Don't Shackle Your Salesforce: CRM Tools that Lead to Success

"Preparation is everything in sales. Unfortunately, too many CRM solutions fail to adequately prepare the salesforce." Etien D'Hollander

TOP SALES WORLD

INSPIRING THE GLOBAL SALES COMMUNITY

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Diane Helbig, Kurt Shaver, Mike Lieberman, Colleen Francis, Bernadette McClelland & Krystle Vermes

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Why the Customer HAS to be at the Center of the Sales System

Jonathan Farrington interviews Sam Reese, CEO of MHI Global

Top Sales World Magazine goes weekly in August!

In this month's issue

Regular Features

Guest Articles

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This Month's Top Features

Why the Customer HAS to be at the Center of the Sales System

This month, Jonathan Farrington interviews Sam Reese, CEO of MHI Global, the newly formed company which, after a very active 12 month acquisition strategy, has seen five companies joining forces in the sales performance space, forming the global company MHI Global, and pioneering the customer-management industry.

The proven methodology, expertise and measurable results of Miller Heiman, AchieveGlobal, Huthwaite, Impact Learning Systems and Channel Enablers come together as MHI Global, to provide businesses with an expanded approach, strategy and holistic view of the customer lifecycle.

JF: *If you had to pick one thing that companies are missing and that's standing in the way of growth today, what would it be?*

SR: Companies that are not committed to helping their clients achieve their goals and objectives will fail to thrive. Growth comes from building a customer base of successful interactions, which will then lead to new wins. Word spreads quickly about things that are done right, therefore leading to additional exposure and, ultimately, more opportunity. Companies that focus on working closely, both internally among their teams as well as with their clients, will achieve growth.

JF: *What are the behaviors that you believe drive world-class sales performance?*

SR: We actually know what the behaviors are that drive world-class sales performance, based on the research that we conduct. Essentially, there are three themes that underlie top performance.

a. Provide Perspective - Go the step beyond merely providing a sound solution and leverage all of the internal information that you have within the organization to help clients get results. Bring value to your clients by offering opinions and advice based on your organization's knowledge and experiences. Learn as much as possible about the client's context and then provide perspectives specific to the client and their strategic issues.

b. Collaboration – Use a common framework and language to work closely with your customers, as well as your internal teams. Go beyond sales and operations, to include all parts of the organization, to create a winning customer management strategy. Use the collective knowledge of the organization to provide a far greater impact on the customer than that possible from a singular point of view.

c. Performance Accountability – This serves as the foundation for the customer management strategy and drives world-class performance. Being held accountable and as an organization holding you accountable, measuring customer results, and providing objective measureable outcomes are behaviors that are observed in the very best organizations.

JF: *What does it mean to have the customer at the center of the Sales System?*

SR: All strategies need to emanate from the requirements of clients. The definition of client success should be the touch stone of company strategy. Being customer centric is not just a platitude or trite phrase. It is an action and is operationalized in all aspects of the organization. The customer should be present in every decision that an organization makes.

JF: *Please describe the value proposition of MHI Global - what's the differentiator?*

> These areas of expertise provide the tactics and skills that organizations need to master to be world-class. MHI Global is able to provide companies with strategies and expertise to more successfully access their clients.

SR: The value proposition is to be the key resource to sales leaders around the globe. The differentiator is in the collective expertise, the products, the global footprint, the research and the extensive network of expert practitioners who can provide perspective. Based on this, MHI Global is able to provide deeper and wider capability to the marketplace; a holistic sales system.

JF: *How will MHI Global support organizations in the areas of customer and business management—most specifically in creating and managing opportunities, and in managing relationships?*

SR: MHI Global's expertise is in understanding what drives sales excellence. From the research that we do, the clients that we've had the privilege to work with, and experiences and results, we've identified the behaviors associated with top performance and then package this in solutions for clients. These areas of expertise provide the tactics and skills that organizations need to master to be world-class. MHI Global is able to provide companies with strategies and expertise to more successfully access their clients.

JF: *What does it mean to "empower growth" and how will MHI Global support organizations in achieving this business outcome?*

SR: Empowering growth is all about the point of view that the customer is at the center of all sales strategy. The key is to help sales leaders to optimize their effort in managing customer relations. MHI Global will equip companies with the solutions and perspectives they need to grow, but we will not/cannot do it for them. This is a team effort. We will bring the expertise that we've codified from our research and experience and partner with them to achieve customer management excellence.

JF: *And finally Sam, I perceive that we are likely to witness further expansion and acquisitions. Can you summarize MHI Global's perspective?*

SR: Through MHI Global, CEOs and sales leaders finally have access to the world's most extensive knowledge base on how to drive customer-management excellence and growth. After all, customer experiences are steering the success of individual companies, both domestically and globally, and driving the business world today. ■

To find out more about the most successful and indeed the most significant sales training organization in the world, visit www.MHIGlobal.com

You can also listen in to Jonathan's audio interview with Sam HERE

To find out more about **Sam**, visit http://www.mhiglobal.com/

Etien D'Hollander

Don't Shackle Your Salesforce: CRM Tools that Lead to Success

Preparation is everything in sales. Unfortunately, too many CRM solutions fail to adequately prepare the salesforce.

Before a sales rep makes a sales call, they have to be aware of the various aspects of their customer that makes them unique. For instance, a sales rep leveraging a quality CRM solution will have information in front of them that lays out the goals of the customer, the various challenges they face, the environment in which they operate, what spells success for them and what spells failure. All of this information is taken from previous calls with the customer, which means without a proper reporting tool, the CRM is of no value to the salesforce.

> When a sales rep has the reporting tools that allow them to make detailed, yet quick and easy reports, they are more likely to send them after every sales call.

If a sales rep doesn't have the tools to report this information on a consistent basis, there can be no adequate preparation for future sales calls. Not only do sales reps want this information in front of them before they make their call, the customer would also prefer to talk to someone who is completely knowledgeable about their wants and needs.

The problem most sales teams face is in the way their CRM is designed. Most sales managers would say that their CRM is more of a revenue and pipeline-centric solution. The CRM is useful for making revenue projections and tracking the sales cycle, but it doesn't do much to identify the customer. With this scenario, sales reps can only provide a somewhat generic view of the product they are pitching and cross their fingers for luck.

When a sales rep has the reporting tools that allow them to make detailed, yet quick and easy reports, they are more likely to send them after every sales call. This information is reiterated later before a follow-up call is placed. With a CRM system that pulls up all the goals, success factors and priorities that give each customer a face of their own, the sales rep has the upper hand and can deliver a solid pitch that increases the probability of a sale.

Organizations can spend thousands and thousands of dollars on CRM solutions that include all the tools you can imagine. However, without a proper reporting tool in that tool belt, the close rate will not improve. If you're not capturing information that matters to your customer and instead focus only on what matters to your organization, you're going to find your fancy new CRM system offers little return on investment.

Companies like Front Row Solutions are building tools that are friendly to the sales rep, offering mobile solutions that give them what they need in the field to create reports that produce more customer-centric sales practices. If you want to improve your outcomes, it's time to talk to Front Row.

To find out more about **Etien**, visit:
http://www.frontrow-solutions.com/

What is the Big Secret That Powers Baseline Selling?

I'm a baseball lover, die-hard Red Sox fan, and proud father of a 12-year-old baseball star. Having founded Kurlan & Associates in 1985 and Objective Management Group in 1990, the only surprise should be that it took so long to combine the two passions and write Baseline Selling – How to Become a Sales Superstar by Using What You Already Know about the Game of Baseball, in 2005.

Companies have terrific results when they implement Baseline Selling and last week a well-known expert asked, "So what is the big secret that makes Baseline Selling so powerful? He thought it would make for a great article discussion so let's attempt to answer that question by starting with a few questions of my own.

Is it the sales process that makes it so powerful? The big difference between the sales process in Baseline Selling and other sales processes is that rather than having outcome-based steps, time-based steps or task-oriented steps, it has customizable milestone-centric steps. You might think that a step is a step but there is a huge difference. With time-based steps you may have achieved a certain number of calls or meetings but you may not have actually accomplished what you need. With task-oriented steps, you may have completed the tasks but you may not know whether you are any closer to having a new customer or client. With outcome-based steps you may have achieved the desired outcomes but as with time and task-based steps you may not know what will actually happen next. With a milestone-centric process, the sequence of steps is extremely important because it builds on itself and as each milestone is achieved a salesperson has more evidence, thus leverage and confidence, that they are closer to the sale.

Is it the methodology that makes it so powerful? Nothing is more important in today's selling than the conversation that takes place between the salesperson and the prospect. While other methodologies are based on relationship building, strategy or tactics, the Baseline Selling methodology is based on the conversations that take place in each stage. Milestones are known only to the salesperson, achieved within the conversations, and invisible to prospects. The methodology then, consists of the conversations that move the process from step to step and stage to stage.

Is it that the approach is built around uncovering compelling reasons to buy? Unlike needs based, buyer-journey, or pain-based approaches, uncovering the compelling reasons why a prospect would move their business to you, or buy this product, service or program in the first place, gives the salesperson leverage, allows the salesperson to build a case using the prospect's reasons, and helps the salesperson position the solution in a way that resonates with what is most important to the prospect. On the other hand, a need may not be reason enough to change. The buyer journey includes the salesperson at a point where it is difficult to move backwards to gather the necessary information, and pain only works when there is a known problem. While a compelling reason could be based on pain, it can just as often occur when a prospect has a window of opportunity and a salesperson seeking pain would conclude that in the absence of pain, this prospect should be disqualified.

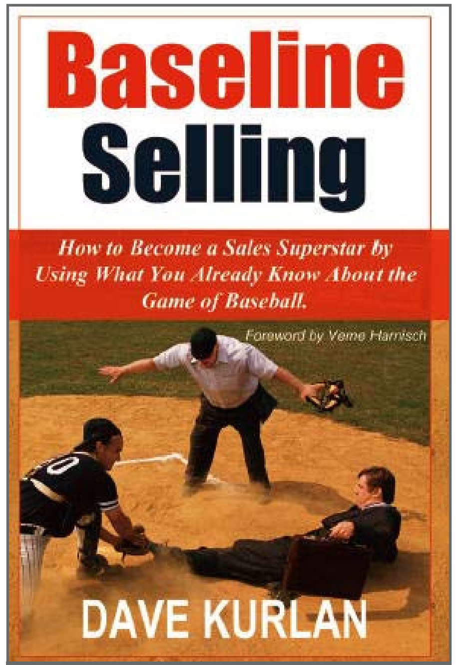
Is it the concept of SOB Quality? Before we can discuss SOB Quality you need to know how that concept was developed, what it refers to in baseball, and how it translates to selling. Watch this [3-minute video] for my complete explanation of SOB Quality. Now you should understand SOB, its application in selling and how it allows salespeople to differentiate themselves from their competitors, internal adversaries, and become trusted advisors. SOB does not exist in other processes, methodologies, sales strategies or tactics. The closest anyone has come since this was introduced in 2005 is The Challenger Sale, however that describes a certain type of salesperson whereas in Baseline Selling, achieving SOB Quality is simply a milestone that any type of salesperson can achieve.

> Nothing is more important in today's selling than the conversation that takes place between the salesperson and the prospect.

So what is the big secret that powers Baseline Selling? While all four of these concepts are important to Baseline Selling, SOB brings selling to a whole new level. It causes prospects to think, "We need to work with Dave. He gets it better than anyone else, he asked great questions, he got us on the right track, he helped us realize that we were approaching this the wrong way and we've never had a conversation like before that with anyone else!"

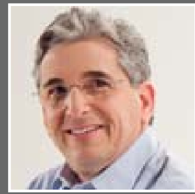
There are hundreds of experts offering dozens of processes, methodologies, approaches, strategies, styles and advice. It's all good. All you have to do is choose one that meets the following 10 criteria:

1. It resonates with you
2. It's easy to understand, teach and learn
3. It's easy to customize and apply
4. It works today and will work tomorrow
5. It's time-tested and proven
6. The methodology was designed for the process and vice versa
7. The process is intended to be integrated into your CRM or pipeline management application
8. The process and methodology are rich enough to offer layered or stepped learning and application
9. The trainer has lived and breathed the process and methodology
10. The trainer understands your go to market strategy.



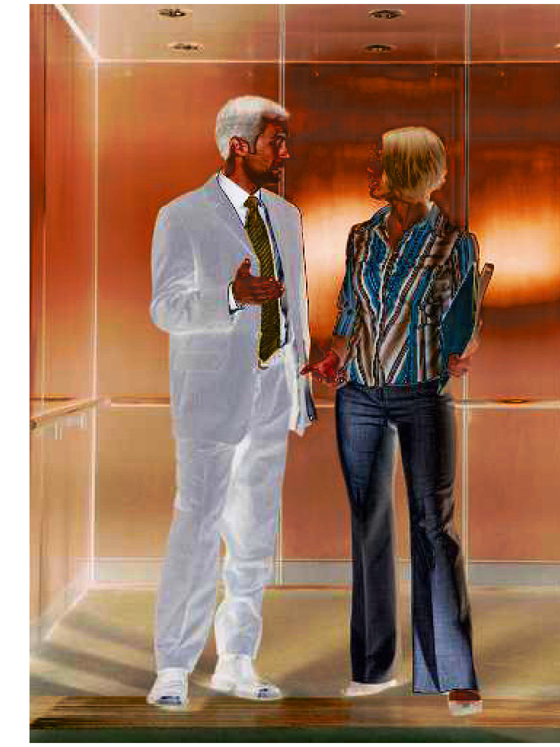
Find out more about Baseline Selling Here

To find out more about **Dave**, visit: **www.kurlanassociates.com/**



30-Second-Qualifier

I've been working with a sales team on creating their elevator pitch. We've been exploring different words, what they mean, and what they mean to other people.



We were debating whether to say CEOs or Senior leaders when describing who they work with. As we were working on it I realized that our elevator pitch can be the first step in qualifying prospects.

Consider this scenario. You attend a networking event where business people in a variety of industries and roles are in attendance. As you meet people they share their commercial and you share yours. Your commercial refers to your clients as CEOs. So, the person you are talking to is determining whether they are a good fit for you or whether they know anyone who is.

Is this a good thing? Should the elevator pitch be more generic so as not to exclude anyone? I submit that the more specific you are the better off you'll be. It starts with having a clear view of your ideal client. What does an ideal client look like? Consider all of the characteristics of your best, most favorite clients. Create a profile of who you like to work with most out of those traits and then seek those kinds of people/companies.

Is this a good thing? Should the elevator pitch be more generic so as not to exclude anyone?

Of course, in order to do this successfully you have to be ready and willing to walk away from (or never encounter) anyone who doesn't meet the criteria you've set. This can be hard for people. If you are chasing revenues you may be uncomfortable clarifying your target. Get over it and realize that chasing revenue actually works against you. Whenever you gain clients who are less than ideal you take yourself, your company, and your time away from finding and working with those you should be working with. When you decide to tough it out and focus on the most ideal, you will find that you gain exactly that.

Everyone is strapped for time these days. Having a specific 30 second commercial can help you gain time. When you are specific you are letting others know who you wish to work with. Therefore, anyone else will not approach – they self-select out. You will find that you are not spending time in conversations with people who aren't your target. You don't have to qualify in the sales conversation because you have qualified ahead of time.

Moreover, as you meet people in networking situations who have clear and specific elevator pitches, you will be able to quickly identify whether you can connect them or not. This helps you qualify networking and referral partners – are they someone you should spend time getting to know?

Anyone in a sales role has a responsibility to their company to build valuable relationships with resources, prospects, and clients. We do this when we have clarity around who we work best with. Our elevator pitch can help us define those people, and then act as the first qualifier in the sales process. ■

To find out more about **Diane**, visit:
http://www.seizethisdaycoaching.com/

Is Insight Enough?

In selling, the latest rage is "customer insight." Consider what leading sales experts have to say about this emerging essential.

From *Changing the Sales Conversation* by Linda Richardson: "Client insight is a marketing term that refers to the data that is gathered about clients to predict their future needs and shape their current ones… You job is to ensure the insights you bring to your clients are relevant and specific to them."

From Anthony Iannarino: "Insight is the highest rung on the ladder (so far as we can see from here). But you can't stand on that rung until you've climbed up using all of the lower rungs. You need business acumen and situational knowledge. This isn't easy to acquire, and it should be a top priority for your personal and professional development."

From *Insight Selling* by John Doerr and Mike Schultz: "Not only do sales winners sell differently, they sell radically differently, than second-place finishers. Today's sales winners harness the power of ideas."

So much stock has been put into customer insight that the authors of The Challenger Sale went so far as to say that solution selling and relationship selling were dead, giving rise to insight selling as the new imperative.

Researchers and experts generally agree, even if there is some departure on how extreme this trend may or may not be. The fact is that buyers do, indeed, value sellers who bring insights and those who ask questions to promote self-discovery of new insights.

In addition to bringing insights, however, buyers still want trust-based relationships with sellers and solutions developed in collaboration with sellers.

Insights + Relationships + Solutions = Sales. But, wait, that's not all.

The term "insight" may be too narrow to adequately describe what your buyers want. Technically, the definition of "insight" is to apprehend the true nature of something, to intuitively understand, to discern the underlying or inner truth, to perceive the motivational forces behind one's actions or thoughts.

Developing insight, then, requires empathy and patience to look beyond the obvious. It requires superior listening and question-asking skills plus the ability to assimilate data points and subtle emotional cues to draw conclusions.

With insight, a seller gets a closer look at the buyer and the situation at hand. In a hurry-up world, this is a gift to time-pressed buyers who may not be able to gather their own thoughts and develop their own insights.

But in this strictest sense of the word, some gaps remain.

Insight is about looking inward. It deals with the known variables and uses, albeit at a deeper level, what is already apparent.

Using insight alone would be the equivalent of being near-sighted, able to see near things more clearly than distant ones. This myopic view is inadequate in sales.

Buyers want sellers to bring more than insight. The sales experts who are using the term "insight" mean it in a much broader sense, and it's important for sellers to understand the full meaning of the buzz term "insight selling" so they do not over-rely on too narrow a view.

In addition to **insight**, sellers need additional sight lines and perspectives.

Outsight is a seldom-used word, being popularized more in the field of leadership than in sales, thanks to the work of Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner. Outsight is defined as the act of perceiving external things. Research shows that innovation to bring new ideas, methods and solutions into use is absolutely dependent on an individual's outsight.

With outsight, a seller is able to cross-apply what is learned in one situation to effectively impact another. Outsight brings new, different and inspiring possibilities into view. Outsight breaks through the here-and-now status quo.

Outsight gives a seller a far-sighted view, an ability to see things in the distance more clearly than near ones. From the buyer's point of view, this is preferred over near-sightedness.

To develop outsight, sellers need to expand their own horizons. Being open-minded, continually seeking opportunities to learn and remaining curious will help sellers to gain outsight. Jill Konrath's new book, Agile Selling, makes a strong case for both insight and outsight. She writes "Buyers expect you to understand their business, direction, challenges, processes, and relationship history." In other words, sellers need to look backwards and forwards to bring more to the table.

In addition to the broad outlook, your buyers need you to access **resight** when needed. That's another seldom-used (but legitimate!) word meaning an ability to see something narrowly and directly. Resight is useful in those times when you need to laser in on what's key. It is not unlike **bombsight** which refers to the instrument used when aiming at well-defined targets. Your buyers would like for you to do this, too, at times.

Of course, **hindsight** is also important. To look back at a situation, ascertain what happened and fully understand the impact gives you credibility with your buyers.

And then there's **foresight**. Unfair as it may seem, buyers demand this, too. They want sellers to articulate the ROI in ways that would require a crystal ball. They request guarantees of performance. They expect the seller's insight and outsight to work together to anticipate and stave off future problems.

This is where you can create the greatest value and differentiation. By looking broadly and continuously at your buyer's present and future needs, you will develop an expansive 20/20 vision and a seeming clairvoyance that makes you an irreplaceable resource. You will also be able to focus in on a narrower view and pinpoint what matters most.

Insight, outsight, resight, bombsight, hindsight, foresight… And just one more. With all this sight, your buyers also expect you to take **oversight** or watchful care of the investments they make with you. With your eyes wide open, you will be capable of doing so.

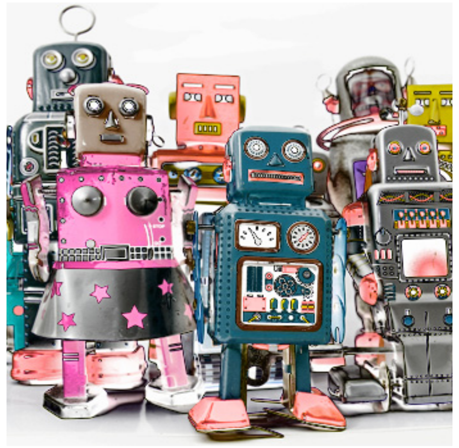
Insight is about looking inward. It deals with the known variables and uses, albeit at a deeper level, what is already apparent.

To find out more about **Deb**, visit here:
http://peoplefirstps.com/

Nancy Nardin

Is Automation the Key to Modern Selling?

With a large percentage of buyers now beginning their search for solutions on the internet, and with more marketing content being delivered to those buyers, sellers have a lot more inbound leads.



At one point, it became neither possible nor desirable to have a salesperson follow-up on each lead for two reasons.

1. The sheer number of leads would require a large, high-cost sales force. This partly explains the fast growth in the number of inside sales organizations.

2. The source of inbound web "leads" is mostly from completed webforms. A completed webform doesn't by itself signal a qualified buyer. It signals an inferred interest at best.

These two factors paved the way for a new type of solution referred to as marketing automation. The process of qualifying inbound leads could now be automated. Marketing automation solutions like Act-On and Marketo make it possible to create rules for scoring leads based on online buyer behavior along with buyer profile information. Those with lower scores get nurtured automatically by the system. Those with higher scores are routed to sales as Marketing Qualified Leads (MQLs).

Because of marketing automation, Marketing is now able to nurture, score and route a much higher number of MQLs than ever before.

But what kind of automation is available for salespeople to effectively and efficiently move Sales Qualified Leads (SQLs) through the funnel?

The time has come for the concept of a Selling Automation system. There are big breakthroughs in automating the flow of information to salespeople, as well as automating the prioritization and completion of tasks. For mobile reps, this comes in the form of innovative solutions like Badger Maps, Selligy and Clari.

> But what kind of automation is available for salespeople to effectively and efficiently move Sales Qualified Leads (SQLs) through the funnel?

Here, I'd like to talk about breakthroughs in the way salespeople can use content to capture the attention and motivate prospects—just like marketing is doing—but during the sales cycle.

Selling automation software allows sales reps to run their own interactive campaigns at a more personalized and direct level.

For instance, a solution by Tellwise allows sellers to reach out to potential buyers with content and, depending on how that buyer interacts with the content (did they click on it? ignore it? re-tweet it?), the system automatically alerts them that subsequent material is available. The tool tracks every conceivable metric with all potential customers and notifies sellers about how to proceed.

Selling automation technology drives down the cost of making a sale because reps prospect more effectively, communicate more efficiently and better understand their prospects' interest and timing.

If you want to learn more about the concept of selling automation I highly recommend an informative whitepaper courtesy of Tellwise; "How to Use Selling Automation to Stay Ahead of the Game." ■

To find out more about **Nancy**, visit here:
http://www.smartsellingtools.com/

9 Things I've Learned From 9 Years as a LinkedIn Member

Last month was my 9-year anniversary of joining LinkedIn. I am Member #2,174,063.

Here's what I've learned in nine years of using and training thousands of people on the world's No. 1 social application for business:

1. LinkedIn is not just an online resume anymore. While recruiting is a big piece of LinkedIn business, it is much broader now now. It's like your personal website.

2. Like many software applications, it is ridiculously underutilized. The average LinkedIn member uses less than 10% of its capabilities.

3. There are hundreds of LinkedIn User Interfaces between the combinations of free and 15 Premium versions, operating systems, browsers and mobile platforms. Features and displays are not consistent. That makes training on LinkedIn a challenge.

4. LinkedIn likes phased feature rollouts. It is good to be cautious, especially in a network of 300M people. Sometimes, it takes a long time. I have taught classes where some people did not have a feature first rolled out seven months prior.

5. It's a powerful tool for sales prospecting. As more members joined and kept their information up-to-date, smart salespeople realize that LinkedIn is an incredible database for finding prospects. Add the unique benefit of being able to leverage your network for introductions and it becomes one of the top ways to initiate a sales dialog.

6. It's a powerful tool for building your brand. The "other half" of social selling is to build your value and attract potential buyers by sharing content. LinkedIn continues to add features to position people as Subject Matter Experts to their networks.

7. Linked Giveth and LinkedIn Taketh Away. Just as valuable new features appear, valuable ones disappear, too. R.I.P. to Products & Services, Events, Reading Lists, Signal, Activities (oops, just added back),…

8. It's mainstream media now. If Content is King then LinkedIn is the King's office. It is many people's top destination for business news related to their interests. Acquisitions like SlideShare and Pulse along with the LinkedIn Influencers and the new long-form Publishing feature all support this ambition.

9. It's amazingly well self-policed. For all the horror stories and misuse of other social networks, I have to compliment LinkedIn and its members on maintaining good business etiquette. Sure, I occasionally see posts of discussions that belong on Facebook or other more personal social networks, but, in general, people stick to business.

What are your LinkedIn lessons?

It's mainstream media now. If Content is King then LinkedIn is the King's office.

To find out more about **Kurt**, visit:
http://www.thesalesfoundry.com

Buyer Behavior Has Changed – Your Business Needs To Adapt To Survive

When your prospects engage, are you providing them with a great buyer experience, or are you scaring them away? Is the content you provide relevant enough to motivate them to return, or do they go somewhere else? Do you have a strategy for staying top of mind, or are your prospects forever lost as soon as they leave your website?

In this guest article Membrain has invited Square2Marketing to give their thought on how smart prospecting campaigns and improved sales and marketing alignment help turn more qualified leads into paying customers.

Don't you just hate it when people call you and ask if you're ready to buy their product? What about when they ask if they can come visit you or send you material you didn't request? It's time to stop cold calling and start nurturing your prospects.

These days, people don't want to be sold to. They want to be educated and helped. They want to feel safe when making their purchase decision from a trusted provider. In order to adapt your marketing strategy and sales efforts to this new buyer behavior, you need to nurture your leads by educating them, not by hard selling to them.

Here are five reasons why lead nurturing works for your sales pipeline:

1. You Can Automate It - The great part about lead-nurturing emails is that they are automated and can be sent behind the scenes. By writing these educational emails in advance, they can be sent automatically one day, three days, 10 days or even 15 days after another piece of educational content is downloaded. Automating lead-nurturing emails allows you to choose when the email is sent, what the message contains and from which sales person this email should come from. Now, after one of your prospects downloads an offer, they're not receiving an interruptive call from a sales person. Instead, they are sent a lead-nurturing email that encourages them to check out another piece of content they might benefit from. You also add a level of control and consistency by knowing exactly what is being sent. No more worrying about each sales rep sending a different, or the wrong, message.

Don't you just hate it when people call you and ask if you're ready to buy their product? What about when they ask if they can come visit you or send you material you didn't request?

2. You Can Track It - Being able to track who received your email, when they got it, whether they opened it, clicked anything or opted out of your campaign is essential to the success of your lead-nurturing emails. This transparency allows you to make adjustments as needed to ensure you're giving your prospects exactly what they want at the right time.

3. It Mirrors *New* Buyer Behavior - This is very important. Lead-nurturing emails are NOT sales emails. They are designed to help your prospects feel safe while they research your product or service. Lead-nurturing emails set you apart from the competition and position you as a thought leader in your industry.

4. It's Scalable - With lead nurturing, every single prospect gets a personalized message at the right time, whether you have three or 300 sales people. This enables you to extend your reach and keep your sales pipeline full.

5. You Get Results - Companies that use lead nurturing generate 50% more sales-ready leads at 33% lower cost (source: Forrester Research). Those nurtured leads make 47% larger purchases than non-nurtured leads (source: The Annuitas Group).

Start Today Tip: It's time to take a look at your sales process to see where lead nurturing fits in. Maybe it's right after you have qualified a lead, or it might be after a prospect fills out a form on your website. Choose a starting point and build a campaign. Decide how many emails you need, what the timeframe for sending these emails will be and make sure your emails don't sound salesy. Remember that you are helping to guide these prospects; you're not selling to them. Keep track of your progress and make necessary tweaks to your lead-nurturing campaign.

About Square 2 Marketing

Square 2 Marketing is a full-service inbound marketing agency designed to do one thing: get our clients leads. We bundle marketing strategy along with inbound marketing techniques including website design, social media marketing, email marketing, content marketing and other digital marketing tactics to help our clients get found, get leads and close deals. With a national client base, we specialize in helping clients in all industries, but offer specialized experience in professional services, healthcare, technology, business services, manufacturing, distribution and financial services.

To find out more about Mike, visit:
http://www.square2marketing.com/

Sales Training: Part 1 – The Willingness & Ability Factor

In my experience, I've found most companies approach sales training the wrong way. This might sound surprising, but hear me out. When sellers consistently fail to meet growth targets, the automatic assumption tends to be, "It's a skills-related issue." The company believes that all its sales team needs to succeed is proper training by an outside consultant or someone within the organization.

The truth is, skills aren't always the problem. And if they aren't, sales training will only be a waste of everyone's time and resources. As a sales consultant and trainer myself, I'm continually trying to save clients from making this mistake.

Before your company invests in sales training, you should consider two important factors: The willingness and ability of each individual on the team. To what degree do your sellers want to contribute toward growth? And do they have the tools to do it? In other words, do you have a sales team that's:

Able but unwilling? or Willing but unable?

(Or, unable and unwilling, which means it's probably time to hire new sellers!)

Knowing these answers will determine if training is the right choice for your sales team.

Able but unwilling

I once worked with a company that, despite having a great team of sellers, constantly missed its growth targets. There was plenty of demand for the laminated trade show booths, restaurant tables and signage they sold. However, all the training from the past had only made them better sellers to existing clients, not to new prospects.

Then I discovered this: The company wasn't reaching its goals because the team, in reality, wasn't willing to grow. The sellers were in a rural area with a very low cost of living and were on full commission. They lived comfortably, so they didn't feel a need to push themselves to make even $100,000 a year. Short of forcing everyone to buy bigger homes and expensive toys, there wasn't much we could do. Sales training would've been useless.

In another case, I saw age and experience have a direct effect on willingness. I interviewed a potential VP of Sales who, at age 42, was very successful. He was interested in working with a client of mine at a start-up where a major hunt for business was underway. Right off the bat, however, he said he wasn't willing to make cold calls – that he was "beyond all that." In the end, he wasn't the right fit because he wasn't willing to do the work needed and receive further training in that area – even though he was able.

Willing but unable

Let's now examine the ability factor. Consider those sales teams that are willing to grow but can't because their skills aren't up to snuff.

For example, a client of mine works in a very mature market with a well-established team of channel partners and resellers pushing their products to buyers. Their sellers have never had to make cold calls, develop territories or request referrals. The reason? The company's resellers have always pushed the deals to the sellers and called every hour with leads.

Recently, though, there's been a push to grow more aggressively and increase market share in response to stronger competition. Now the sellers have to do the work of the resellers. The problem? They were hired to be reactive versus proactive and don't know how to prospect. They're being asked for a 40 percent increase in sales – more than three times what they've ever accomplished – but their current growth rate is still hovering at 12 percent.

In this case, the sellers are willing but unable. Sales training is clearly vital in order to sharpen their skills so the company can achieve target growth.

> In this case, the sellers are willing but unable. Sales training is clearly vital in order to sharpen their skills so the company can achieve target growth.

Customize the training

Once your company decides sales training is the right approach, it's time to gather input. If you're a leader that approaches training based on what you think your sales team needs, you'll likely miss the mark and nothing will get implemented. Sellers won't accept new information nearly to the degree they would if the training were based on what they actually want to improve.

Before calling in a consultant for training sessions, ask your sellers to describe their trouble spots. This does the following things:

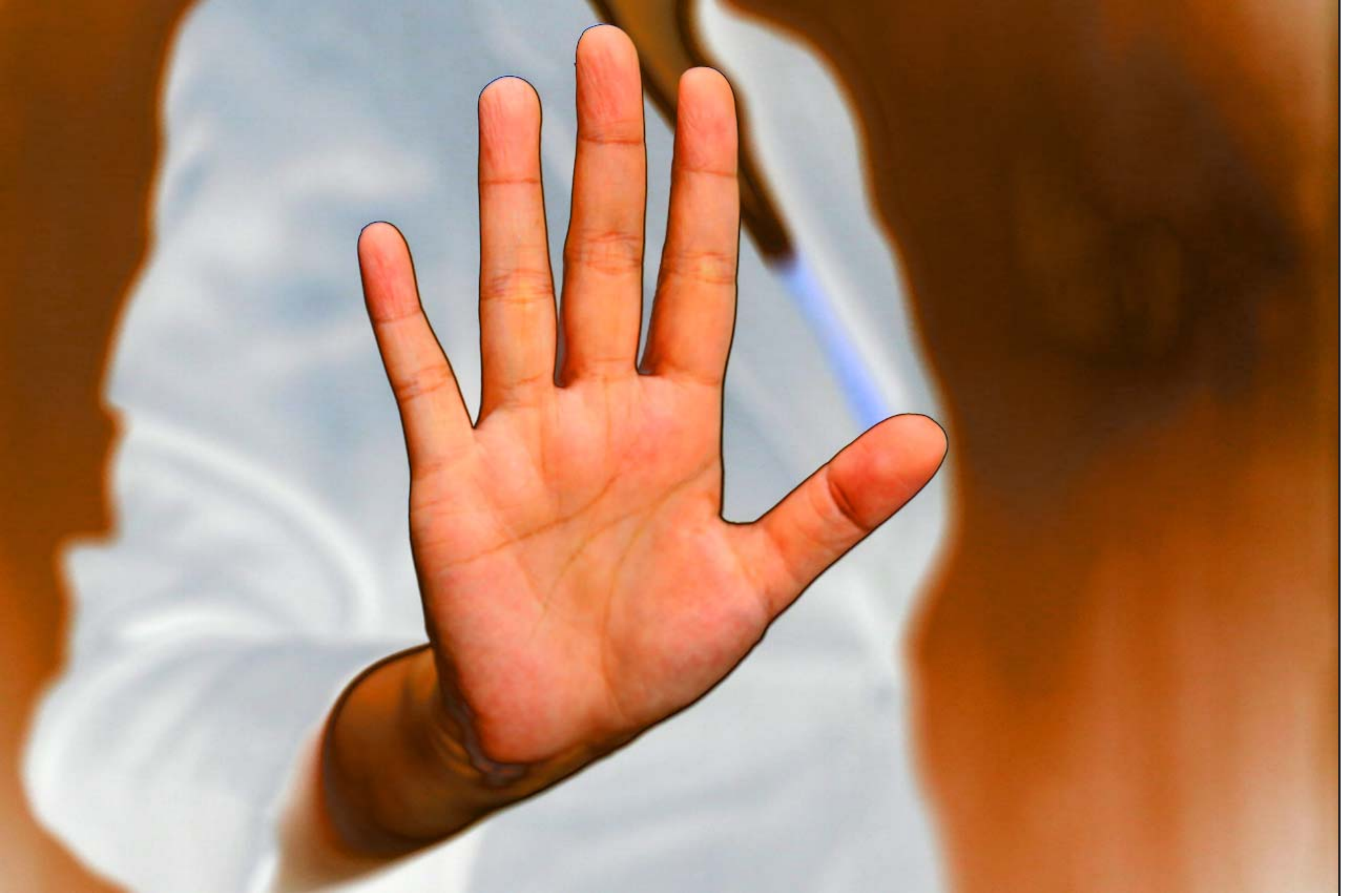
- It ensures your company isn't wasting time and money by addressing the wrong areas in training.
- It allows your team to be involved in creating the solution. They're being heard and see that training is being developed to meet their needs. This means they'll ultimately buy in and implement the information.

If you option for one-on-one coaching, rather than a group training session, you can often skip this step because sellers will typically provide straightforward feedback during your coaching session. In this case, the material covered can therefore be adjusted on the fly to meet their immediate needs.

The next step

We've discussed, in overall terms, the effect of willingness, ability and customized training on your company's growth. In Part 2 of this article series, (presented in next month's magazine) we'll get down to specifics. This includes how to determine what level individual sellers are at and how you can harness their talents. Further, you'll learn how to fully implement sales training and use the power of accountability to ensure long-term success.

To find out more about Colleen, visit:
http://www.engageselling.com



Stop Talking AT Your Prospect

Sometimes I wonder why I answer my phone, especially when the caller's number isn't familiar to me. But on this particular day, I was expecting another call, so I answered. As fate would have it, it was a stranger calling me out of the blue with a sales pitch.

As a long time sales professional, I admit that I'm always evaluating the performance of other salespeople. Depending on the situation, I might just brush the seller off and quickly get off the phone. In other situations, I feel compelled to provide the caller with feedback and sales coaching. On this particular day…coaching was definitely in order.

The call went like this:

Me: "Hi, this is Barb Giamanco."

Seller: "Can I speak to Barbara Giamanco?"

Me: I say, "You are speaking to her." I'm thinking, what an idiot. I just introduced myself. The sales rep didn't even listen to what I said.

Seller: "My name is Sam with XYZ Software Company. You recently attended one of our webinars. Thank you. I wanted to follow up with you to see if you have any questions and tell you how our product can help you grow your business."

Me: "You are interrupting me, I am expecting another call."

Seller: "I'm sorry to be an interruption. If you have just a few minutes, I'd like to walk you through a demo of our product and show you how it can benefit your business."

Me: "What do you know about my business, Sam? How do you know your product can help me?"

Seller: "We can help you make better business decisions by harnessing the power of big data."

Me: "Sam, you don't actually know anything about my business. If you did, you would know that I'm not a qualified buyer for your product. I own a small business; you sell an enterprise service. I listened to your webinar because I like to keep up with technology trends."

At that point, I stopped the call and had the following advice for the salesperson.

1. Before you call anyone, look at the company website, review the person's LinkedIn profile, their Twitter account or use the Internet to conduct some basic research to know who they are and what they do.

2. LISTEN to what the person is saying to you.

3. Stop pushing forward when the buyer has just told you your interruption is unwelcome, they are not your target customer and are annoyed that you don't know that.

Times have changed. Stop talking at buyers. If salespeople don't stand out they'll be shut out. It's just that simple.

Unfortunately, the call experience I just described is happening thousands of times each day. This cold call is a classic example of a seller determined to plow through a script that was handed to them.

Stop Doing What You Have Always Done

Einstein is famously quoted as saying, "Insanity is doing the same things over and over again expecting a different result." Frankly, I think there is a lot of insanity going on sales today. What worked five, ten or fifteen years ago either doesn't work at all or has completely diminished in effectiveness.

The American Association of Inside Sales Professionals (AA-ISP) came to Atlanta this month. Listening to the various conference speakers, a few common themes emerged. They are:

1. Listening and communication. During sales calls, sellers need to stop talking at the buyer. Listening is not waiting for your turn to pitch. Listening is about presence, the ability to perceive what isn't being said and paying close to attention to what they buyer reveals when the right questions are asked.

2. Hiring and onboarding. Hire the right people. Then, during the onboarding process provide sellers with the right sales training needed to succeed. Shoving a call script in their hands isn't what I mean. Rather than teaching them how to pitch features, help them with listening, communication and questioning skills. They need to be able to hold strategic, solutions oriented sales conversations.

3. Sales training. Ongoing programs to keep sales skills sharp is not optional. Surface level training at sales kick-off meetings aren't enough. Skills training needs to include the reinforcement of good interpersonal communication and selling skills, as well as training on the use of social technology to engage, educate and influence in the online world.

4. Tools and technology. Use the right tools to generate leads and help accelerate the sales cycle, but don't use online channels to broadcast pitches. Technology enables great selling but does not replace it.

5. Sales call preparation. Bring insight to the table. Share information that will benefit the buyer and their business in some way. Educate them on something they may not have considered relative to their industry or the competition. Making sales calls should be about quality NOT quantity.

Times have changed. Stop talking at buyers. If salespeople don't stand out they'll be shut out. It's just that simple.

To find out more about **Barb**, visit: **http://barbaragiamanco.com/**

The #1 Roadblock to your Prospecting Success. It's in your Head

Want to grow your sales? Let's face it -- the road to prospecting success is paved with roadblocks. When I ask sales pros what they consider to be their biggest barriers most point to issues outside of their control: e-RFPs, voice mail, gatekeepers, the competitor's strangle-hold relationship with your most desirable prospect.

The reality is these external roadblocks pale by comparison to the internal roadblocks within your control such as your prospecting strategy (do you have one?), your prioritization system (not all leads and prospects are equal), your sales messages (do you focus on what's important to you or to your prospect?) and the efficient leverage of social media, technology, people and resources (do you still rely on traditional e-mail and phone?).

And then there's the # 1 roadblock to your prospecting success … your mindset.

The way you "think" about prospecting shapes your actions, which in turn dictates whether you hit frustration or paydirt. So let's work on your mindset.

First piece of advice: Stop focusing on the sale! Yes, you heard me. This overwhelming focus on making an immediate sale causes even the smartest seller to create e-mails and phone messages that send buyers scurrying for cover.

Just think about a typical vendor call from the busy prospect's perspective. Based on a 30-second voice mail or e-mail you're expecting me to voluntarily pick up the phone to talk to a stranger who wants 30 minutes of my precious time to talk, meet, or do coffee with me… during which time this stranger will talk interminably about all of their "awesome" benefits. And then endeavor to sell me something I don't want or try to convince me that they are better than my current spectacular supplier to whom I would gladly donate my left kidney.

Seriously, why would I agree to do this? I barely have time to talk to the people I need!

Today's reality … I don't want to hear from you unless you have evidence -- yes I said evidence – that you've got something of value that will contribute to my success in areas important to me now and by my definition. Developing messages that demonstrate this evidence takes effort. If you're not prepared to invest energy into continuously learning about me, my company, my market so that your prospecting messages address my current priorities, guess what? You're heading to the prospecting black hole along with every other seller who decided it's easier to talk about their product than to talk about the customer.

Sadly, although delivering a compelling and relevant message dramatically improves your odds of getting on my radar, it doesn't guarantee a response.

So here's another mindset shift: Stop thinking of prospecting as an event and start looking at it as a strategic process to build a high-value high-trust relationship over time. The intent is to stand out from the ridiculous number of stale "cold calls" so that you are top of mind when the time is right from the buyer's perspective and, more importantly, to increase their sense of urgency to connect with you.

This requires you to execute a carefully planned access campaign, i.e. a series of communications that may be delivered via a variety of media – social, audio, video, written, tactile -- that focuses on what's of interest to this specific customer now. It is not a bunch of disjointed messages where you "check in" to see if the time is right or "wonder" if this buyer is considering your product or service as part of their balance-of-year plan.

If you want to be in the 3% of sellers that do this well, position "you" in context of "me." Connect relevant short updates about your offering to what matters to me now. And intersperse these with valuable objective educational sound bites that will contribute to my success; perhaps a fresh perspective on the state of my market, a critical trend or statistic that I may not have seen or a best practice in generating funding / sponsorship dollars. If your content is relevant your message will get noticed … and so will you.

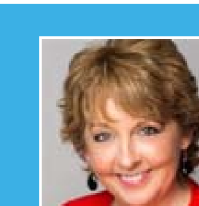
First piece of advice: Stop focusing on the sale! Yes, you heard me. This overwhelming focus on making an immediate sale causes even the smartest seller to create e-mails and phone messages that send buyers scurrying for cover.

My final word…

When it comes to prospecting for new business it feels like even the smartest sellers have had the common sense trained or managed out of them. Which brings me to the #2 roadblock. your leadership team. If your sales leader is barking at you to make more calls and churn out more proposals without working with you to develop an intelligent prospecting strategy, encouraging you to craft high-value relevant messages delivered through a creatively orchestrated access campaign, here's my advice… position this article front and centre on their desk or deliver to their inbox now.

Good prospecting!

To find out more about **Bernadette** visit:
http://bernadettemcclelland.com/



5 Questions to Assess Your Impact As a Leader

When it comes to self-assessing your coaching acumen, it's essential for every manager to look in a mirror, instead of looking out a window, and be honest about where you stand in your journey to becoming a world class coach and leader.

Here are some foundational best practices that are always worth reviewing regardless of how good a coach you are or think you are, along with five questions you can ask yourself to uncover your growth opportunities so that you can continually better your best.

1. Are you asking questions that you don't know the answer to?

If so, you're coaching! And in many cases, while you may have the answers to their challenges, you want your directs to arrive at the solution on their own. After all, people resist what they hear but believe what they say. If they create it, they own it, rather than being told what to do.

2. When coaching, are you facilitating the conversation with open ended questions or closed ended questions?

If you're asking closed ended questions, you're closing your people and directing them to the outcome or solution you want, not coaching them. Don't be sneaky! Open ended, loaded questions that contain your opinion or advice also need to be avoided. (Example: "Don't you think it would be a good idea if you call the customer and find out what you can do to keep their business?" or "Have you tried…")

3. Are you patient? Do you give people the space to think through issues and arrive at a conclusion in the way THEY process information?

Respecting each person's individuality also means respecting their thought process, including how they make decisions. If you find that you're losing your patience during a conversation, or believe they're not 'getting it fast enough,' then chances are, you are 'shoulding' all over your people! (Example: "They've been selling for years! They should already know how to handle this!") Do yourself and your team a favor, don't 'should' on them. Remember, a 'should' is simply the excrement of your own assumptions, judgment and agenda!

4. Are you coaching in your own image?

Does your experience actually get in the way of tapping into each person's wisdom, talents and individuality? Do you find yourself saying things like, "I dealt with the same thing when I was in your role, so, here's what you should do." "When I was in your position, here's how I handled it…." If so, you're building robots or attempting to clone yourself. So, how's that working for you? Life becomes much easier when you first take the time to tap into each person's individuality; their passions, goals, challenges and values. Why? Because people are motivated by what they want, not what you want.

5. Are you consistently coaching each person on your team?

If you feel compelled to jump in and solve a problem that's gotten out of control or "need" to help your salespeople close a deal at the end of a quarter, you've already missed the coaching opportunity! If you were coaching each person on your team in some consistent basis and have developed a coaching cadence, you would be able to recognize the problem and the coaching opportunity in its infancy, when you and your people can do something about it.

To find out more about **Keith**, visit: **http://keithrosen.com/**

Top Sales Article June 2014

JUNE 2014

Each week we select the very best sales articles from the major article sites, written by top sales gurus from around the world. The overall winner for June was Linda Richardson.

Selling in the World of the "Brilliant Machine"

You sell with drive and rightly so. But do you sell with heart? I pose this question in the final chapter of my new book, Changing the Sales Conversation. In that chapter I explore the difference between being client-centered and human-centered and why selling with heart and establishing trust are major differentiators today as knowledge becomes commoditized.

They say that there is a continuum from data to information to knowledge to wisdom. Where is your customer along this spectrum? Where are you? Any client can go to the internet and get infinite amounts of data. In this environment it is easy to think that that data rules buying decisions. But every sales decision is determined by emotions too. How attuned are you to the emotional side, the "heart" side of selling? If you are not you are missing an essential way to maximize your expertise.

I am a dedicated fan of the cultural commentator David Brooks. In his New York Times February 4th column he explored how we are heading into an age of brilliant technology in which computers can fill in for people, whether it is driving our cars or beating human pros at chess …

Brooks is not alone in sounding this warning. Jaron Lanier of Microsoft has written two books about it – You Are Not a Gadget and Who Owns the Future? Erik Brynjolfsson and AndrewMcAfee of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology tell us that computers will increasingly perform important parts of even most cognitive jobs, which will make certain human mental skills less important. We are seeing this happening in sales where knowledge has become a commodity and insights are on the agenda of sales organizations. We know that we must bring insights and produce business outcomes to create value for clients and move them to buy. But what else is needed to start or build the relationship and win the sale?

David Brooks has identified five human traits that he believes will be rewarded in what he calls "the age of brilliant machines":

Enthusiasm (voracious explanatory drive to make sense out of bottomless oceans of information)

Extended time horizons and strategic discipline (ability to provide a conceptual frame to give a broader context—a computer can calculate a thousand options but only a person can do this) ......

Read More Here ▶

Top Sales Blog Post June 2014

JUNE 2014

Nobody knows precisely how many blog posts are made every day in the "sales space" but it is probably thousands. Each week on Top Sales World we will publish the details of the top ten posts – in our opinion – and then announce one winner. The four weekly winners will battle it out for the "Top Sales Blog Post of the Month" title, and be re-published here in our magazine. June's winner was Julie Hansen.

7 Tips for Sales Storytelling Success

Like a great movie, a great sales story can change the minds and hearts of audiences, differentiate you and your solution and inspire action in a way that information alone simply can not. A poorly crafted or executed story can cost you credibility, attention and ultimately the sale. With so much at stake, it pays to learn a proven strategy and powerful tactics for storytelling from a $1.8 trillion dollar industry that has been engaging and influencing audience's for centuries: Entertainment!

Prospects are told things all day long: "We're the best… We reach more customers… etc. " Showing your message, solution or results in action through a story or illustration and letting your prospect reach the desired conclusion will often have much greater lasting power than hitting them over the head with a list of facts.

But a story is only as good as the storyteller. Learn how to apply the actor's trade to bring your story to life with authenticity and confidence and leave a lasting impression on your audience.

Here are 7 tips for crafting and delivering a successful sales story:

1. Add drama:
Stories are based on drama and drama requires conflict and tension before it ultimately comes to a resolution. Give your story the "so what?" test. If it doesn't pass, you may need to escalate the dramatic tension. At every point in your story ask yourself, "and then what would happen?" The tension should be at a peak before you show the solution.

2. Be descriptive
Think in terms of word pictures. Allow your listener to experience the story in a three-dimensional way by using words that engage them through multiple senses. Be careful not to go adjective crazy. Pick and choose only those descriptions that help color or advance your story.

3. Be specific
Focus on a few key details. According to Chip and Dan Heath in Made to Stick, "if you tell them three things you've told them nothing." Don't try and cover too much. Providing too many details will quickly overwhelm your listener and create tune out. Highlight a few key elements of your story. Quantify when you can. For example, "ninety-percent" rather than "most" or "five" instead of "several." ......

Read More Here ▶

Owning Your Own Process

Most of you in the sales profession are more acquainted with the phrase "walking the talk" than you are with "owning your own process." Talk alone can be cheap and superficial. What's actually involved in walking your talk?

Walking the talk is about creating the process and throughput resulting in relevant and valuable outcomes. Isn't that a mouthful to chew on?

Your customers are looking for a business partner, not another golf partner. They are looking for answers from a knowledgeable resource, instead of a plethora of social chatter.

What your customers want is for you to own your own business development and transactional process. Developing and mastering your own process requires you to digest, interpret and potentially question information that your company provides to enable your selling activities. From a base of solid quantitative data and qualitative information, you must confidently create your own knowledge platform.

Walking the talk is about connecting their dots with your dots. Walking the talk is doing your own thinking.

Do these activities sound like too much work? These actions are what differentiate top sellers from the rest of the hungry pack.

Let's explore together.

Ideally, selling is supposed to be easier than it really is. You already know that selling is difficult. You don't think you have time to devote to learning. You are too busy selling and chasing quotas.

You have a nagging sense that you've been leaving out activities which are critical to successful business and selling outcomes. Nobody but you is going to fill in the gaps in your selling process. The knowledge you acquire from taking the time to learn, instead of spiel, can make the difference between making your numbers or not.

There's a huge difference between learning and training. Learning involves exploring aspects of business that make you curious. Learning activities are individualized – by you. To satisfy your own curiosity, you dig for information. You read, listen and learn. Because you are genuinely curious, what you learn becomes hardwired into what you retain.

When you learn for the sheer sake of learning, you improve yourself. As a result, you effortlessly incorporate what you have learned into how you communicate with customers. You combine what you have learned with other information parked in your brain. As a result, you innovate and create relevant value for customers.

Training is an obligation, not necessarily of your own choosing. Training may not involve subject matter in which you are particularly interested, let alone curious. Training programs may be implemented because of lackluster performance on the part of the salesforce as a whole, instead of your individual performance.

Training is a standardized format focused on creating consistent output. Your brain files that sales training and only brings this information to the forefront when you are engaged in selling activities. Your training reinforces specific behaviors but puts a damper on coloring outside of the sales training lines. As a result, you avoid combining training information with curious-learning information. Training focuses on the output goal of closing the sale instead of creating and innovating relevant value for customers.

The curious thing is that when you learn for your own sake, you become better at selling. You become more engaged in listening to your customers because you are relating what they are telling you to the latest information you have acquired. Dialogue with your customers becomes an anticipated learning event rather than an obligation. Your discovery conversations become innovative because both you and your customers are focused on "What if?" instead of "Sign here."

When you own your own process, you develop domain area expertise. You become that font of knowledge that customers crave.

When you own your own business development and selling processes, your outcomes are a result of continuous learning. You constantly seek out information related to strategic trends as well as information related to specific players within industry verticals. You begin to compare and contrast information you learned today, with what you learned yesterday and in the past. You develop a proactive selling process. You start to tell your customers and prospects what you think they ought to know, as well.

When you own your own process, you develop domain area expertise. You become that font of knowledge that customers crave. In a sea of self-promotion and push selling, you are a refreshing oasis. You also become a far more interesting sales person, differentiated from the status quo.

Here's your homework for this month:

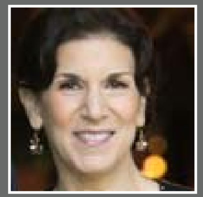
1) Pick a business topic. Take a deep dive, even if it seems to have nothing to do with your company, product or services. Isn't there some industry vertical that perplexes you? Don't you wish you knew more about this stuff? Now is your chance to satisfy your curiosity.

2) Find 10 articles about this topic. (Note: Wikipedia doesn't count as a resource.) Read original source material, not just someone's list or synopsis. Move beyond SparkNotes® mindset. Find out what the originator of the information really had to say about the topic. Compare perspectives. What do folks agree about? What are they debating? What's news to you?

3) Identify areas of overlap with your own industry or market. Are these articles raising the same issues you've been hearing about within your own business sector? What are their approaches to finding solutions? Could you adapt some of these approaches into your own business activities? What would be the benefit of incorporating this hybridized learning into your own business development and selling process?

There you go. You are on your way to creating and owning your own business development and selling process. Keep your insights fresh by learning across categories and professional disciplines. The difference is in the relevant and valuable solutions and outcomes you provide to your customers.

To find out more about **Babette**, visit:
http://salesaerobicsforengineers.com/



5 Ways to Encourage Your Salespeople to Use CRM

Companies fail to achieve about 80 percent of the benefits of the CRM integrated into their organizations. As a sales VP, it's your job to ensure that your reps understand how to maximize the ROI of your CRM.

Here are five tactics you can use to make sure that you aren't missing out on 80 percent (or any) of the advantages that come with your CRM.

1. Go mobile

One of the biggest complaints among sales reps is that they don't have time to use CRM, especially after spending most of the day outside of the office, selling to prospects. However, you can easily resolve this issue by investing in a CRM that has mobile capabilities. Salesforce, for example, has the Salesforce1 mobile app that allows users to take CRM anywhere they go.

Programs like Salesforce go above and beyond accessibility. In addition to making CRM available wherever sales reps may be working, they put prospect and customer data into the hands of salespeople. Inevitably, employees will use CRM more as they look for valuable information on the go.

2. Hold competitions to encourage CRM use

Choosing a CRM with mobile capabilities will make it easier for sales reps to access the program more often, but this doesn't necessarily mean that they have to use it. Top performers, for example, may be busy with client meetings and allow CRM to fall by the wayside. This is where competition can come into play – holding contests can encourage more CRM use.

For instance, you can create a competition to see which sales rep can create the most robust customer profiles in your CRM, and then offer a prize to whoever comes out on top. In order to keep it rolling, make the competition a weekly event. Don't reveal the prize beforehand – this will create more mystery and make the contest more engaging.

You can also use an enterprise platform such as Hoopla to motivate your team to improve their performance. Hoopla uses data analytics to generate contests within a "Game Center" that sales reps can access to view their achievements. Think of ESPN's Sportscenter featuring your sales team's benchmarks! This will inevitably result in more engagement and inspire your sales reps to go above and beyond expectations.

3. Train your sales team

No one wants to sit in a meeting room for hours and listen to a colleague discuss the ins and outs of CRM. To fully recognize the benefits of this investment, training is necessary – sufficient, engaging training that doesn't make people feel like they're wasting their time.

CRM has multiple functions, and in order to tap into this potential sales reps need to know how to apply the program to their daily work. During the training process, the focus should be on demonstrating how CRM can help with everything from prospecting to customer relationship nurturing. Instead of going through the functions of CRM step by step, giving real-life examples can gauge more interest and make training more worthwhile.

> This will inevitably result in more engagement and inspire your sales reps to go above and beyond expectations.

4. Data visualization

Many CRMs offer data visualization capabilities, including Microsoft Dynamics. Those who use Dynamics, for instance, can create visually pleasing charts containing data directly from the CRM. It's these types of features that make CRM more functional and useful to sales reps. The ability to automatically transform a set of numbers into a pie chart of bar graph can bring more value to salespeople. Take this stat into consideration: visuals are processed 60,000 times faster in the mind than text. If you can find a way to put your data into visually pleasing graphs and charts, you can get through to your audience quicker and more efficiently.

5. Make CRM part of the buying process

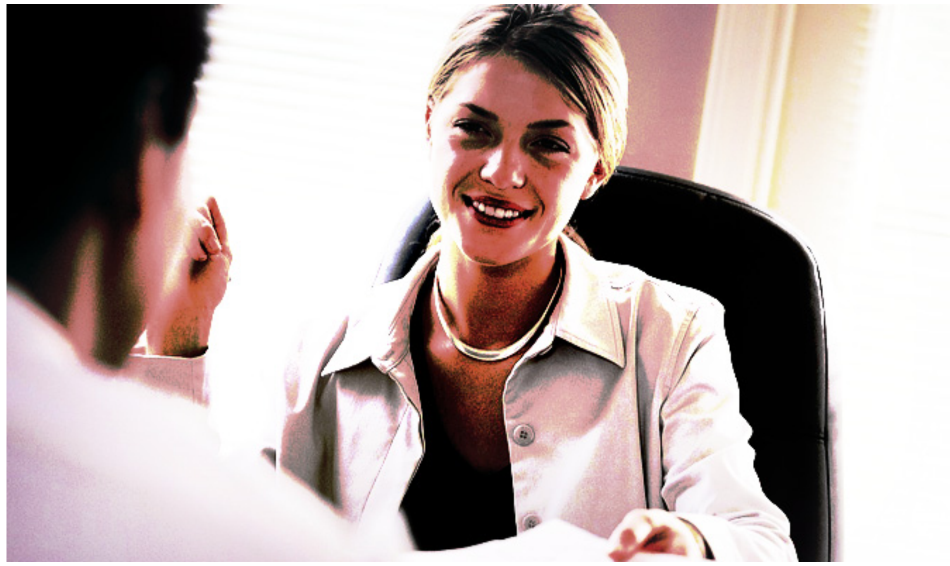
Some salespeople view CRM as a place to go once a day to locate or update customer information. After this task is completed, CRM goes onto the backburner – but this doesn't have to be the case. Specifically, inside sales teams can be using CRM to maximize their efforts.

When up-to-date content is seamlessly integrated into Salesforce, for example, inside sales teams have one place to go for all of the prospect and customer information they need. This dramatically reduces the amount of time that salespeople typically spend trying to hunt down relevant collateral. In turn, employees become more efficient – it translates into the equivalent of more manpower without having to increase head count.

CRM is often viewed as a long-term investment, but its true value will not be uncovered without taking these five tips into account. Everything from mobile accessibility to training can make a difference when it comes to encouraging more CRM usage.

As you look for a starting point, remember to consult your sales team for insight – they will give you an accurate idea of where you can make improvements to enhance the usability of your CRM. In the end, you may find that your CRM has a challenging interface, which negatively impacts the user experience. Maybe the issue is that sales reps can't take the CRM with them on their mobile devices. It's this type of information that can help you increase usage and maximize the ROI of your CRM. Together, you and your sales team can determine which program is best for your sales enablement strategy and overall success as a company.

To find out more about **Krystle**, visit:
http://www.seismic.com/



"Yes, But Can You Sell?"

This heartfelt cry for guidance is fairly typical of the messages turning up in my mailbox, because sales teams everywhere are waking up to the fact that almost 50% of frontline sales professionals are under-achieving - and this is not a new phenomenon, this has been going on for the past few years.

Dear Jonathan, I am looking for some guidance, and I hope you can help me. We have just been presented with our sales results for Q1, and for the fifth quarter running I have missed quota - and by quite a long way. In fact, only two of our team over-achieved out of twenty salespeople.

What I don't understand is that I am doing everything right. We have a superb CRM system, which I use rigorously; last year we bought a new lead tracking and management solution; we have a social media strategy in place, and I spend lots of time on Twitter and LinkedIn - in fact I have 4000 Twitter followers and 50 LinkedIn recommendations. All my customers like me, and I work very hard, so what am I doing wrong?

Best Wishes

Antonia

The reality is that whilst sales costs continue to rise - salaries, commission payments, cars, expenses etc. - achievement levels are decreasing. From a shareholder's perspective, this is incredibly alarming - paying more and more for less and less. Why?

Over the past few years we have been swamped with new technology: Outstanding CRM solutions; a plethora of data sources, where we can even discover what our prospects had for breakfast; lead generation and tracking packages, which remove so much of the "leg work" that we previously had to endure.

During this period, social media also arrived, and is it not true that today, every second person we encounter in the sales space is a "social media expert?" And they encourage us to build up our Twitter following, as well as spending as much time as possible on LinkedIn, garnering recommendations and endorsements etc.

But, here is my question to you today: "Which two words have almost disappeared from our vocabularies over the past few years?"

Answer: "Sales skills" or "Selling skills" or "Ability to sell" - OK, that was three words, but you get the point.

I would suggest that globally selling skills have never been so inept, and this is the singularly most obvious reason why one in two salespeople missed quota last year, and will, in all probability, miss quota again this year.

Oh, and my response to Antonia? "Yes, but can you sell?"

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Why Being a B2B Buyer Is Different – Consumerization is a Poor Comparison

When buying a personal laptop, you know your budget and your preferences. You compare your best options using online research, and then make a decision. That's consumerization in the IT space.

The first time you bought your laptop was probably a time consuming process, with iterations and mistakes. But having done it more than once, with more information available online, you now know where to go, and who to trust when making your decision.

Now imagine yourself working for a large corporation. You are the final decision maker for the new laptop generation. The CFO asks for different ROx metrics. The CEO is focused on productivity while the corporate IT board and procurement bother you with various policies. Is that the same buying decision? Most likely, no. Context, stakeholders and buying criteria are different.

People may argue that IT consumerization makes all buyers the same. Buyers act as human beings. But the rest is different.

The buying context is different

The B2B buying situation is determined by the company's current state, their desired results, their stakeholders and budgets, etc. Their situational context is specific, even if clustered as budget optimization or effectiveness issues. B2B buyers need to understand what a solution means to their relevant business outcomes.

Many stakeholders – many different concepts

Buying privately, you depend on your individual concept how to fix a problem and how to achieve a goal. In an organization, there are many different challenges. That's why your perspective how to approach challenges is unique to your B2B role. Furthermore, other stakeholders have their own, often different, concepts in mind.

> Let's assume that all initiatives on the table have great financial impact. In this specific B2B buying situation, decision-making becomes political.

Decision dynamic is different

While the buyer's journey may look the same on a very high level, the decision dynamic is very different, every time. It's true that IT consumerization impacts people's concepts and expectations regarding services and outcomes. But the decision criteria in a B2B situation will be different and they have to be agreed upon across the entire stakeholder network. There are people with more or less influence and power. Only a very few of them will have their skin in the game. Imagine what happens, if a key stakeholder with lots of power and influence doesn't prioritize your specific buying initiative? Let's assume that all initiatives on the table have great financial impact. In this specific B2B buying situation, decision-making becomes political.

As B2B buying is different, so too is B2B sales. Understanding the buyers' context and concepts, orchestrating their decision dynamic, to provide a value-creating perspective – that's always unique. That's why sales professionals exist - to create value for their customers, to help them to achieve their desired results and wins. ■

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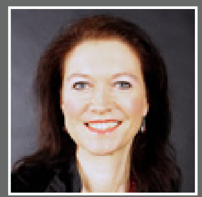


Focus on
Jill Harrington

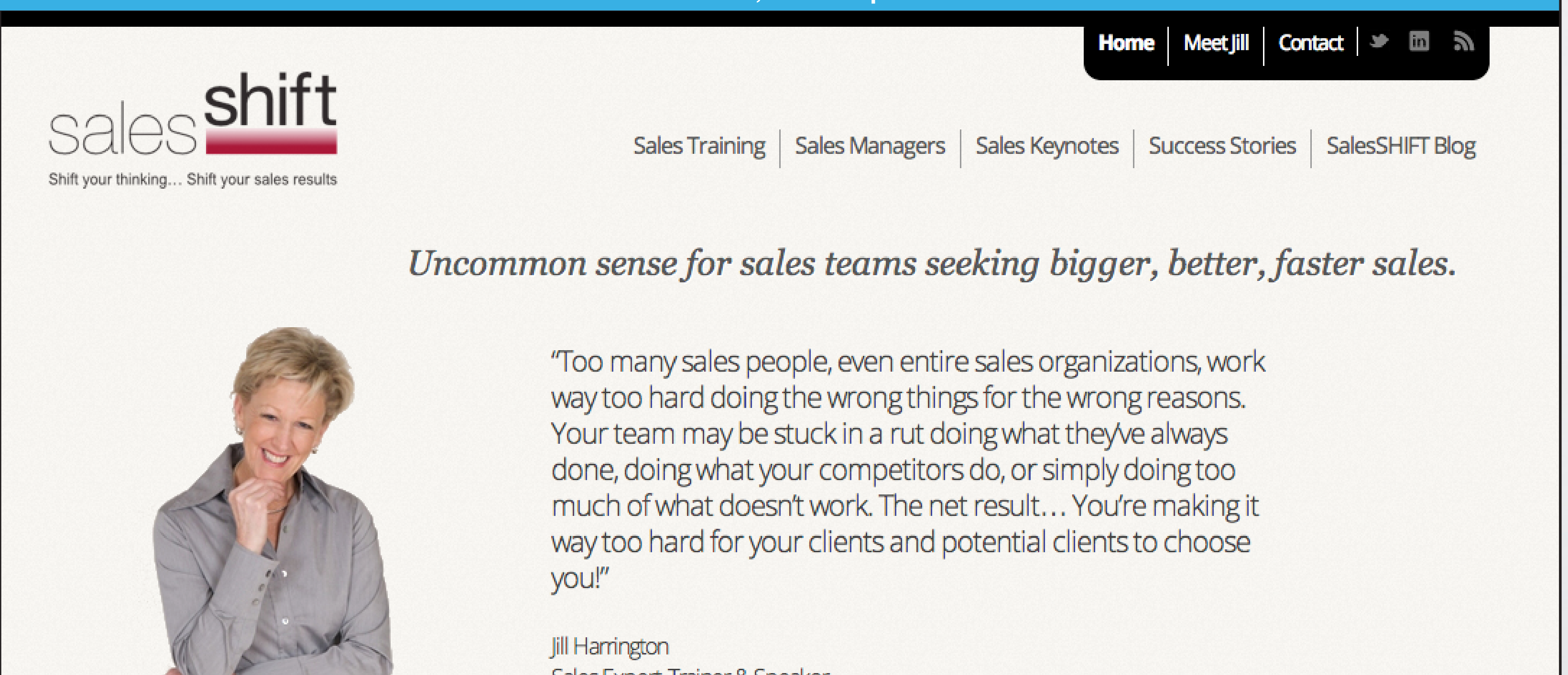
Jill Harrington works with sales teams and business owners who want bigger better faster sales. She masterfully shifts the way you think about your role and delivers the uncommon sense that will maximize your influence, impact and income.

Jill has helped improve business top lines and bottom lines for a diverse range of industries including business services, hospitality, travel, finance, technology, insurance, pharmaceutical, media and telecommunications. She has held executive and sales leadership positions in national and global performance improvement companies, where she developed a reputation as an industry leader in developing and motivating sales organizations to drive improved business performance.

She has supported the success of thousands of sales and service professionals from a wide range of industries around the globe. She is a regular speaker / trainer on the subjects of sales and sales leadership effectiveness, employee motivation and corporate performance. She sits on the Advisory Council for the Centre of Excellence in Sales Leadership at Toronto's Schulich Business School; and in 2012 she was inducted into the Canadian Meeting and Incentive industry Hall of Fame under the category of "Industry mentor."

Jill received her university education in the UK. She has advanced business education from Western University's Ivey Business School, holds advanced coaching credentials through the Adler School of Professional Coaching in Toronto, and earned her certificate in adult education from St. Francis Xavier University. ■

To Find out more about Jill, visit: http://www.salesshift.ca/



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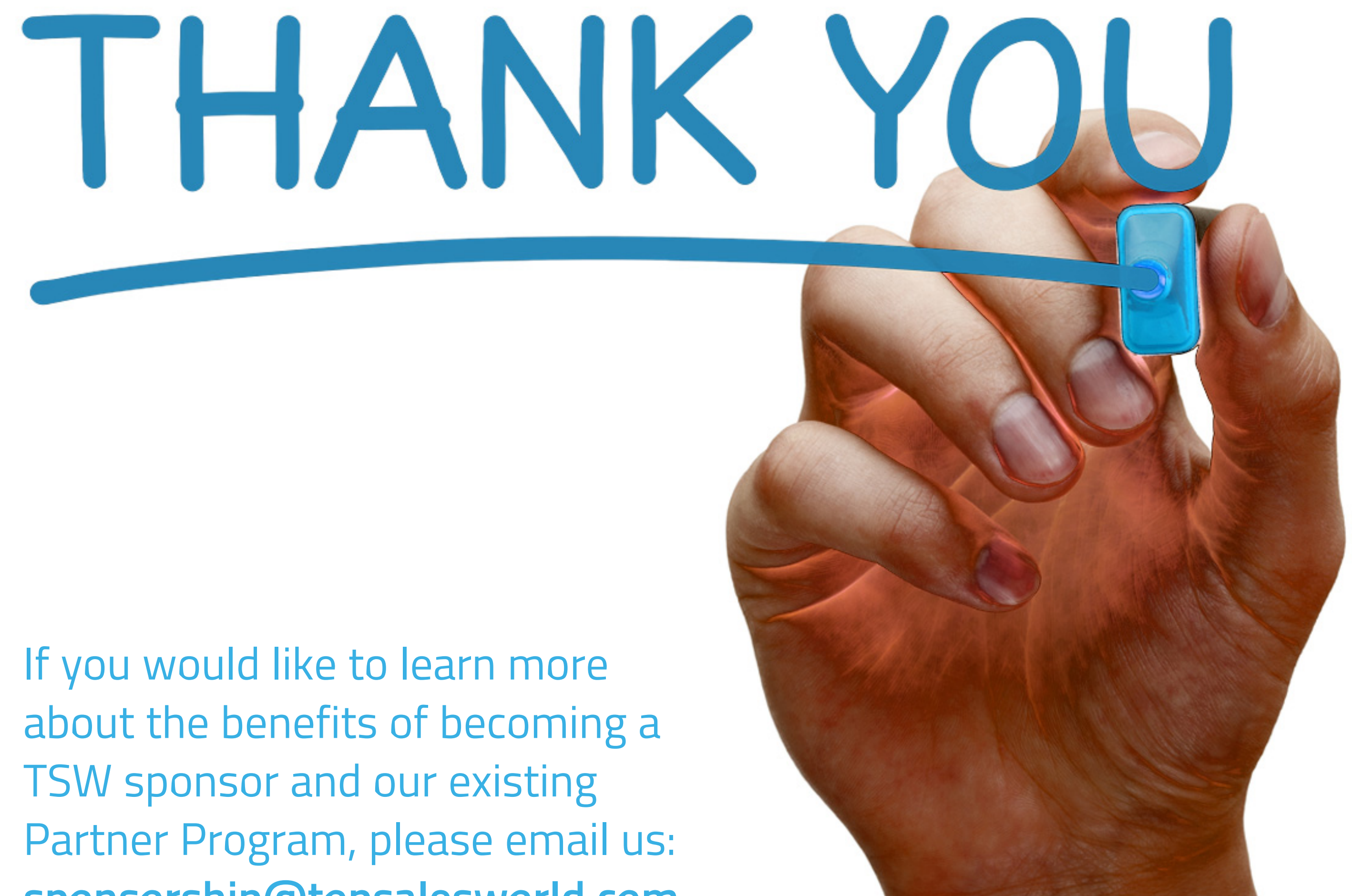

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