1**

(I could explain the reason for this number of presenters to you now and for all of the other negatives that you'll see below, but what's the point? If I couldn't articulate it to the customer at the time, there's no sense in me trying to after the fact)

- He explained that my competitor had indicated that our solution would be far more expensive than theirs, but that when we discovered the disparity in the two prices, we would find a way to drop our price to match theirs. The competitor went on to say that we would find a way to claw back this discount at some stage during the life of the project, if our solution was selected.

The Exec sponsor then reminded me of exactly what had happened. *"You provided us with your original pricing proposal, when I gave you the ball park figure the other vendors were quoting, you immediately found a way to discount to their level. That made us feel you had been overcharging us in the first place and also convinced us that you'd find a way to claw back the original amount over the life of our project"*

Strike 2

And, The Ugly

As I sat there listening to this feedback, I was starting to dislike this other faceless salesperson, but I have to admit I was also developing a grudging respect for him. I didn't know their

solution particularly well at the time, but I knew as a company they were small, a riskier proposition than us and struggling to gain any market share.

What I failed to realise or remember, was that first and foremost, people buy from people. Ideally from people they know, like and trust. What does it take to earn these attributes? It takes time, it takes commitment, it takes great listening skills and strong cultural fit. But I digress....

- My shiny-shoed arch nemesis explained that his company was pretty small, so this customer would be one of their largest and most strategic in the country. He posed the question to the Exec sponsor: How important a customer would they be, if they were to select our solution? Top 5, top 10, top 50 even? He went on to suggest that this customer would be such a low priority that we wouldn't even sell them our solution directly, instead we'd send in a partner to do our selling for us.

I'm sure you can guess where this is going. In we marched with a partner, without taking sufficient time to explain the context of this approach and without any appreciation of the competitive landmines we were stepping on.

Pow...Strike 3

In baseball three Strikes usually sees you heading back to the dugout, but not in this deal review. For another 30 minutes the hits kept coming. Even now, many years later, recalling this review meeting still causes me real discomfort. Often in a losing sales cycle, when specific feedback and insights like this aren't present, you can console yourself with the old clichés which most sales people trot out at times of lost deals:

- We lost on price (an oldie, but a goodie)
- The client had a pre-existing bias towards another vendor (hard to prove, but then again hard to disprove)

- We lacked executive sponsorship (a clever one, because it shares the responsibility around a little, but is sufficiently vague to avoid any direct finger pointing)

But not this time. On this occasion, I had to confront the brutal reality that we had been out-played, out-thought and out-sold. It was an extremely humbling experience, but also an incredibly motivating one.

Many people in business, and virtually, all people in sales possess a competitive streak as part of their DNA. This feedback did more than just educate me, it motivated me to win the next deal in which I competed against this individual. The more perceptive amongst you might have already worked out what else this Loss Review did for me. It provided me with my competitors play book, so the next time I went head to head against him, I was beyond prepared.

I realised that in all likelihood he would adopt the same or a similar winning strategy, which had beaten me so comprehensively in the last deal. On the basis of this extremely thorough Loss Review, I now had the knowledge and insights I required to pivot my sales strategy for engaging on the next deal. I'm pleased to report the next time I did find myself head to head on a deal with this particular sales rep, my team knocked the ball out of the park, because now we had an unfair advantage, a complete copy of his playbook to help guide and inform our sales strategy.

So, as a sales professional or sales leader what can you do?

- Take a deep breath and make a commitment to never winning or losing another important deal again, without finding out the key factors which contributed to the win or loss.
- Reverse engineer the review process, by first working out what you need to know or would like to understand better. Then you can work out what questions to ask to elicit this feedback.
- Consider using your sales process as guide to help you structure your line of questioning.

Finally, consider setting an expectation with your prospect at the very beginning of the sales cycle that you would appreciate their feedback and insights at the end of the sales process, win, lose or draw. By asking early you increase your chances of their participation, whilst also differentiating yourself from your competitors.

Happy Selling....

Insights By:

Name: Cian Mcloughlin
Company: Trinity Perspectives
Title: CEO
Location: Sydney, Australia
Website: <http://www.trinityperspectives.com.au>
Blog: <http://www.trinityperspectives.com.au/blog>
LinkedIn: <https://au.linkedin.com/in/cianmcloughlin>
Twitter: @Trinityperspect



Seven Questions To Help You Plan Your First Executive Meeting

by Steve Hall

You've finally scheduled that meeting you've been trying to get with a high level executive in one of your biggest target accounts.

You know first impressions are critical and you want to make sure you get it right and don't fall at the first hurdle. Ask yourself these seven questions to help make the meeting a resounding success:

1. Are you meeting the right person?

This is a question you should be asking before you schedule the meeting. If it's your first meeting in the account you should be aiming for the highest level executive you can reach – assuming the solution you're selling affects them.

The best way to do that is to define your business value proposition *for that specific company* and, depending on the company you're targeting, approach the CEO or other senior executive.

Tell them you'd like to discuss how you can help them to achieve a specific business goal that they care about. If they do care about it they will either see you or refer you to the person who has responsibility for that area.

Example:

A very small South African software developer was trying to get in to Australian telcos to discuss their complex billing software. They had no offices, customers or staff in Australia.

After discussing their solution we decided they had the capability to allow large telcos to generate new revenue streams from their customers by offering more flexible pricing.

We called the CEO of Australia's largest telecommunications company, spoke to his PA and said we'd like to discuss generating new revenue streams for them. We were referred to his second in command who in turn organised meetings with several Executive General Managers and the CTO – purely because we'd identified a business issue that they cared about that our client could help them with.

It's critical to enter a major account at the right level. If you start at the top and you're referred down, you go to a meeting with the imprimatur of the person who referred you.

If you enter via the bowels of the ICT department or through a middle manager it can be difficult, if not impossible, to climb to the level of the people who make the final buying decision. If you can't get to the final decision-makers your chances of winning a deal are significantly reduced – and even if you finally reach them you're seen as someone who operates on a lower level rather than a valued business partner.

For the purpose of this article, let's assume you're meeting with someone at the right level to discuss helping them with a business issue they care about.

2. What do you know about the company and person you're meeting?

It's no longer enough to go into a meeting with a senior executive and ask *"tell me about your business"* or *"what keeps you awake at night?"*

Senior executives expect you to have done your research before they meet you.

You need to understand what the company does, who its key customers are, its offerings, its history and its business challenges.

You also need to know as much about the person you're meeting as possible – what other positions they have held, what they care about in their current role and so on.

By doing effective research using the company web site, annual report, newspaper articles, industry research, LinkedIn profiles and articles the executive has published you should be able to get a good picture of the company and executive you're meeting with.

3. What is your key objective?

It's important to know what your objectives for the meeting are – and not to have too many.

If it's your first meeting it's too early to sell. They aren't interested in your company, your offering, your brochures, presentations and case studies. They are interested in themselves and their business issues and the possibility you might be able to help them.

It varies depending on the circumstances, but usually the objectives of a first meeting are:

- To discuss the business issue you can help them solve, its implications and consequences
- To show you understand the issue

- To develop credibility as a person and an organisation that can help them
- To agree there's potential for you to help them
- To agree on the next step

The first meeting should be almost all about them and very little about you. You should encourage them to do the talking by asking intelligent questions then listening to (and taking notes of) the answers.

You shouldn't take presentations, brochures and other marketing aids to the meeting and under no circumstances should you even consider demonstrations during a first exploratory meeting.

My strong recommendation is that the only props you should take to a first meeting are your brain, your research and either a pen and paper or a laptop/table for taking notes.

4. What is their key objective?

You know what you want from the meeting. What do they want?

Senior executives are very busy and they have many demands on their time. They rarely meet anyone without a specific objective – so what's their specific objective for their meeting with you?

You should be able to make an intelligent assumption about their objective based on the reason they accepted the meeting and what was said to get them to agree to the meeting.

However, the best way to validate your assumption is to ask them. Two questions you can ask are;

"I know you're very busy – what was your motivation to accepting this meeting?" or "What objective do you want to get out of this meeting?"

Then make sure you address those objectives as a priority and at the end of the meeting ask them if you've done so to their satisfaction.

5. What intelligent questions can you ask?

The quality of the questions you ask will determine how they view you. The statement *"there's no such thing as a stupid question"* is in fact a stupid statement (if there's no such thing as stupid question, what sorts of questions do stupid people ask?).

Generic questions such as *"Tell me about your business"* or *"What are the top three business issues you're facing?"* simply show you haven't done your research. If you're talking to an important target account and you believe you can help them with a key business issue you need to know about that issue.

By asking intelligent questions you not only get the detailed responses that allow you to understand more but you show that you understand their issues.

If you're meeting to discuss a specific business issue then the questions should be related to that issue and should demonstrate your familiarity with the issues and its impact.

Example:

"I know you recently bought another company and in our experience there are many logistical and cultural issues when you're trying to integrate two companies. How are you handling the issue of merging your sales teams?"

That shows you know about them, it shows you know about the kinds of issues they face and it gets more information on the area you're interested in (assuming you're interested in helping people with their sales processes).

6. What questions are they likely to ask?

At some stage, they are going to ask you a question. The better you've prepared the better your answer will be and the more professional you'll look.

Ask yourself: *"What questions are they likely to ask and how will I respond?"* – remembering you want them to do most of the talking. So prepare answers that are accurate, honest – and ideally fairly short.

If they ask: *"What do you do?"* resist the temptation to launch into your company or product pitch. They don't really want to know what you do. They want to know what you can do for them. The correct answer is: *"We help companies like you to <solve the business problem you're there to discuss>".*

If they ask a question you can't answer, rather than prevaricating it's best to say: *"I don't know but I'll find out."*

7. What is the next step?

You should have a next step clearly in mind. It may be to get a referral to another executive, it may be to organise an investigation, arrange a presentation or schedule a demonstration.

Whatever it is, know where you want to go, understand where they want to go and agree on the next step at the end of the meeting.

Once the meeting is over you will also want to send the executive a summary of what you discussed, what you agreed and what the next step is.

Summary

Like anything, implementing these ideas depends on many factors and circumstances. The key issues are:

- Initial meetings are to develop credibility, not to sell
- Make it about them first, you second
- Understand what they are trying to achieve
- Understand them and their business issues
- If you've gone to a lot of trouble to get a meeting at the right level, you need to prepare and research thoroughly
- Your objective isn't to qualify an opportunity – this should be a by-product of the meeting, not the rationale for having it.

Insights By:

Name: Steve Hall
Company: Technology Sales & Marketing
Title: Director
Location: Sydney
Website: <http://www.stevehall.com.au>
LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/stevehallsydney>
Twitter: @stevehallsydney



How 'Smarketing' Boosts Sales Results, Customer Experience And Employee Engagement

by Peter Strohkorb

Let me start with an important statement:

"An under-performing Sales and Marketing department severely inhibits the success of the entire business."

Why is this the case?

The digital economy and the Buyer's Journey have revolutionised the way that people and organisations conduct their purchasing, particularly when it comes to large B2B sales. While it was once enough to have a relationship with one's customers to secure their loyalty, it has become increasingly apparent that, especially in competition-saturated vertical markets, the *quality* of these relationships is a driving factor in attracting, satisfying and retaining customers.

Put simply: Smarketing – the collaboration of Sales and Marketing - is a strategic advantage.

Sales and Marketing are, of course, two of the most customer-facing functions in any organisation. They may not be the face of the organisation in the boardroom, but they certainly are that face in the marketplace. Customers gauge organisations by the way sales and marketing departments speak to, and with, them.

Since today's buyers report that they are looking for quality and consistency in this dialogue, you would think that the senior management team's top priority would be to ensure that these two vital functions perform in perfect harmony so that they best represent the organisation to customers and prospects. With surprising frequency this is not the case.

Disconnected Sales and Marketing teams have no chance of hitting sales targets.

According to the TAS Group, *"67% of sales professionals do not achieve their personal sales quota."*, and IDC says that, *"Only 25% of sales leads and collateral that Marketing creates are ever used by Sales teams."*

Smarketing is the ideal vehicle to align customer-facing business processes and messaging to enhance the customer experience all along the Buyer's Journey. Further, the successful deployment of popular sales acceleration tools such as sales training, marketing collateral, thought leadership material, power messaging, mobile and business automation technology are only as effective as the goodwill of the people utilising these resources. It is for this reason that one of my favourite sayings is:

"You can have the latest technology and the most sophisticated business processes, but if your people are not with you then it will all come to nothing."

Therefore, symbiotic Sales and Marketing collaboration at all levels, from the CEO down to the most remote sales rep, needs to become more than a 'would be nice to have'. It needs to become a top priority for organisations of all shapes and sizes everywhere.

“If your organisation is not either overhauling or fine-tuning this important relationship right now, you can be sure that your competitors are.”

To understand an organisation’s collaboration status quo, I propose that there exists a collaboration maturity spectrum, i.e. that there are different collaborative stages through which an organisation can grow and mature.



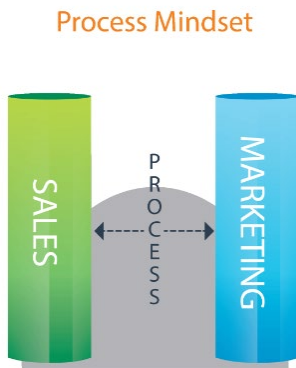
The lowest maturity stage is characterised by what I call the ‘Silo Mindset’. Here, the contact between the two corporate departments is largely conducted primarily at the executive level, i.e. the heads of the two departments talk frequently, while the interactions further down the food chain are either rare, or mostly unpleasant. If you think I am painting too bleak a picture here, then think again. I have seen this kind of behaviour in some

of the largest and best known brand organisations on the planet. A typical scenario for the Silo Mindset is one where Marketing throws sales leads and collateral ‘over the fence’ to Sales and wipes its hands of any downstream consequences. “We’ve done our work,” they say, “now it’s up to Sales to sell.” Sales looks at the leads and says, “These are no good,” promptly and permanently ignoring them. The same process is repeated with marketing collateral. Sales, then hastily concludes that Marketing lives in its own world, that it doesn’t support Sales, nor understands its needs. Marketing jumps to its own conclusions, usually pertaining to Sales’ supposed inability to sell anything at all.

Luckily, I am seeing less and less of the Silo Mindset, thank goodness, but this kind of cycle, if left unchecked, has not – at least not to my knowledge – ever resolved itself.

The next maturity stage through which would-be collaborative organisations must pass is what I call the ‘Process Mindset’. At this point,

the two departments have realised that they are better off working together in some, albeit limited, way.



Process Mindset collaboration is limited to a small number of narrowly defined processes, the most popular one being the generation, nurturing and handover of sales leads. This is also one of the popular 'quick-fix solutions' that management likes to throw at the problem of poor Sales+Marketing Collaboration. More on that later.

Less mature organisations treat sales lead management as a one-way process as described above, whereas in the more mature organisations this process is much more bi-directional, with information flowing back to Marketing from Sales in terms of lead follow up and closure rates.

But even this is less than ideal.

The really mature organisations have discovered that there is much more to marketing than the generation of sales leads and marketing content. These mature organisations understand the importance of a united front; from the customers' perspective, Sales and Marketing have become nearly indistinguishable from each other.



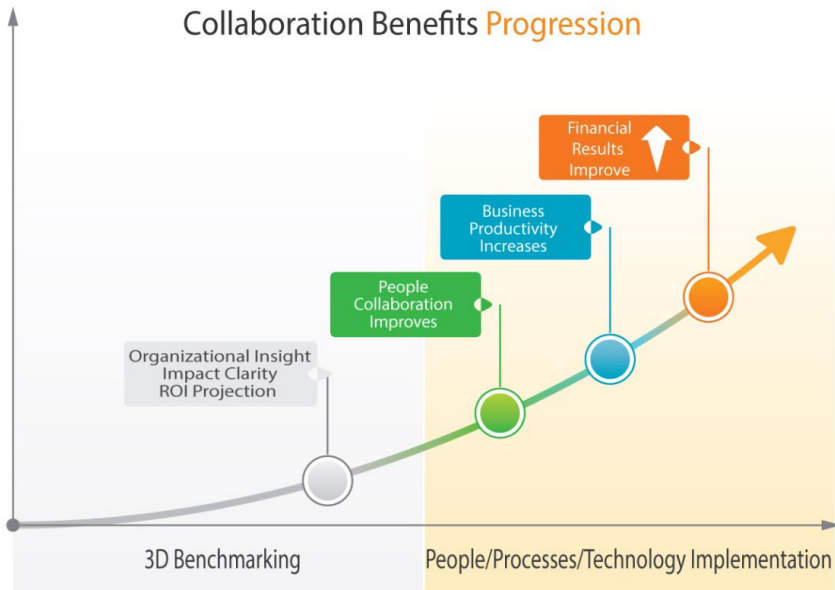
They have developed what I call the 'Collaboration Mindset'.

Such a mindset – to deserve the name – must be pervasive. Most importantly, it must unfailingly deliver the kind of personalised and nuanced customer experience that organisations have been talking about for years, but rarely have delivered. Such organisations live and

breathe the term 'Smarketing'.

It's difficult to overstate the importance of effective Sales+Marketing collaboration for organisations that want to address the needs and expectations of today's customers. Think of Sales and Marketing as the two legs of a long-distance runner. Since the customer is only interested in the leaders of the pack, and misalignment between sales and marketing functions significantly impedes organisational foot speed, it is crucial that organisations do not fall behind. But hobbled or (at the very least) limping organisations are rapidly doing so, lagging behind twenty-first-century buying trends. More than ever they need to have both legs pumping in unison for maximum efficiency. They need to use their energy to propel the organisational body so that it can out-sprint the competition in the era of the digital economy and the Buyer's Journey. Foot-dragging organisations need to propel themselves into the kind of methods and processes that are necessary to forge a better Sales/Marketing relationship.

What is more, staff engagement in the business and a collaborative environment is hugely attractive to high performers, whereas an atmosphere of blame and finger-pointing is not. High performers (particularly high sales performers) are immensely mobile, they can choose the organisations that they would like to work with and they act on their choices. Ask any HR manager about how critical to business success it is to have a collaborative culture and a supportive team environment. The answer will invariably be: very important. However, it requires an appropriate mindset to move across the collaboration maturity spectrum and to create a superior and consistent customer experience that delivers high growth, staff engagement, boosted sales results and overall organisational growth.



When you are ready to take the next steps, you can achieve Sales & Marketing collaboration in three steps:

1. **Benchmark** the true level of collaboration between your teams in order to draw a line in the sand and to move forward from. Benchmarking, necessary to determine the quality of the Sales and Marketing relationship at every level of seniority, is today, where the bottlenecks are, and where the 'low hanging fruit' opportunities lie.

This is best done by an external, independent and neutral 3rd party so that it is not influenced by pre-existing relationships that may hinder true, frank and honest feedback from all stakeholders.

2. **Coach** the parties and their players at all levels of seniority (i.e. not just the executive team) on why closer collaboration is good for them. Then help them to define and agree on the collaboration processes and metrics that they will from now on live by. Answer questions such as: "What's in it for me?" and "What does success look like for me, for my department and

for the whole organisation?" Make sure that there is universal agreement on the above.

- 3. Implement and support** the collaboration processes with suitable collaboration technology, if appropriate. Don't be tempted to rush this step. It is important to leave this until the parties have agreed on why and how they will work together because a technology-lead approach will only encounter the usual resistance as people often reject change that is imposed on them (just look at how unsuccessful many CRM implementations are around the world).

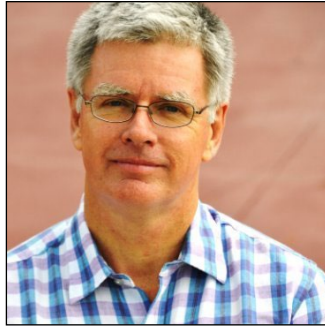
Provide ongoing coaching, either by a neutral collaboration services provider or by a dedicated internally appointed and empowered 'collaboration czar', so that collaboration can grow beyond the walls of head office, and so that it can remain sustainable for a long time, even when internal personnel and external circumstances change.

Businesses can no longer afford to have unsuccessful Sales and Marketing teams. Every under-performing sales rep is costing you money. That means that, as shown here, Smarketing is now a strategic advantage.

Help is available to begin your teams' own Smarketing journey. Start today.

Insights By:

Name: Peter Strohkorb
Company: Peter Strohkorb Consulting International Pty Ltd
Title: CEO, Speaker, Author
Location: Sydney
Website: <http://www.peterstrohkorbconsulting.com> and <http://www.peterstrohkorbconsulting.com/>
Blog: <https://www.linkedin.com/today/author/3315897>
LinkedIn: <https://au.linkedin.com/in/peterstrohkorbsalesmarketing>
Twitter: @pstrohkorb



Moving From Price To Value - Building B2B Trust

by Keith Dugdale

“All my customers care about is price” is a commonly held belief among sales teams, managers and executives, especially as they start losing market share or as an economy tightens.

Of course, everyone includes price in their decision-making, but the key point is to understand where price sits in their list of buying criteria. For some buyer price is number one. For many more, price is much lower down the list, provided they see value for the price they pay. That value could be perceived in terms of quality, technical excellence, reliability, size, speed, or trust. Increasingly, and especially when market conditions toughen, trust becomes a key differentiator. Without it, in markets where technical differences, reliability and speed are hard to differentiate, price becomes the dominating decision criteria.

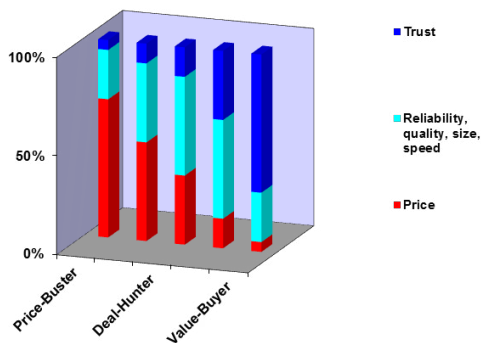
Trust can even be the difference between survival and extinction. In a recent strategy discussion, one of our clients indicated that they needed to reduce the number of sub-contracted manufacturers of their product from 7 to 4, owing to market conditions. They said they were basing their

decision on who they found it easiest to work with. When pushed, they admitted their decision came down to the ones they felt they could trust.

Returning to price, we find that as buyers become more trusting of their suppliers they not only worry less about price, they worry less about the offering itself and the extent to which it is the right offering for them, because they trust that the person selling to them would only sell them things which are of value to them. It is the level of trust that individuals within organisations build between them that matters in a B2B relationship. Trust is so critical because it is the lever that moves personal and by extension organisational relationships, to new levels.

The benefits of moving from price to value are many. Value-buyers seek more help, so sales increase and they look for opportunities to refer their trusted partner to other people within their organisation and to other organisations. Competitive bidding, with all the associated time and cost is reduced. The salesperson often enjoys the interaction more, makes more sales and gets a bigger bonus. The organisation has a more motivated sales force; revenues increase because more customers are buying more; profit margins increase because with less competitive negotiation, prices increase; all leading to higher market share and a higher share price.

Buyer Motivation



□

As trust builds, other criteria, including price, become less critical and people can be moved from Price-Busters, to Deal-Hunters, to

Value-Buyers. Even within Price-Buster organisations, individuals can be found who behave as Value-Buyers. Regrettably, the opposite is also true. The trick is to work out which you are dealing with and whether, and how, you can move them.

Examples:

Low-cost high volume businesses such as security, building materials, freight typically fall into the Price-Buster category.

Government and commercial procurement functions often claim to be in the deal hunter category, but often display many characteristics of Price-Busters.

Technical buyers of IT would generally fall into Deal-Hunter category.

High brand value organisations buying items of high exposure (such as advertising) would typically be Value-Buyers.

Building Trust

The events of the last decade have seriously impacted trust.

One of the triggers for the shift could be an economic downturn or an event which indicates that something which was assumed to be trustworthy is now proven to not be so. Similar to the impact of someone finding out their spouse is cheating on them, when the banks were exposed in 2007 as having made irresponsible decisions proved that brand was no indication of trustworthiness. As an indication of this, according to a Harvard Business Review survey back in June 2009, 43% of respondents now trusted consultants less than they did a year earlier, and suppliers 21% less.

The good news is that trust can be rebuilt – with the right behaviours – and that does not have to take a long time. Initial trust can happen quickly and effectively. The most important element is intent. If the salesperson has the intent to help, as opposed to sell; and from the first word demonstrates that they are there to help then a level of trust can

be built in minutes. Such behaviour can lead to trusting relationships between individuals forming within half an hour, and this can be achieved either face-to-face or by phone.

Broken trust takes a little longer. Replacing compromised members of the team is one option. Admitting individual mistakes, while focusing on the value of the broader relationship is another. Repairing broken relationships or moving existing relationships to a higher level of trust is more easily achieved where a matrix of trusted person-to-person relationships supports the organisation to organisation relationships. Too often, we see individuals holding their organisations hostage because they have directed the organisation's relationship through them and them alone. Organisations should actively discourage and penalise such behaviour, as in the long term it exposes organisation to organisation relationships. Bringing in other team members to form new relationships and create a matrix should be encouraged and rewarded.

For example: if salesperson A from an IT company has a deep level of trust with the customer's IT procurement manager that is great news. However if the COO is still saying that price is the key, the strategy should be for salesperson A to develop the same level of trust with the COO. There should also be a plan for another person in the sales team to develop the same level of trust with both the procurement manager and the COO. This protects the IT company should salesperson A leave the company. In this way, a matrix of trusted relationships is formed, the B2B trust escalates and price becomes less important to all concerned.

Be it the downturn triggered by the GFC (Global Financial Crisis) or the downturn driven more recently in late 2012 when China significantly reduced its demand for minerals, there is a tendency for most organisations and governments to focus increasingly on price. This gives sales organisations essentially two choices, drop price or give more value and become more trusted.

Digital disruption is probably the most recent and dramatic driver for a need for sales organisations to focus on trust or risk entering the 'race to

the bottom' that is a price war. Almost regardless of industry, technology has had an impact. Customers have greater choice through online shopping, new business models are in place such as Uber, and international competition has increased through easier access to overseas markets. The 'Future of Employment' report published in late 2013 by Carl Benedikt Frey and Michael A. Osborne indicates that up to 47% of current jobs are likely to be replaced by technology over the next decade or so. Such efficiency drivers are likely to make everyone more price-sensitive. One of the recommendations of that report is that we start to teach everyone from school students to seasoned professionals the two things that computers cannot do - be creative and develop the ability to build relationships.

Self-harm

So, whilst most organisations say that they focus on increasing the number of Value-Buyers they work with, why is it that many then undermine their own intent?

Interestingly, in many cases, the reason a customer is a Price-Buster or a Deal-Hunter is that the sales organisation themselves have driven their customer to focus on price.

There are three common ways in which organisations do this:

- 1) They promote price as their number one differentiator
- 2) Their marketing focuses on their offering and its features, rather than on the customer and the value to the customer of the offering
- 3) Their salespeople are much more comfortable with, and capable of, talking about their product and its features than understanding their customers and the value that customers are looking for. Do you, for example, train your salespeople to:
 - a. explain to the customer the intention that they (the customer) should get value out of the sales *discussion* itself (as well as from the actual *offering*)?

- b. listen carefully to the words and structure of what the customer says in the first minute or so and then adapt their language patterns accordingly – to help the customer with their thinking process?
- c. offer the customer an opportunity to change the conversation's direction even when the salesperson sees an opportunity to close?

Many wholesale salespeople focus their conversations with their retailer on the product they are selling and how many units the retailer should buy (sell-in). How many focus the conversation on understanding the retailer's business and thus, understand how they can help the retailer with their sell-out.

It is our contention that by changing their approach, organisations can move customers from being Price-Busters and Deal-Hunters to Value-Buyers.

Promote Value Above Price

Do a Google search on most retail, telecom or service industry websites from Sydney to Toronto and New York to London, and on the front page will be a caption on price. Small wonder then that by the time the customer comes to buy, their thoughts are focused solely on price.

One of the world's largest PC companies is very good on its retail site about describing the benefits of its computers to its users. However on the page aimed at corporate accounts its first line refers to cost-saving.

Now, we are not suggesting that promoting offers and bargains should not be done, but what we do suggest is that making price the emphasis or official tag-line of an organisation, does not help buyers and sellers focus on the value of an offering.

If an organisation wants to change their marketing emphasis then it is a significant strategic decision, and one which could appear laced with risk.

After all, a price focus has worked before, why change now? Well, one reason to change now is that in many parts of the world the economy has changed. Price has become more important to customers and thus, if you start off by leading them in that direction, they will push harder on price than ever before as the leaders of the customer's business try to cut costs across all parts of the business.

Consulting firms have a tendency to 'buy' work from strategic targets with the assumption that they will be able to increase the rate and also drive scope creep in the future. Sadly, this is one reason why many consulting firms have high revenues but minimal profits from some of their clients, because they never manage to raise the rate. They win the work based on price and thus helped the client become a Price-Buster and then try to change the price.

Also, there are an increasing number of easily accessible competitors in all industries. It is easier for customers to find a preferred supplier. If customers are encouraged to focus only on price, an Internet search very quickly provides alternatives.

Tell Stories to Demonstrate How Your Offering Benefits Buyers

Some companies place a strong focus on the features of their offering:

"4g processor"
"Global network"
"Fast wireless service"
"Independent suspension"

Whilst some customers can make the link between the feature statement and what value they will get from the feature, many cannot. Also, since everyone gets a different value out of the same offering how do you make sure the feature you list relates to the value the customer is looking for?

What many companies do is list all the features and hope the customer sees the one they are looking for. Unfortunately this is a little optimistic.

The longer the list, the less likely a customer is to find the feature they want, and the more likely they are to think that the offering may be over-priced, or that it suffers from being a 'jack of all trades' but 'master of none'.

"Is speed important to you?"
"Are you looking for a network with no black spots?"
"Is safety your key concern?"
"Are you looking for comfort?"

A customer-led approach is more likely to hit the right buttons:

Compare these two web messages for banks competing for the same corporate customers:

Bank A

We want to help you if you are:

- 1. Making an acquisition*
- 2. Consolidating debt*
- 3. Wanting instant access to someone who can help*

Bank B

- 1. Treasury management*
- 2. Interest Bearing / Money Market*
- 3. Traditional loans / overdrafts*

Bank A is looking at it from the customer's perspective; Bank B is looking at it from the perspective of their offerings.

The customer can then decide what is more important to them and you can focus on the value that your offering delivers in that area.

Instead of promoting specific features, some organisations promote broad capability:

"We care about our customers"

"We are innovative"

"We will reduce your risk"

"Great backup service"

Sadly, life in general teaches us all that grand statements often disappoint. This dulls the impact of statements that run against our general experience while providing little evidence to support grandiose claims. Often, such statements are also very similar to statements that competitors use – hardly a source of differentiation. Unsupported capability statements also run the risk of alienating customers who object to their self-focused and egotistical tone.

Instead, focus on stories, true ones:

"The key feedback we get from our customers is that we 'cared' about their needs"

"Our largest banking client recently said that our new approaches saved them 10% of costs"

"Working with us, one of our largest construction clients recently managed to reduce the instances of litigation by 50%"

"Our 2008 customer survey showed that customers rated our backup service as number 1 in the industry"

Stories and citations are the best way of 'proving' capability

Build 'Impact' Skills

For every \$100 that the typical large corporate spends on advertising and marketing, how much is spent on training salespeople, and others in the organisation who interact with customers, to ensure that everyone is talking from the same script? Of that money, how much is spent on

building 'impact' skills – the ability to shift people's thinking and help them get what they want.

Of any sales training spend, typically over 80% is devoted to product knowledge. This is important of course, but inevitably leads to salespeople spending most of their time talking to customers about the technical features of their product.

Think about your own experience, especially where technical sales are concerned – how many times have you experienced that moment when you switch-off because a salesperson is bombarding you with technical information? As well as turning some people off, this focus on product features leads quickly to comparisons and encourages price-buster and deal-hunter behaviour in customers.

Traditional skills training for salespeople also drives this point. Much of the consultative sales training in the market focuses on highlighting problems facing the customer and affecting a sale, especially to less sophisticated buyers. The challenge however is that even though the sale is made, there is unlikely to have been a relationship built. There will almost certainly have been a price negotiation and quite likely some offer of a discount made. Most importantly, if the customer returns, price will be a key criterion because the sales process the first time was not engaging. Equally, if the sale is not achieved in the first interaction, then if the customer comes back for a second conversation, the chances are high that it will become a price discussion.

More sophisticated buyers will not allow themselves to be pushed into buying something quickly, so if the behaviour in the first meeting was of this type then they are unlikely to want to buy from that provider. If they do, they will haggle on price until they feel they have won a great deal. And when they win, you lose. Again, consider your own experience. Think about where you choose to buy from, especially where you make multiple purchases. Is your choice driven by the unique technical superiority of the offering or do you buy from the place that is most helpful? For most people, it is the latter.

To develop 'impact' skills and begin to build trusted relationships with customers, the three key areas for skill development are:

- opening discussions in a way that helps the customer want to be in the conversation rather than feel they have to be in the conversation
- understanding, reading and adapting behaviour in order to help the customer feel comfortable when talking to the salesperson
- an engagement process that genuinely helps the customer identify, understand and prioritise their desired outcomes

These skills are not easy to develop. They impact behaviours and anything that impacts behaviour patterns takes time and commitment to change. Also, there is an element of personal risk involved for the salesperson. Here's why. If they rely on product or price to sell and the customer decides they don't want to buy, then the salesperson can attribute the decision to product or the price. If however the salesperson is selling themselves and their ability to build trust then, if the customer decides not to buy, the salesperson may feel that they failed personally.

The good news is that where these skills are developed and aligned with customer-centric marketing, then loyalty increases, customer spend increases and customers recommend you to their friends and colleagues.

Insights By:

Name: Keith Dugdale
Company: Business of Trust
Title: Owner and Founder
Location: Australia
Website: <http://www.boft.com>
Blog: <http://www.boft.com/blog>
LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/keithdugdale>
Twitter: @keithdugdale



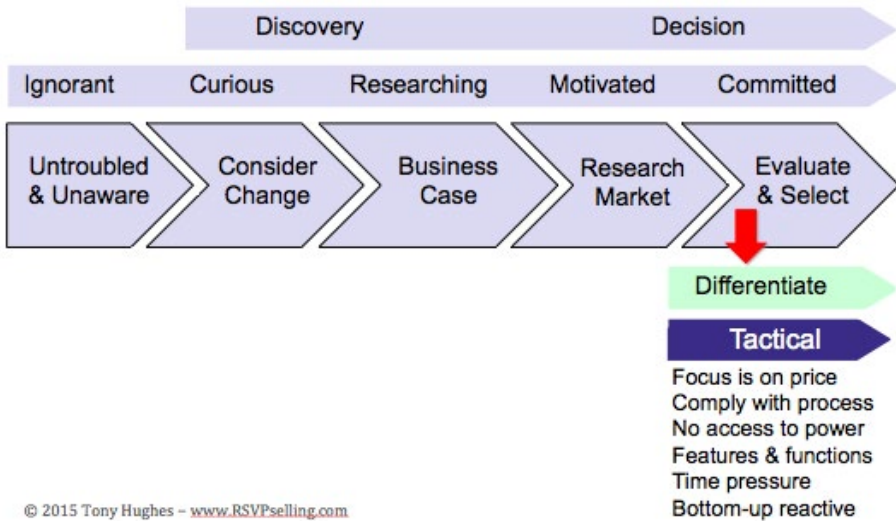
Strategic Social Selling

by Tony Hughes

In the world of complex business-to-business selling, when a salesperson says, “the deal is strategic” we usually take that to mean that they want to discount massively or invest for a prolonged period of time before there is any prospect of revenue. The term *strategic* is often cliché, and we need a real world definition and model for actually being strategic that can be applied in the context of modern social selling techniques leveraging social media tools, platforms and communities.

Before we define what best practice looks like, let’s identify the kind of selling that disempowers sellers due to them being late to the buyer’s process and benchmarked as a commodity against others who have set the agenda and selection criteria.

Illustration 1 – Reactive Selling



Those engaged in this reactive type of selling are often disrespected and treated as a mere commodity with the buyer barking orders, commanding the seller to invest in completing onerous tender documents within tight deadlines, then to perform magical demonstrations with almost no time to prepare. The buying organization often won't tell you who will be in the audience or what their roles are when you present. They also often refuse to tell you who or what you're being compared with and competing against. On top of all this, they can also be adversarial as they seek to disempower your efforts to understand, qualify and craft a value proposition or solution in their best interests. It's no fun being used as leverage against others.

Illustration 1 shows the buyer's journey in its varied forms but the defining element of reactive selling is that the customer is in the driver's seat from beginning to end. They decide when to invite you into their process and it's always according to their rules of engagement. There is inevitably a focus on price, assessment of features and functions, ratings of risk versus bang for buck; and you are blocked from talking with the real decision-makers, instead being forced to comply with their process

and timing – it feels like you’re flying blind. Many adhere to the old adage: if you didn’t influence their tender then don’t bother responding. You can, however, win business where you were late to the party, especially with government, but the odds are not ideal if you were not the one to set the agenda.

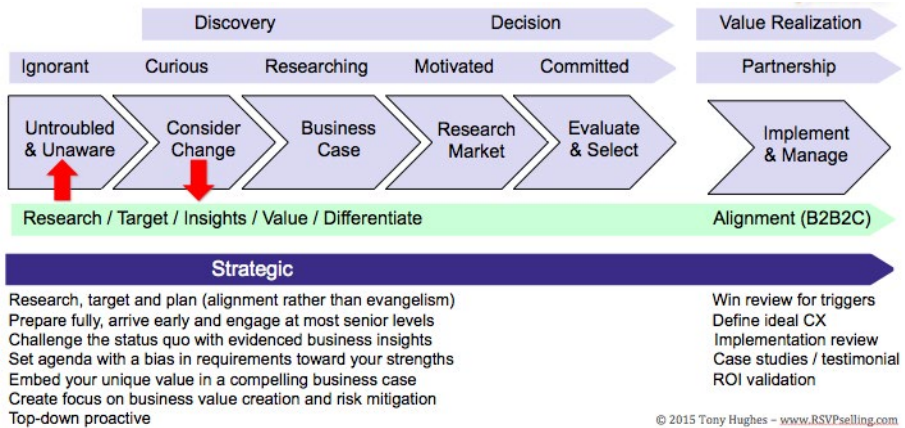
Here is my definition for strategic selling for business-to-business (B2B) sellers:

“The process of engaging early at the most senior levels, aligning with political and economic power, in addressing the most serious problems or opportunities. Then architecting solutions with unique compelling value while setting an agenda that disadvantages or eliminates competitors.”

The hallmarks of strategic selling are proactive research along with targeting and planning to engage much earlier in the buyer’s journey. But there is a proven technique for enabling masterful early engagement and it is achieved by focusing on win reviews with your best customers to identify the triggers that motivated them to invest time and energy considering change to eventually buy a solution. There is a very important distinction here – it is NOT about discovering why they bought from you over the competition; it’s instead about identifying trigger events that caused them to decide they had a serious problem or opportunity in the first place. The best sellers use buyer trigger events to seek alignment with the ideal prospective customers rather than attempt expensive commercial evangelism.

Illustration 2 defines all the elements of being strategic, including the need to understand the customer’s customers (thinking B2B2C) to create conversation that resonate with the most senior executives within the buyer’s organization... more on this later.

Illustration 2 – Proactive Strategic Selling



The other reasons that win reviews are so powerful are they validate the benefits promised to customers and create case studies. If there are project services involved in implementing your solution, call the win review a 'post implementation review'. This is where you assess benefits realization to then present back to the customer concerning whether the business case was delivered with benefits realization. From this you can create an internal case study, whether the client is willing to allow it to be published or not. This enables salespeople to create a powerful narrative about the business benefits they deliver to their customers. It's why salespeople should be part of the process... it's the best training they can receive because it equips them to identify opportunities early and tell powerful true stories to prospective new customers.

Publishing case studies, without revealing the identity of customers, is a practical way for salespeople to begin the journey of becoming micro-marketers by writing content they can publish in LinkedIn Publisher to enhance their profile. It's incredibly powerful for people in sales, professional services, project management or other customer facing roles because it shows the business value they bring clients and the values by which they operate.

However, many salespeople continue to regard closing the sale as the end of what matters; but for the customer, signing-up or placing their purchase order is where their risk begins. They therefore seek to buy from someone who cares about delivering the outcomes they are seeking. Customer eXperience (CX) is the new sales model for driving sustainable competitive advantage. Sellers who take the time to do post-implementation reviews with ROI (Return On Investment) validation are the ones who generate the most powerful case studies and testimonials. They also create customer advocates who evangelise in the market. As mentioned previously, the most powerful way to create buyer empathy and alignment is to focus on the world of your customer's customer. The sellers who genuinely care about their customer's challenges and opportunities are the ones with credibility in discussing ways to reduce costs, improve efficiency, gain market share, improve customer satisfaction, retention and more.

The way we sell has always been more important than what we sell. Now look to the left of illustration 2 (Proactive Strategic Selling) and notice the red arrows. This is the most powerful time to influence the customer to shape the agenda but success demands investment with sales teams and domain experts who go vertically deep in industry segments. Yet the rewards are enormous. According to Corporate Executive Board research published in *The Challenger Sale, 2012* (n=5,000+ purchasing organizations) 53% of the positive differentiation resulting in the buyer selecting one supplier above all others, came from the sellers ability to educate with insight and provide valuable perspectives on the customer's options for addressing issues and opportunities while navigating risk.

The very best sellers prepare fully, arrive early and engage at the most senior levels. They challenge the status quo with evidenced business insights while setting an agenda with an inbuilt bias toward their strengths. Finally, they embed their unique value in a compelling business case to overcome apathy and the status quo which is the most important competitor to focus on. They positively use fear and risk as a weapon to position as lowest risk and best value. They create a strong focus on

business value creation and risk mitigation while aligning with those who have genuine power within the customer's political structure.

But the very best sellers today also combine proven strategic selling methods with modern technologies and platforms to monitor for buyer organization trigger events and then leverage social tools to create direct access to those who have real influence. Importantly, strategic social sellers accept responsibility for building their own pipelines. They research extensively before engaging the right people with credibility and relevance. They also collaborate and amplify their efforts in social media to accelerate results and drive sales efficiency.

Why Social Selling Is Important

Without doubt, there is a problem in B2B selling. Gartner Research predicts that 85% of interactions between businesses will be executed without human intervention by 2020. Buyers are clearly in control today and in many B2B sales organizations only 40% to 60% of salespeople meet or exceed their sales targets. I believe that 30% of B2B field salespeople won't have jobs in professional selling by 2020, and this will be due to their inability to adapt to the forces of commoditization and disruption to deliver the necessary value that funds their roles.

Inadequate management is a key contributor to poor sales performance and sales managers need to focus on coaching and driving the activities and behaviours that create success in their teams. According to Jason Jordan, co-author of *Cracking The Sales Management Code*, 83% of sales metrics being reported in systems such as CRM cannot actually be managed. Salespeople need guidance to become truly consultative and create the right conversations and value for both customer and employer. According to Corporate Executive Board research, 95% of buyers expect insight from the seller yet 86% of salespeople fail to differentiate. Forrester research findings state that 85% of sales engagements fail to meet buyer expectations.

Sales teams need to step up and execute at a higher level and when they do, the results are transformative. According to Corporate Visions

research, 74% of buyers choose the seller who first provides insight and value. The best sellers don't talk about themselves, what they do and how they do it; instead they establish their credentials before a meeting to instead focus on why the conversation is important and what can be achieved for the customer supported by a strong business case.

The biggest issue for sellers is therefore securing meetings with the right people at a point in time where they are able to shape requirements and help set the agenda. When leads come to the sales organization it's then very difficult to exert the right level of influence and that's because buyers are typically 57% (Corporate Executive Board) to 70% (Forrester Research) through their change and procurement process. According to IDC research, 75% of buyers research the seller before meeting or agreeing to engage.

The key to influence is obviously early engagement; yet a Harvard Business Review article highlights that 90% of decision-makers never respond to cold outreach, and according to Corporate Executive Board research, 97% of cold calls yield no result.

The corollary of the negative statistics is in research conducted by C9 Inc who found 7 times more pipeline and 11 times more revenue (36 companies and 9,000 sellers) with those who embraced LinkedIn's Sales Navigator tool. LinkedIn themselves analysed a cross section of new and existing sellers who increased pipeline by 45% and the probability of achieving their sales targets by 51% simply by improving their standard LinkedIn social selling index (SSI) scores.

Strategic Social Selling Defined

According to Steve Richard at Vorsight, "In B2B selling only 3% of your market is actively buying at any given time, 57% are not ready and 40% are poised to begin." Importantly, their buyer's journey begins online and this is why social selling matters.

Social selling also matters because social buying is a reality – we live in the age of massively empowered buyers. Our customers can research

and commoditise what we offer with just a few clicks. They can assess our assertions of value and then introduce competitors with ease. Sellers therefore need a framework for attracting customers through strong personal and corporate brands that enable early engagements of influence. Individuals as well as corporations need social strategies for complex B2B selling where, according to CSO Insights, there are on average 6 people involved in the typical buying decision.

Before we explore social selling it's important to again understand that those who spam, push, annoy, narcissistically drone or aggressively sell are unfollowed and disconnected as quick as a click. Connecting someone new and then immediately seeking to sell is a serious mistake. I define strategic social selling for B2B as follows:

The strategy and process of building quality networks online that attract clients and accelerates the speed of business and efficiency of selling, as achieved with personal human engagement through social listening, social publishing, social research, social engagement, and social collaboration.



On a foundation of a strong personal brand I have identified the 5 pillars that enable the best results in social: 1) Social Listening/Monitoring, 2)

Social Research, 3) Social Content Publishing, 4) Social Engagement and 5) Social Collaboration.

In my definition, technology is merely an enabler but can be leveraged to create truly incredible results with the right strategies. Obviously, social initiatives are supported by the use of technology and social platforms but it's really all about human connection and interaction to provide real value through insight or assistance with relevant content and conversations.

Social platforms, especially Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and Google have driven the era of personal brands and a new reality of transparency. The days of being able to project a manufactured persona are gone... people can quickly uncover the reality of who you are, how you operate, how well you're connected, and the value you offer... all before you ever get to say a single word on the phone or face-to-face. Social proximity is a real factor that enhances or undermines potential connection, often without the seller ever discovering how their network (or lack thereof) helped or hindered their efforts.

Your social strategy will depend on what you're seeking to achieve and where your market is but don't fall into the trap of becoming busy in social without having a strategy for both connection and content. For example, think about the reasons for posting in LinkedIn Publisher or creating Facebook pages. Are you seeking to attract and build an audience platform? Are you wanting to evidence your credentials? Are you wanting to provide insights and credibility to support your new business meeting requests? Are you wanting to proactively deal with potential objections you could encounter? Are you seeking to associate yourself with admired brands and thought leaders? Are you perhaps chipping away at commonly held myths about your disruptive solution set to cause a sea change?

Social selling is a strategy, not a set of technologies. Most importantly, you need to know exactly who your target audience is and what insight or value you can provide before they would be interested in what you sell. Once you know what you're seeking to achieve and have defined

goals and metrics, then you can design your strategy and action plan to cascade down to the individual elements. Here is an overview of the five pillars of strategic social selling.



Social Listening and monitoring: The process of proactively searching and monitoring for trigger events that provide potential opportunities to improve your own customer service, intercept competitor’s customers, or engage potential clients early in their own buying process. Hootsuite, TweetDeck and Meltwater are a few examples of tools that could be used. Social monitoring is especially important for intercepting unhappy clients by capturing incidents and then managing in a case management or CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system. According to Forrester Research, when customers leave a supplier, 68% of the time it is because they believe the supplier does not care – this alone is the business case for implementing social listening solutions such as Lexer, Radian6, Brandwatch and others.

Social Research: “Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe” – Abraham Lincoln. Anyone who initiates contact or arrives at a meeting having failed to do the necessary homework is an amateur. Social research allows you to identify social proximity, background, financial performance, industry trends, competitor relationships, common interests and much more. The amount of information freely available online to research individuals, corporations and industries is staggering. LinkedIn is the most important platform on which to focus and investing in training for salespeople to become masterful in using it as a research and engagement tool is essential.

Social Content Publishing: What do buyers see when they click on the salesperson’s profile? *Quota crushing, Porsche driving, uber-sales dominator*; or do they see ‘social proof’ of credibility, business

value, insight and integrity? Publishing insights, opinions and valuable information is a strategy for attracting audience or evidencing credibility and value. A brutal truth for sellers today is that if they cannot write then they cannot sell. You need to impress with both your business value (what you do for your clients) and the values by which you operate (your ethos and the way you engage and deliver). LinkedIn Publisher is the number one blogging platform on the planet based on mathematical network effects and propensity for virality, and it integrates with your personal brand – some pundits have named this ‘networked blogging’. Video content is massively powerful attraction marketing and YouTube is the leading platform but Facebook with autoplay has amazing momentum and video is increasingly popular for mobile users. Twitter can also be used to amplify your publishing efforts. Do you know what your potential customers are looking for online before they look for you? You need to publish in a way that leverages search engines (SEO) so they find you as a source of insight and education early in their buying cycle.

Social Engagement: By listening for relevance, attracting interest and establishing credibility through publishing, and by doing your research – you’re now ready to engage. Social media enables you to be where your clients are in forums, groups, communities, blogs and special interest groups. The best social sellers engage with context and relevance and their success rate is above 90% for securing meetings. They join relevant LinkedIn Groups and build trust through insightful comments and never promote their product or service. They instead provide people with relevant content to add to a conversation. They also find ways to secure warm introductions rather than make cold calls or send hapless e-mails. Importantly, never ‘connect and sell’ which is the biggest sin of social selling. Everyone should avoid sending spam style InMails within LinkedIn.

Social Collaboration: We live in a world of mash-ups for creating best of breed solutions for sales, marketing and project management. The best sales people execute flexibly and collaborate using online tools such as Skype, go-to-meeting, Web-Ex, Dropbox, Google Docs, Hang-outs and many others. They also utilize their own CRM software and other tools to rally internal resources and manage expectations. The very best sellers

are engineers of outcomes rather than warriors of persuasion. Research from the Rain Group unearthed that collaboration is one of the rarest experiences for executive buyers. They crave this, and social allows you to do it while driving down the cost of the sales process. Further, it transfers the psychology of ownership of the ideas to buy from seller to buyer. This is because people are best motivated by reasons they themselves discover.

Social Selling Benefits

I work with CEOs helping them with their company's social selling strategies and it is important to have a strategy before you jump into social media platforms and technologies. Where are your customers online and what are they looking for before they search for you? What are the problems you're seeking to solve or opportunities you can realise? Forget push marketing and interrupt selling; instead engage buyers early in their online journey by attracting them to you with useful information, insights and value. Allow me to state the most important reasons for why social selling matters:

- **Social listening dramatically reduces customer churn.** 68% of the reason that customers leave is because they think you don't care (Forrester). Listening and having empathy has always been the key to resolving customer satisfaction issues. Failure to monitor where customers are communicating almost guarantees substantial brand damage with unnecessarily high churn and low Net Promoter Scores (NPS).
- **Social buying is a reality** with 75% of buyers doing their research online before engaging sellers (for significant purchases as published by IDC). We must be where our prospective customers are and attract them as early as possible in order to have the opportunity to influence.
- **Social strategies enable sellers to research and engage early** in the buyer's journey which is essential because purchasers are progressed somewhere between 57% (CEB) and 70% (Forrester)

of the way through their own buying process before they invite non-preferred sellers to the table. It's impossible to execute strategically in sales today without embracing social selling.

- **When salespeople use social well they dramatically increase their pipeline and revenue performance.** Using social engagement platforms masterfully increases pipeline by 45% and the likelihood of a sales person achieving their sales target by 51% (C9 LinkedIn research). It's not overstating the situation to say that it's negligent for sales management not to invest in LinkedIn for their B2B sellers.
- **Social publishing transforms the way people sell.** Salespeople need to learn to engage earlier and at more senior levels by leading with insight. Publishing blogs is the key to them honing their narrative to move away from talking about who they are, what they do and how they do it; to instead lead with why a conversation is important for the buyer and how they can assist through insight and value in delivering the client's most important outcomes and managing the client's risks.

The business case for social selling is compelling. Sales and marketing need to come together for salespeople to become effective micro-marketers; to build their own credentials and to create opportunity pipelines. They need to engage earlier and at senior levels to create the necessary value for both the buying and selling organizations to fund their role. Content publishing is how they can effectively achieve all this and it can be done with the support of management marketing and sales working together.

Insights By:

Name: Tony J Hughes
Company: RSVPselling Pty Ltd
Title: Managing Director
Location: Sydney, Australia
Websites: <https://RSVPselling.com/> and www.TonyHughes.com.au
Blog: <https://www.linkedin.com/today/posts/hughestony>
LinkedIn: <http://au.linkedin.com/in/hughestony/>
Twitter: @rsvpselling



Activating The Leader Within

by Bernadette McClelland

In days gone by, leadership was all about being The Big Wig, The Big Cheese or The Big Kahuna. It was all about being the one in control, the one who dictated and wielded all the power.

Today, though, it is very different story.

Today, it is not important to be **THE** leader; what's important is being **A** leader. It's not about all bowing to the direction of one person; it's about individuals stepping up and owning the leader within so we can all row the boat together and reach our destination faster and more efficiently.

Nowhere is that more relevant than in the sales environment. With *caveat emptor* being replaced with *caveat venditor*, salespeople must be the ones to step up and own their leadership role so they can collaborate with stakeholders, both internally and externally, to make sure everyone wins. It's OK to climb higher by winning the business, but what's also important is to also help lift others, namely their customers, at the same time.

The biggest concerns I hear from my clients are what can I DO differently to shift the buyer's decision-making process? or what can I DO to have

them return my calls? or what can I DO to have them even see me in the first place? The difference today is not so much what you need to DO. It is more about who you need to BE. Such a cliché, I know, but activating your leadership is calling so loudly.

The meaning and the role of a leader is changing. Today, leadership and the new leadership role can best be summed up in the words of Ronald Heifetz from his book *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1994) and that is: "to help people face reality and to mobilize them to make change."

We have to help our buyers face reality, to realise the status quo may not be working for them and to make change happen, which is not easy and can be agonising in some cases. In essence, salespeople today are selling change, no matter their product line.

Heifetz continues: "Many people have a 'smiley face' view of what it means to lead. They get a rude awakening when they find themselves with a leadership opportunity. Exercising leadership generates resistance — and pain. People are afraid that they will lose something that's worthwhile. They're afraid that they're going to have to give up something that they're comfortable with." Nowhere is that more prevalent than in a buyer and seller relationship.

The buyer is being measured so tightly these days, taking decisions to committees and preferring to stay with the status quo for fear of making a wrong decision. The cost of change, in a changing world, can make it easier and more compelling to stay with what they have, despite any misgivings.

Salespeople are also being measured more tightly today. The fear of job loss, falling revenues and profits, and customers not making decisions quickly enough can tend to make salespeople more desperate, more often. As a result, the salesperson may tend to think about themselves more and what they can get; which means their focus on contributing to their buyer's world and what they can give, is lost.

Leadership activation in a sales professional can best be viewed across three distinct, but integrated aspects. To own modern day sales responsibility means owning all facets of what I call, the Leadership Triad - your Personal Leadership skills, Thought Leadership ability and Sales Leadership capacity. When well-developed, these three aspects will align the seller to today's buyer in an extremely empowering way.



Bridging The Gap

Just like any result we want to achieve, the reality is we never just arrive at that place without being on a path of sorts. There will always be a gap from where we are in our current reality and where we want to be. Bridging that gap is our challenge. How we close that gap is by the way we **approach** our conversations with ourselves and others, the **focus** of those conversations and the **outcomes** of those conversations. It's about backing ourselves, the relevance we have and our intention. To help us achieve and even over-achieve, is to understand the Leadership Triad with both depth and scale.

Today's economic climate means we also find ourselves at another fork in the road, where processes alone are not enough. Even leading sales authority Neil Rackham has said of the current day scenario: "The changing face of B2B buying behaviour is affecting every stage of the sales process - vendors must adapt or they will become irrelevant."

It's not about farmers or hunters these days. Sure, farmers sow the seed, nurture and cultivate the relationships but it's not enough. It's also not enough to just call up and ask: "How are you going?", or to turn up with coffee and donuts. People don't want overpaid courier services wasting their precious time.

And, what about the hunters - those who get their energy off the hunt, make the kill and move on? Businesses are saying no more! We don't want to be sold to; we want someone to help us make a difference in our business. And as we find ourselves at that fork, like most change-makers; only the ones who take the road less travelled will succeed. It's more than doing and having.

Sales 3.0 is transformational and inspirational and more about **being**. It is leadership incarnate. It is definitely the road less travelled for the common seller because it's about customer intimacy and people being more human with each other. It's about reaching a place where your approach is transformational for you, your business and the buyer. Having the ability to inspire your client to want to make change happen by having the right approach, creating the right focus within conversations and having an intention for the outcome to be win/win/win, is not only powerful but what today's clients want.

In my recently published book *'The Art of Commercial Conversations - When It's Your Turn To Make A Difference'*, identifying and focusing on the art of commercial conversations is underpinned by understanding the fundamentals, and the depth and scale of this Leadership Triad:

Personal Leadership and the Value of Self

Clearly, the approach that we took in the past is not as effective today as it once was. We have so many options open to us today, including a cross section of buyers and decision-makers spanning multiple generations from Millennials to Baby Boomers. This means we've got to be able to meet the buyer where they are – both online and offline, and adjust our style to suit them. It can be seen in my redefinition of the ABC's of selling from **'Always Be Closing'** through **'Always Be Connecting'** to **'Always Be Contributing.'** We need to make our buyers curious enough about us to choose to contact us when researching potential suppliers. We need to stand out from the very beginning and not be vanilla, beige or insignificant. We cannot get lost amongst our competitors. In order to do that, we need to own who we are; believe that the first sale must always be made to ourselves and approach our buyer with conviction. It's about so much more than contacting them in order to convince them to buy our product; rather it's about being a magnet so they want to partner with us, and only us.

Thought Leadership and the Value of Your Offering

We know the sales conversation has been completely turned on its head, as has the buying process. As a result, we need to completely recalibrate our focus. We need to do more than walk in the buyer's shoes and be empathetic; we need to know what shoes they wear and buy the same pair. We need to get on the same side of the table as the buyer more than ever before and to do that we need to shift our questions to ones of depth and breadth, and significantly elevate our care factor. We also need to know what makes us unique and be able to deliver that message to the market in a strong commercial manner. Learning how to redefine and position our offering in a more relevant, tailored and contextual way includes changing our questions, our statements and the way we think.

Sales Leadership and Your Value to the Market

An intention to serve, to collaborate and to contribute to a client's business is what the profession of selling is all about. It is about outcomes

and dynamics where everyone wins. Businesses with this mindset and top down approach will attract and retain people who buy into their mission. With staff loyalty and talent retention being such an issue for businesses today, living the values in real-time means sellers who walk their talk, by default, will be viewed as the good guys – and girls. Their authenticity will show up in conversations, negotiations and relationships as carrying a real and genuine, ‘How Can I Help You?’ mindset, creating and providing both purpose and profits.

The Art of Commercial Conversations

History has dealt us the science and the mechanics behind selling. I believe it is time to view selling as an art and look deeper into what is behind the process and structure to paint a difference landscape and that is the activation of leadership.

How that plays out is through filtering your approach, focus and outcomes through the filter of the ChangeMaker Circles, comprising:

- What you need to do
- How you are going to do it
- Why you need to do it and
- Who you need to be to succeed

It is important to note that in stepping up our leadership skills and moving into an area that transforms our buyers’ worlds; their results and their growth, then we cannot dismiss the transactional seller (Sales 1.0), because we all need to know those basic skills. Nor can we dismiss the transitional, relationship seller (Sales 2.0) - even though Matthew Dixon and Brent Adamson’s *The Challenger Sale* refers to only 7% of relationship sellers being successful, because we also need to have those extremely important skills.

What is key is to introduce a different way of thinking to get clear on what our buyers want from us so we align with their expectations and remain relevant in our market place and achieve that transformational level (Sales 3.0).

How we can do that is by:

1. Owning our value first and making that first sale to ourselves;
2. Recognising why our buyer went, or wants to go, to market in the first place and the value they have received, or want to receive, over and above the benefits of a product offering;
3. Getting clear on your intention before the order is signed and after it has been signed and that is to create a collaborative, win/win/win scenario through service.

We are on a journey to become the seller who can step up to the plate with conviction, have those conversations that drive value and are driven by purposeful values in the right business context, and also contribute to our business and our customer's business. More than that, we want to be even more mindful of the ripple effect into the wider community and be aware of the impact that sales as a profession has on a community, the difference it makes and the difference we make.

In today's business landscape this is what being a leader means, and this is what activating leadership in today's sales environment means.

Insights By:

Name: Bernadette McClelland
Company: Bernadette McClelland Consulting and ChangeMakers Global
Title: CEO
Location: Melbourne
Website: <http://www.BernadetteMcClelland.com>
Blog: <http://www.BernadetteMcClelland.com/blog>
LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/BernadetteMcClelland>
Twitter: @b_mcclelland



Selling More Starts With Giving More

by Ian Lowe

Some of you may be thinking to yourselves or even saying out loud: *“Nice idea. But isn’t that kind of naïve?”* It’s an understandable reaction given today’s low trust world where every day we deal with dog-eat-dog competition, experience the ‘selfie’ absorbed or even narcissistic people and read about corporate scandals in the daily news headlines. The idea that you can actually give your way to success can seem to be unrealistic at best and naïve at worst.

But it isn’t. Not only is it not unrealistic or naïve, it’s actually the most effective path to sales, business and life success. Let me share a recent experience to illustrate the point.

What Sales is Really All About

It was a business event with a difference. The location was a beautiful co-working space in the Sydney CBD known as Workclub and the room was full of entrepreneurs, business owners and executives. But this wasn’t your typical handshaking, business card exchanging, getting to know you networking session.

The group had assembled to enjoy an acoustic performance with a twist by composer, artist, collaborator and Affector, Ben Romalis. Glasses of red wine in hand, and with cheese and crackers in plentiful supply, the group was tightly huddled, in very close proximity to each other, Ben and his two guitars. It was an intimate affair.

Ben started out by re-framing our expectations. This wasn't going to be a sit back and enjoy the music type of event, not at all. In fact we were all part of the performance. Ben explained there should be no barrier between artist and audience; and tonight we were very much companions on a journey to create, explore and experience sights, sounds and emotions.

It was fantastic. We talked, we discussed, we challenged, we were moved emotionally, we travelled too far off locations in time and geography, and deep in to our own memories. Ben's magic fingers and his ability to interpret the mood and conversation by instantly producing beautifully evocative music were incredible. What has all this got to do with naked salespeople? Good question.

One thing that Ben said really had an impact on me and it's been on my mind ever since. I've asked Ben to replay what he said below:

"We all need to practice, to go through the repetitive task of building our skill base and strengthening muscle memory. But a problem arises when we mistake the practice of our craft for the execution of it.

I found myself booking in long periods of time for practice, desperate to get better, eager to speed up the learning process with some dedicated effort. But this clinical approach only served to dishearten me, for while I did improve, I also came to resent the thing I was trying to improve for! Music had been reduced to a mechanical act.

This is not what makes music enjoyable, at least not for me anyway. My love of music comes from its limitless potential to violate expectations. The act of constructing a composition through exploration and play is, in itself, a most rewarding experience. And so at some point, I decided not to practice any more. I decided instead to write, to perform and to play; still

committed to the quality of my work but no longer desperate to put rigid parameters for improvement in place.

Two things happened:

- 1. I began to enjoy, even more, the thing I'd always loved about my art: the making of it.*
- 2. My skill base improved quickly and with focus."*

There are incredible parallels between Ben's experience and the experiences that have led so many in the world of sales to become frustrated and disheartened. In our desperate clamber for ways to 'get more sales' we've become so clinical in our approach that we've lost touch with the natural beauty, flow and uncertainty of human interaction. We fear what we can't control because so many of us have learned sales as a set of tightly choreographed steps designed to place control firmly in our hands. Here in lies the problem, because the reality is we are not in control. The more we attempt to control the actions of our clients and customers, the more we will create the type of adversarial relationships that make sales much harder than it has to be.

Sales, at its core, is about people. We are unpredictable and emotional beings; people will do what people will do and the very idea that we're in control of others is illusory. Yet the very essence of our humanity; passion, curiosity, creativity, authenticity and trust has been eroded over many years in favour of a mechanical execution of the 'sales process'.

This mentality inhibits our ability to truly connect, and the result is that we and our clients are not typically companions on a journey of mutual exploration and discovery; in fact, we are often going in completely opposite directions.

As Ben so eloquently describes, his love of music comes from its limitless potential, from exploring new possibilities, violating expectations, writing, performing and playing rather than from rigid parameters. The same is true for salespeople and sales success. Sales isn't a cold clinical, mechanical process. It's alive. It's living and breathing. It's all about

people, and it needs to be free from any restrictive constructs or mindsets in order to flourish.

So how can giving change this dynamic and result in greater individual, team and organisational purpose and success?

In our business parable, *The Go-Giver*, written by our founder Bob Burg and his co-author John David Mann we codify the crucial elements in what we termed the 'Five Laws of Stratospheric Success.'

The First Principle: Create Value

In the story, our fictional hero, Joe goes looking for some big guns to help close a tough deal; 'clout and leverage' is what Joe's says he's after. Instead, he finds a system of five interlocking principles that at first sound counterintuitive, naive, and even silly; but in the end, prove to make Joe's world his oyster.

For the story's sake, we frame this as one individual's experience, but in real life, these five laws actually form a key that unlocks optimum productivity and job satisfaction for individuals, departments and organisations of all shapes and sizes. Taken together, they can be used to create a culture of excellence in a workplace that is entirely customer-focused.

The Law of Value goes like this - *Your true worth is determined by how much more you give in value than you take in payment.*

At this point, you might be thinking, "What are you talking about?! How does one give more in value than one takes in payment and still survive? Isn't that a recipe for negative cash flow and ultimate insolvency?" Not at all: not only can you *survive* by approaching your work this way, it is the only way to *ensure* survival. In fact, when you adopt the first law as your guiding principle, you will not only survive but actually *thrive*.

The first law seems counterintuitive, at first hearing, and even paradoxical. The key to grasping its efficacy is our perspective on the question of *value*. Value is not the same thing as price.

You see, price is a dollar amount, it's a dollar figure, it's finite. Value, on the other hand, is the relative worth or desirability of a thing, to the end user. In other words, what is it about this thing, this product, this service, this concept, this idea that brings with it so much value, so much worth that someone will exchange their hard-earned money for it and be glad, be ecstatic that they did, while you still make a very healthy profit?

Let me give you an example. You hire an accountant to do your tax returns. And she charges you, let's use a round figure, two thousand dollars. And, that's her fee or price. But she saves you six thousand dollars. She also saves you twenty-five to thirty hours of time of doing it yourself, and she provides you with the peace of mind and security of knowing it was done correctly. Because our accountant is also very diligent and well prepared she understands the changing dynamics of tax legislation as it relates to your business sector and she provides you with insights and guidance that help you to be much more effectively structured going forward.

So we see in this case, value can be measured in financial terms, with the six thousand dollar savings, and even the time, because time is money, and also in non-financial terms with the confidence and peace of mind of knowing it was done correctly, and also, of course, the insights and guidance she provided. So, we see that value is different from price. What your accountant did was give you much more in value than what she took in payment, so you feel great about it, and she made a very healthy profit, which she should. And, that's the kind of relationship we want to have with everyone with whom we do business.

When you genuinely focus on the value, your customers (existing and new) come to trust you and they feel good about you and they are much more willing to exchange their money for your product or service. Focus only on the money, however, and they're going to sense that too, consciously or unconsciously. They will sense it and they'll be less likely to do business with you. So focus on the value, and the money will come.

How are you giving more in value than you take in payment?

The Second Principle: Touch Lives

Our second law, The Law of Compensation, is this - *Your income is determined by how many people you serve and how well you serve them.*

The second principle says that in addition to adding value to the process, you also must touch as many people as possible with that added value. Another character in *The Go-Giver* story explains it to Joe this way: *"The First Law determines how valuable you are, that is, it describes your potential income, how much you could earn. But it's the Second Law that determines how much you actually do earn."*

Very briefly, the accountant in the first example did a terrific job of giving more in value than she took in payment. If you're her client, the chances are you feel good about her. You'd do business with her again, and you'd refer her to others. The chances are also good that her other clients feel the same way. So, our accountant is very quickly amassing what we call an 'army of personal walking ambassadors'. And, as she continues to add that kind of exceptional value to the lives of more and more people, her income will continue to grow.

Here's the key; the value is the building block, but just providing great value in and of itself isn't enough to make you a great income because if you only serve one person the chances are you're not financially going to do that well. It's also a matter of reach, which is where law number two comes in. We can sum up the first two laws, in a sense, by saying, **exceptional value plus significant reach equals very high income.**

How can you touch more lives with the exceptional value you create?

The Third Principle: Build Networks

The third law, The Law of Influence, provides the formula for creating genuine influence - *Your influence is determined by how abundantly you place other people's interests first.*

Like the Law of Value, this often strikes people as counterintuitive at best, and downright naive at worst. Yet it's actually quite practical. There

is a Golden Rule of Business that says - All things being equal, people will do business with, and refer business to, those people they know, like and trust. There is no faster or more effective way to elicit those feelings toward you in others than by your placing their interests first.

Now, please don't get me wrong. Not in a way that is self-sacrificial or co-dependent. Nothing like that at all. It simply means that you're always looking for ways to provide value to other people and as you do this you are planting seeds of goodwill with so many people, you're developing those know you, like you, trust you feelings. You understand that the best relationships are not 50/50 or win/win; they're simply 100.

As you apply this principle, you begin to attract more and more of those types of people in your life and what a great network of people it is when you've got everyone focused on adding value to each other.

What more can you do to extend the reach of your influence?

The Fourth Principle: Be Real

The fourth law, The Law of Authenticity, says - *The most valuable gift you have to offer is yourself.*

The best thing about this law is that it isn't something you have to *learn*; it is something you simply need to *embrace*, because it comes to us all naturally, if we only let it. When you do that; when you consistently turn up as your true authentic self, people sense it. People feel good about you. That sense of trust is there because people love consistency, which is sadly so rare in today's world.

In *The Go-Giver*, there is a character named Debra Davenport who discovers that all the sales skills, technical skills and even, the people skills she has laboured to learn are for naught unless she is genuinely herself with her clients. When she gives up on all the techniques and lets herself simply be herself, the sales process miraculously works. This is not to say that knowledge and the development of solid skill sets are not important;

they are. They are *very* important. But they are worthless in the absence of authenticity, while the *presence* of authenticity amplifies effectiveness.

Of course, embracing our authentic selves doesn't mean we ever stop learning and growing. We continue to read books and listen to audio books or podcasts. Maybe we attend seminars, get coaching, and get mentors. That's essential because we want to continue to grow and become an even higher authentic self.

The challenge is that while we can learn and choose the people we learn from, what we want to do is learn from them but we don't become them. We adapt their wisdom but we don't adopt their personalities. In other words, we adapt; we don't adopt. We learn their wisdom, but we always stay true to our own authentic selves.

Are you turning up as your true authentic self every day?

The Fifth Principle: Stay Open

The last law, the Law of Receptivity, says - *The key to effective giving is to say open to receiving.*

In the story, Pindar, the main mentor, asks Joe to breathe out and hold that breathe for 30 seconds. Joe tries, but in a very quick period of time he's running out of breath. It's obvious that he's struggling and Pindar says, "What's the matter? You can't do it?" Joe says, "No, I can't just breathe out, I've got to breathe in as well."

And Pindar said, "Joe, what if I was to tell you that it's been medically proven that it's actually healthier to breathe out than it is to breathe in?" Joe just laughs. He says, "That's silly. You've got to do both. You've got to breathe out and breathe in."

Exactly. You breathe out, you breathe in. You breathe out carbon dioxide, you breathe in oxygen. You breathe out, which is giving; you breathe in, which is receiving. Giving and receiving are simply two sides of the very same coin and they work best in tandem. In fact, to minimize, to focus on

just one while trying to minimize the other is really an exercise in futility because every giving is made possible only because it's also a receiving. And every receiving is made possible only because it's also a giving.

What we need to do is to allow ourselves to receive. Surprisingly, many people have a problem with this. There are people who are habitual takers, who take and only take, yet there are also people who give and refuse to allow themselves to receive.

All the giving in the world won't bring success or create the results you want unless you are willing and able to receive in like measure. Why? Because if you don't let yourself receive, you're refusing the gifts of others and you shut down the flow.

The key is to know that so long as you're focused on giving, you have earned the right to receive; not the *entitlement* to receive but the *right* to receive. Then, we've got to simply allow ourselves to receive it. It so important to the natural flow of things; if you close yourself off to receiving you are inadvertently undermining your own success.

One way we shut down the flow in sales is that we set out with the idea of 'making a sale'. That very idea immediately sets you out in the wrong direction because you cannot *make* a sale. You might be thinking "*What do you mean you can't make a sale? Of course you can make a sale. It's what we do every day. We have to go out and make sales.*"

Let me explain, we say you can't *make* a sale because in a free market economy, you can't make anyone do anything they don't want to do. What you *can* do is you can create the *environment* where that person feels good about you, they get know you, they come to like you, they begin to trust you, they respect your judgment and they come to believe that you and your product are the answer to their need, their want, or their desire. And, they *choose* to buy.

So, while you can't make a sale, you can create the environment where a sale is made, and you are there to *receive* the sale. You see, if you believe you're out there to make a sale, then it's all about you and your product

or service. If, on the other hand, you believe you're out there to create the environment where someone chooses to buy because they feel it's in their best interest to do so, now your focus is on them. And, that's exactly where it *should* be.

Are you staying open or shutting down the flow?

To summarise, I want to refer back to the story I shared at the beginning of this chapter. As long as we continue to allow sales skills and techniques to create a mechanical, inauthentic sales experience we will be just like Ben hating the routine of doing scales time after time on his beloved guitar. Sales and selling is not at its core a business transaction, it is first and foremost the forging of a human connection. How do we do that?

We find more, we find better and we find creative ways to give more in value than we take in payment, we serve more and more people with the exceptional value we provide, we continue to increase and expand our influence through our willingness to put other peoples' interests first, we stay true to our core values and highest authentic selves, and we embrace the fact that just like breathing out and breathing in is a natural flow, so is giving and receiving.

Create Value, Touch Lives, Build Networks, Be Real, Stay Open. Over to you.

Insights By:

Name: Ian J Lowe
Company: Go-Givers Australia
Title: CEO
Location: Mezzanine Level, 383 Kent Street, Sydney NSW 2000
Website: www.thegogiverway.com.au
Blog: www.thegogiverway.com.au
LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/company/go-givers-australia>
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ianjlowe>



The Enlightened Sales Professional

by Sue Barrett

We are seeing a new kind of salesperson emerging in our midst. Not common by any stretch of the imagination, but appearing in businesses slowly but surely. Smart companies are becoming aware that they need a new kind of salesperson, especially at the higher levels of business. The days of the flashy, aggressive, all talking 'pitch master' , or 'you're my mate' schmoozer are fading fast from most industries with only a few industries stuck in the good ol' days mentality. Even some of the latest offerings in the ideal salesperson arena such as the contrarian sales challenger will be faddish at best.

Buyers, clients worldwide, are looking for a collaborative, more enlightened approach to selling, where they can work with sales professionals who bring their in-depth knowledge and understanding of how solutions can be applied and who work with their customers who also have an in depth knowledge of their own business and challenges. The two – buyer and seller, in partnership work collaboratively to develop solutions that deliver the greatest effectiveness and improved efficiency, with the least possible risk, at a total cost of ownership that is bearable and justifiable.

Smart companies know that their clients aren't idiots. If salespeople still believe they can control the sales call they are living in a fool's paradise. Customers are now equal partners in the sale.

The enlightened salesperson is aware that they work in a complex world, a complex system where nothing has an iron clad guarantee or a predictable outcome. They can live with ambiguity and uncertainty, yet they operate with a sense of purpose underpinned by self-discipline and determination. They don't stress about not knowing everything or fool themselves into thinking they can control everything around them. They know that today customers strenuously resist dealing with salespeople who know it all; salespeople who attempt to take control or confront decision-making processes.

Instead, these salespeople are observant of what lies beneath the surface and look for the deeper meaning which makes them more perceptive, discerning and intuitive. They slow down their pace and can perceive the nuances in an idea or situation. They can see the links and areas for opportunity that will benefit both their client and themselves and the organisation they represent.

So what makes for an enlightened sales professional?

What makes them successful?

A Defining Characteristic – Curiosity

One of their defining features is their curiosity. They have an ongoing, intrinsic interest in both their inner experience and the world around them. They are attracted to new people, new ideas and new experiences, and are rarely bored. Their curiosity benefits them socially and professionally. These salespeople are considered good listeners and conversationalists; good problem-solvers and solution crafters. Their thinking is not constrained and their curiosity drives their interest in innovation and collaboration. People seem to like them too. These curious salespeople tend to bring interesting ideas, fun and novelty into relationships. In the business realm, you can see why being curious is also attractive to clients.

Smart companies are waking up to the fact that they need these types of people in their midst. Smart companies are looking for these enlightened salespeople to lead the client engagement process, acting as a conduit of opportunity and value realisation across the whole value chain, with the client at the centre. Still few in number and usually independently evolved, smart companies know they cannot wait to find these enlightened individuals, knowing that the search can be long and costly - like looking for a needle in a hay stack. Instead, we will see smart businesses begin to cultivate a more enlightened sales culture where curiosity and other enlightened qualities such as active listening, reflection, intention questioning, stillness and detachment will be core skills to enable great client engagement and business success.

You may think this is sales nirvana but research is finding that curiosity is associated with intelligence and problem-solving ability. Whilst researchers have not yet identified the pathway by which curiosity leads to cognitive growth, a likely explanation concerns the rich environment curious people create for themselves as they seek new experiences and explore new ideas. Put simply, curious brains are active brains, and active brains become smart brains.

Curiosity is also associated with high performance in both academic and work settings, and so it is with selling. There is evidence to suggest an upward spiralling relationship between curiosity and knowledge. The more we learn, the more we want to learn, and so on.

And that brings into play another defining characteristic of the enlightened sales professional – empathy.

Empathy – The New Sales Edge

With the shift away from product as central to the complex sale, business and markets are becoming more intertwined and people are now featuring more at the heart of viable business relationships. The challenge will be to reconcile the prevailing norms of the cool-headedness of the analytical thinking brain and the risk-taking brain of the 'cowboy' entrepreneur with the empathetic moral compass brain as we navigate

and manage the impact of our decisions on individuals, customers, suppliers and communities.

However making empathy a priority is not that easy. A lot of emphasis has been placed on the importance of being 'analytical' in business, being rational. Yet the newspapers are littered with stories of CEOs and leaders whose rationality and analytical thinking was of the highest order, but they made decisions without considering the people factors. At worst, they put the lives of people and communities at risk, destroying or severely eroding their business brands and future viability as well as creating horrendous consequences for those affected by their decisions.

We also read countless stories of risk-taking entrepreneurs who are lauded as business celebrities one day for the way they have taken a business from zero to hero faster than the speed of light and then canned the next when their venture takes a dive, leaving people jobless and out of pocket, and investors poorer for the experience.

Numerous articles and books are written about that 'One thing' or that 'Secret to Success' that will solve all your issues – and what happens? It doesn't work by itself – it needs to work as part of a system. And, so it is with the brain. The brain is a complex network and being able to access and develop key areas of the brain, allowing them to work in concert and counterbalance each other for positive outcomes is the key.

Smart businesses are making empathy a priority to redress the balance and develop our brains' interpersonal sensitivities: our empathetic side to take into account the needs of others, as well as our own needs – working more in collaboration for the mutual benefit of each other while maintaining the best of analytical thinking and risk-taking. Now is the time to reconcile and place equal importance on developing the empathetic parts of our brain as our new sales and business edge.

To get some perspective we only need go back 20 to 30 years to the 1980's and 90's to see what selling and business was like back then. Certainly in the latter part of 20th century as big business became bigger, the emphasis on B2B selling had a distinct aggressive ring to it. So much

so, that you could walk down the halls of many businesses and think that you were involved in big game hunting. Many of these teams saw selling as an extreme sport, or more precisely, Big Game Fishing or Hunting.

- Customers were 'Targets'.
- Getting a sale was referred to as 'the Kill'.
- Customers were regarded as objects to be possessed or trophies to be placed in their cabinet; to be shown off and admired (perversely so) like stuffed animal heads on the wall.

Little regard was really paid to building genuine customer relationships and developing real value. It was in essence an 'us' versus 'them' approach where collaboration wasn't on the agenda. And if you tried to develop deeper client relationships based on solid ground where mutual benefit was to be had, it was seen as wimpy and soft. If you had listened to many sales teams in 1980's, 90's, and naughties, you would have overheard many sales people speak about their clients in disparaging and disrespectful ways with little regard for the value of genuine relationships built on trust and transparency.

The numbers were all that mattered: how much you were going to earn in commissions, how you could beat your competitors, grow market share, be the biggest (remember the mantra 'bigger is always better'?) and you could get there whatever way worked for you even if it meant duping the customers and taking people for a ride. And, if you were really rational you could always find some way of justifying your actions - 'You'd do it to if you were in my shoes'.

For many years, the legend of the 600lb sales gorilla or Alpha sales superstar has been allowed to strut the hallways and boardrooms of businesses. Often revered for achieving so-called 'top of the league ladder' sales results, yet feared by many for their aggressive, manipulative, ego centric, demanding and intimidating antics. Countless CEOs and sales managers have allowed these sales prima donnas to remain in their sales teams, but at what cost to their sales team and their business?

This litany of bad behaviour such as aggressiveness, violence (be it emotional, mental or physical) and over-rationalisation is when we allow our brains to operate too much in one zone without the counterbalance of other areas to help guide us to better decisions; the right decisions.

What's Needed in a Complex World

Interestingly, in this increasingly complex world, emotions such as empathy, compassion and benevolence are emerging as critical qualities of highly successful people, teams, organisations and communities. Even in the highly competitive world of business and selling, it has been found that those salespeople and leaders who are able to incorporate these qualities into their daily work and personal lives are finding greater levels of success. This is coming in the form of better sales results and healthier, more prosperous client relationships as well as better personal health, resilience, and overall job and personal satisfaction.

And, the good news is that the emotional qualities such as compassion, empathy and benevolence can be trained: they can be proactively developed and mastered.

What we now know is that the prefrontal and temporal cortex of the brain is where our higher level executive functions reside such as decision-making, analysing, problem-solving, creativity as well as empathy, benevolence and compassion.

Interestingly, the latest brain research has identified that we cannot operate simultaneously in both the analytical and empathic parts of our brain. We can only switch between the two parts of our brain at any given moment. Research also shows that many of us have strength in one sector, and not so much the other.

A pivotal study led by a Case Western Reserve University researcher shows: *'When the brain fires up the network of neurons that allows us to empathize, it suppresses the network used for analysis.'*

This could explain how a CEO could be so blind to the public relations fiasco his cost-cutting decision has made. The researchers pointed out that: *'When the analytic network is engaged, our ability to appreciate the human cost of our action is repressed. At rest, our brains cycle between the social and analytical networks. But when presented with a task, healthy adults engage the appropriate neural pathway, the researchers found. The study shows for the first time that we have a built-in neural constraint on our ability to be both empathetic and analytic at the same time.'*

The Switching Brain

Lessons can already be learned from highly successful salespeople who, often unbeknown to themselves and others, have been switching between empathy and analysis for years, finding a delicate balance of collaboration and business success for both their customers and their organisations. With practice we can develop both our empathetic and analytical skills and capabilities to make us more effective and, of course, different elements will come easy to some than others.

So what about those aggressive sales prima donnas and leaders? Well, it may come as a surprise to many, as it did to us to find, that the brain circuits responsible for empathy are in part the same as those involved with violence. Amazingly, those aggressive 600lb Sales Gorillas are accessing the same parts of the brain where empathy resides. Researchers from the University of Valencia (UV)¹ have investigated the brain structures involved with empathy - in other words, the ability to put oneself in another person's position - and carried out a scientific review of them. They concluded that the brain circuits responsible for empathy are in part the same as those involved with violence. The study concluded "that the prefrontal and temporal cortex, the amygdala and other features of the limbic system (such as insulin and the cingulated cortex) play "a fundamental role in all situations in which empathy appears."

¹ Science daily 1 April 2010 Empathy and Violence Have Similar Circuits in the Brain, Research Suggests

Encouraging and developing empathy has an inhibiting effect on violence which means it is difficult for a “more empathetic” brain to behave in a violent way. The researchers concluded that “Educating people to be empathetic could be an education for peace, bringing about a reduction in conflict and belligerent acts.”

So perhaps those frenzied, hyped up, RAH RAH ‘make more sales’ sessions are doing more harm than good. In all likelihood they are. Focusing the brain on fear and violence is not a long term sustainable sales or business strategy.

The Brutal Facts

The brutal facts in business are that we have neglected developing the Empathic parts of our brain as an important business resource for too long and we have over-relied on the Analytical parts to drive our businesses, or worse still, we have championed the aggressive kill-or-be-killed mode of operation that still drives some industries today.

It cannot be denied that selling requires excellent analytical skills, and some degree of drive and competitiveness. However selling must now be balanced with the ability to genuinely listen and respond to the subtleties of more complex relationships which involves patience, nurturing and dealing with ambiguity, all of which are in the realms of empathy. Think of the types of conversations you now need to have with your prospective customers where listening, questioning, resolving problems, collaboration, empathy and understanding are encouraged.

When we work with other people (customers, colleagues or managers) it is important to be able to understand where they are coming from or to ‘be able to walk in their shoes’! This becomes especially relevant if we look at dealing with a customer and meeting their needs. We still need to employ our analytical skills to understand and resolve problems and explore opportunities; however, we will also need to be mindful of the welfare of people, communities and environments and employ empathy as our leading edge into the 21st century.

The Yin & Yang of Enlightened Selling

Don't think for a moment these enlightened sales performers are flower-wearing hippies; the enlightened sales professionals love to achieve but know that achievement comes from collaboration and cooperation instead of destruction and defeat. They understand that everything is a compromise in one form or another and it is their job to find the best outcome for their business and their clients. They understand that selling is about being of service to people: with their ideas, intellect, openness, curiosity, resourcefulness and desire to see everyone succeed. And, clients feel safe in their presence knowing that they will do the right thing for the client and the company they represent.

They operate with a sense of detachment, stepping back and looking at things objectively. They let go of things they cannot change and allow clients to be themselves, arriving at their own decisions through insightful questioning and skilful listening. These salespeople know that sales results are an important signpost of sales success but they are not desperately attached to the sales result because they know it will happen if they work with the whole situation from a clear perspective.

Interestingly, the Eastern approach to a 'we' culture and the practice of listening and collaboration may be a further signpost that we are definitely evolving into the Asian Century. The Western world needs to pay attention to these subtle signposts. The enlightened salesperson, regardless of their origin knows that the balance is a combination of both cultures - Yin and Yang.

Yin and Yang are complementary opposites that interact within a greater whole, as part of a dynamic system. Everything has both yin and yang aspects, but either of these aspects may manifest more strongly in particular objects, and may ebb or flow over time. There is a perception (especially in the West) that yin and yang correspond to good and evil (not respectively). However, Taoist philosophy generally discounts good/bad distinctions and other dichotomous moral judgments, in preference to the idea of balance.

The profession of selling in the West has been out of balance for some time and to its detriment. If we look at how selling has been evolving over the last 50 years, we can see a distinct shift occurring from the aggressive one sided approach where conquest was king (too much yang) to a more delicate balance between the masculine and feminine aspects of yin yang.

It cannot be denied that selling requires yang – a proactive, focused, go-out-into-the-world and find opportunity approach. However, selling must now be balanced with the ability to genuinely listen and respond to the subtleties of more complex relationships which involves patience, nurturing, and dealing with ambiguity, which is yin.

Think of the types of business conversations smart companies and their enlightened salespeople are now having with customers – a selling and buying approach where listening, questioning, resolving problems, collaboration, empathy and understanding are encouraged by both parties; where a fair exchange of value is the business and sales norm and good, viable business can flourish now and into the future.

As Cindy Gallop, founder and CEO of IfWeRanTheWorld, says: “I don’t wait for things to change. I make things change”- and so too do smart companies and smart salespeople. They lead the way to ensure they win the hearts and minds of their clients and continue to do good business.

Insights By:

Name: Sue Barrett
Company: Barrett Pty Ltd & www.salesessentials.com
Title: Founder & CEO of Barrett Pty Ltd & www.salesessentials.com
Location: Melbourne, Australia
Website: <http://www.barrett.com.au> and <http://www.salesessentials.com>
Blog: <http://www.barrett.com.au/blogs/SalesBlog/>
LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/profile/suebarrett1>
Twitter: @suebarrett and @barrettconsult

An educated man is not, necessarily, one who has an abundance of general or specialized knowledge. An educated man is one who has so developed the faculties of his mind that he may acquire anything he wants, or its equivalent, without violating the rights of others.

— Napoleon Hill