Do Salespeople Leverage the Ideal Moment in the Buying Process?

"For the salesperson, there is no better moment than the one that occurs immediately after the deal has been completed." says Dave Kurlan

TOP SALES WORLD

INSPIRING THE GLOBAL SALES COMMUNITY

MARCH 2014

On Top of the Revenue Marketing World

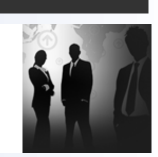
Jonathan Farrington interviews Debbie Qaqish author of the 2013 Top Sales Book of the Year

The 2014 Global Top Sales Professionals Contest Goes Live! See inside

In this month's issue

Regular Features

Editors: Jonathan Farrington & Linda Richardson **email: JF@topsalesworld.com**
Design: Bill Jeckells **email: bill@billjeckells.com**
Published by: Top Sales World **web: http://topsalesworld.com/**



Guest Articles

This Month's Top Features

On Top of the Revenue Marketing World

This month, Jonathan Farrington interviews Debbie Qaqish, Principal Partner and Chief Strategy Officer for The Pedowitz Group, a Revenue Marketing™ agency, and author of the 2013 Top Sales Book of the Year, "Rise of the Revenue Marketer"

JF: Why did you feel the need to write a book on Revenue Marketing?

DQ: It was all about the "missing dialog." As B2B customers embarked on digital buying journeys and marketing began to embrace new technologies like marketing automation, the role of marketing in the revenue equation began to change drastically. As I observed and participated in this market dialog, it became clear to me that it had more to do with the tactics associated with this shift and not the strategy. It became clear that the leadership element required to transform marketing from a cost center to a revenue center was being largely ignored. It was what I called the "missing dialog"

JF: What did it mean to you to win the Top Sales World Gold Award?

DQ: First, winning the award provided an incredible level of validation for the new role of Revenue Marketing. It's real and it's here to stay. Second, I would say that it was one, if not the top professional achievement, of my career. When you come up with an idea that you feel so strongly about. When you spend the last six years of your career growing and validating that idea. When you spend close to a year in writing a book that you think will make a difference to an emerging category of marketing. Winning this award was a BIG point of validation.

JF: How has this impacted you personally and professionally?

DQ: One of the things I have hanging in my office is something I call a Life Map. It's a bunch of circles and lines that represent the things that are personally and professionally important to me and things I want to accomplish. Writing and publishing a book is on my Life Map. What was not on my Life Map was the amount of acclaim that book would receive. It has been a very nice and unexpected surprise.

JF: Will you write a f/up book?

DQ: Yes, but probably not soon. I'm in the last 2 years of a 4 year PhD program and it is now getting pretty intense. Interestingly, my dissertation is on the impact of marketing automation on the changing role of the CMO. So I do have congruency between education and Revenue Marketing. With that said, I do have an idea or two for a next book.

JF: I know REVTalks was an offshoot of your book – What were the high points for you?

DQ: Yes, REVTalks is our annual Revenue Marketing conference that is all about the "missing dialog." I identified six themes from the executive interviews for the book and they became the six major tracks for REVTalks – Change Management, Sales & Marketing Alignment, ROI/Results, Strategy to Execution, Organization & Talent, and finally, Globalization.

The high point from REVTalks was additional validation on the importance of addressing the leadership issue in connecting marketing to revenue. There is such an appetite for this dialog because this is what marketing leadership is being asked to do today, and for most marketing leaders, this is a new gig.

JF: Will you do another REVTalks and when and what will you do differently?

DQ: We've been going through the feedback and it's just been great. All the participants and all of our sponsors found a great deal of value in the event. So, we will be doing another REVTalks in early 2015.

First, winning the award provided an incredible level of validation for the new role of Revenue Marketing. It's real and it's here to stay. Second, I would say that it was one, if not the top professional achievement, of my career.

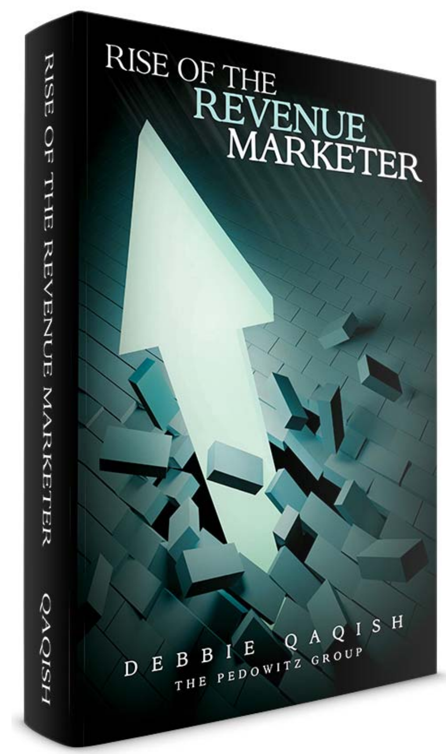
JF: What were your AHA moments in Revenue Marketing from the speakers or other participants?

DQ: This is an interesting question for me because I live and breath Revenue Marketing and am in constant dialog with practitioners. I also worked with each of our 34 REVTalk presenters to help them shape their topic and delivery for REVTalks.

With that said, I recently wrote a Top Ten Things I Learned from REVTalks and it made me really reflect on this question. I think it comes down to data. Wynn White of Birst referred to himself as a "Data Artist" and I really like this idea. In many of the REVTalks, marketers discussed their relationship with data and leadership and I think it was this practical yet and strategic use of data that was an AHA moment for me.

JF: While Revenue Marketing is still in its infancy, what comes next from an evolutionary standpoint?

DQ: I think we are now at the point where marketing leadership has a lot of technology to help make this transformation. What they are now beginning to realize is to optimize that investment, to change the role of marketing in the revenue equation, and to build a more competitive company, it's now time for strategy, process, organization and talent. Marketing needs to align strategically to revenue, marketing needs to institutionalize (with sales) key processes like the Buyer Journey, marketing needs to organize around Revenue Marketing, and finally, marketing needs the talent. This is where marketing leadership will be focused in 2014.



Find out more about *Rise of the Revenue Marketer:* An Executive Playbook HERE

To find out more about **Debbie**, visit: **The Pedowitz Group**

Do Salespeople Leverage the Ideal Moment in the Buying Process?

This winter in the northeastern USA, we have been getting hammered with snowstorm after snowstorm. Visually it has been beautiful. A winter wonderland. The glow. White before it browns. And lots of it. This my friends, is what it feels like the morning after you close a big deal. Everything is perfect. A sales wonderland. The glow. Black before it turns red. And lots of it.

For the salesperson, there is no better moment than the one that occurs immediately after the deal has been completed. It's the closure that captures and rewards all of the work, effort, energy and resourcefulness that went into getting the deal closed. And for large, complex sales, that could include conversations that began taking place up to two years earlier.

The customer experiences much the same sense of peace, joy and excitement. It has gone on for just as long, may be just as important, and the customer finally got what they wanted. Better still, it's too early for anything to have gone wrong yet.

You can relate to the customer side. Think of the day that you finally got the car you always wanted. I'm not talking about your 8th Lexus or your 5th Beemer. I'm talking about THE car. Do you remember that? And what about the day you got the house you finally wanted? I'm not talking about the first house. I'm talking about the BIG one, or the summer house. Do you remember that? And it was before you discovered the flaws, bugs, or quirks that would drive you nuts.

The moment after it's all closed is the perfect moment for both salesperson and customer, and it can only go downhill from there. So why do salespeople fail to leverage that moment?

Testimonials, referrals and introductions would be examples of how one can leverage the brand new, happy-as-can-be customer. But for some reason, salespeople prefer to wait until the customer is happy. It must be a different kind of happy that they wait for... Are they waiting to meet the customer's expectations? Isn't meeting expectations a step or ten lower on the excitement scale than the morning after? Isn't there a lot that can go wrong between now and then?

The moment after it's all closed is the perfect moment for both salesperson and customer, and it can only go downhill from there. So why do salespeople fail to leverage that moment?

Why leave things as important as testimonials, referrals and introductions to chance? And why leave it to others - you know - manufacturing, design, engineering, shipping, customer service, billing, IT, the consultants, delivery service, technicians and anyone else that might need to get involved to complete the customer experience. If you get a referral at that point, it's a testimony to your company. If you get a referral the morning after, it's a testimony to you.

Do yourself a favor, leverage the moment, and fill your pipeline with opportunities generated from your customers, who are feeling the love, and willing to rave about you.

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

Identifying Buyers in Your Pipeline

Your sales reps don't have infinite time. If they did, you could have them lavish enormous amounts of energy on every open opportunity in their pipeline. But in the real world, you must make sure your reps spend enough time working the opportunities that really matter, which unfortunately means giving the short shrift to others. It's not ideal, but it's the hard truth about inside sales.

But how do you prioritize your reps' open opportunities to ensure that they're spending enough time on the ones that are most likely to convert? The answer lies in using historical data to identify buyer behavior.

To do this, you must use the following 3 metrics to separate the winners and losers in your reps' pipelines:

1. Age
2. Size
3. Slippage

Age

Look back at the last 100 opportunities your sales team closed. Is there a stark difference between the length of time Closed-Won and Closed-Lost deals spent in the pipeline? On average, eventual winners tend to progress down the sales funnel quickly while losers often stall. The reason? Buyers tend to know what they want from the beginning while non-buyers typically hem and haw and look for reasons to delay their "purchase."

This means that if you have an opportunity lingering in a specific stage for more than 3x the average amount, you may want to tell the rep handling it to back off and focus their energy on a higher-probability opportunity.

No rep wants to give up on an opportunity, but the alternative – failing to focus on the highest-probability opportunities – is far worse.

Stage

Go look at the last 50 deals your sales team won. More than likely, the bulk of these deals fell in a fairly tight size range, as your sales team is designed to target prospects within a certain size range.

In terms of prioritization, this means that you should pay the most attention to opportunities that are closest to your Average Sales Price. This doesn't mean you should completely ignore an opportunity that is, say, 5x your average, it just means that you should ensure your reps are investing enough time and energy into the opportunities that are closest to your typical customer profile.

But how do you prioritize your reps' open opportunities to ensure that they're spending enough time on the ones that are most likely to convert?

Slippage

So you should have your reps deemphasize especially old and large opportunities – what else? They should also deemphasize opportunities that have their close dates routinely pushed back or their expected values regularly lowered.

'Happy ears' may impel your reps to stick with these unstable opportunities, but analytical sales managers know better. Give your reps the best chance to hit their goals by having them identifying (and investing time in) the most likely winners in their pipelines. ■

To find out more about **Zorian**, visit:
www.insightsquared.com/

5 Things I Learned about Sales by Publishing a Book about Sales

I've been surprised and humbled by publishing a book. Along the way, I knew there would be lessons learned and discoveries made in 20+ years of field research. I fully expected to gain insights and deeper understanding, too, in the actual writing of a book about sales. But I did not anticipate how much I would learn over the six months following the first printing of my book.

Here are 5 of the most compelling reminders, reinforcements and revelations for me since DISCOVER Questions™ Get You Connected was first released in September.

Everybody Has Something to Sell

I wrote this book for professional sellers of all stripes. It's a good match, an obvious one. That's why sellers have responded so positively.

Unexpectedly, though, by November I started seeing a flurry of Amazon reviews and e-mails from small business owners. This was followed by invitations to appear on radio broadcasts targeting entrepreneurs and small businesses. The recurring theme in why this audience has embraced DISCOVER Questions™ Get You Connected is, as one reviewer wrote, this "method of sales doesn't feel like sales."

More recently, two reviews have been posted that describe how DISCOVER Questions™ have helped non-sellers form stronger relationships and become more productive in cross-functional work teams. These are people selling ideas and influencing co-workers by improving their questions.

I'm reminded that everyone has something to sell, but not everyone is comfortable with selling in stereotypical fashion. I'm glad I was able to offer a book that helps set aside those old school tactics and reframe what selling is really all about.

Sellers Deserve Credit for What They Already Know and Do

I designed DISCOVER Questions™ as a tower of power to elevate (rather than replace) what sellers already know and do. By being platform neutral and complementary to any sales process, my intention was to make the eight purposes of asking questions accessible to sales teams in all industries and channels.

What I've been reminded of is how important it is to also dignify individual sellers. Because DISCOVER Questions™ Get You Connected doesn't indict what is already working for veteran sellers, many have responded openly and gratefully to these add-on skills. One reviewer wrote "I've been in the sales field for more than two decades, and the system outlined here gave me new tools for giving excellent value to my clients while hitting my sales goals." That's a seller who wouldn't and shouldn't stop doing what already works but is seeing success by supplementing with DISCOVER Questions™.

Marketing Is Harder than It Seems

I'll take selling work over marketing work any day. Marketing is hard to do! In sales, you have an opportunity to personally connect with each buyer, to tailor your message to each buyer's needs, and to offer relevant value based on very specific needs identified.

The work of marketing this book has revealed to me that the inherently impersonal approach of sending a mass message makes it much more challenging to turn a prospect into a customer.

What I haven't quite worked out yet is this – why do so many sellers choose mass marketing approaches to selling when all that does is make the job of advancing the sale far more difficult to do?

Connections Count

Suddenly, I have all sorts of new credentials – author, in-demand speaker, finalist for 2013 Top Sales & Marketing Book, sought-after guest on radio programs, and so on. It's been a wild and exhilarating ride since the book was published!

But those credentials simply don't open as many doors as I may have hoped. Instead, I'm rediscovering the importance of good, old-fashioned connections with other people. What you know is not as powerful as who you know.

Style Matters

There is solid substance in this book I wrote – all the leading sales experts and thought leaders who have endorsed this book will tell you that.

Despite all their praise for DISCOVER Questions™ Get You Connected, despite the impressive sales numbers for this book, despite the transformational results sellers report when they read and apply this work… despite all that, not a week goes by without someone asking me when the book will be available as an e-book and/or an audio book.

Different people have different preferences, and no book (no matter how good it may be) will override those preferences.

What I'm Doing with What I've Learned

It is tempting to say "Here's this book I wrote. It's pretty good. Take it or leave it." I could decide that my product offering will be narrow, limited only to this traditional book format.

It is also tempting to market this book less, to avoid all the work involved in talking to audiences I never imagined the book for and to save all the time spent in marketing vs. direct selling.

I have to admit it is tempting, too, to make the easy pitch. Like any book on selling, there is an eager audience of sellers who are new or struggling. I could focus on them and not concern myself with also trying to get DISCOVER Questions™ Get You Connected in front of experienced and successful sellers.

I wrote this book for professional sellers of all stripes. It's a good match, an obvious one. That's why sellers have responded so positively.

But I'm not succumbing to any of those temptations. I am learning about marketing, expanding the reach to match the demand from sellers and non-sellers alike. I am going to release e-books and an audio version because that's what a segment of the marketplace is asking for. And I am going to keep talking to groups of experienced sellers and sales managers about how to elevate their current processes and skills with these additional tools.

The first response to buyer feedback is the second printing, now available on amazon.com with a foreword by Dr. Jonathan Farrington. The e-books and audio format will be released in the summer. Complementary white papers, webinars and more are in development, too, to help you access the information you want about DISCOVER Questions™ in a variety of formats.

In other words, I am going to practice what I preach. Doing so takes me out of my comfort zone. But it allows my buyers to be in their comfort zone, and that is where I have the best chance of truly connecting with them.

The second printing of DISCOVER Questions™ Get You Connected, with a foreword by Dr. Jonathan Farrington, is now available and will help you become the one seller buyers actually want to talk to. **Get your copy today!**

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

Where's the WOW?

Social Selling, in the context of how it is usually talked about, focuses on the front end of the sales process... well decked out social profiles, expanded networks with more buyers, searching for new leads or pre-sales call research and planning. I've certainly written about these things myself.

Given the pressure that sales leaders feel to achieve quota objectives, the rabid fixation on bringing new accounts to the table might seem justified, but the problem with constantly chasing what is shiny and new is that it is expensive. Estimates vary but the cost is roughly 6-7 times more expensive to acquire new customers than to retain the customers you already have.

That doesn't mean new accounts shouldn't be pursued, but are your sales people spending as much time using Social Selling to broaden their reach, cultivate sales opportunities and deepen loyalty with current customers, as they are searching for new accounts?

And, if your assumption is that once a customer is sold they will always remain a customer, watch out. Experience makes the difference in closing new business. More importantly, positive experiences keep customers from skipping out the door taking their revenue right along with them.

It surprises me how blasé leaders are about customer retention when competition is pretty stiff in almost every industry imaginable. Once a customer walks, you have little hope of enticing them back. Doesn't it make sense to never give them a reason to go?

Whether it is a prospect or a customer, do you know what they go through when interacting with your company?

Imagine you are the prospect. Walk through every step of the buying process just as they would. Carefully review your email and social media marketing messages. Have a sales rep make a presentation to you. Did you tune out – like your prospects do – listening to the company history? What was it like to have features, benefits and a product demo pushed on you?

Now turn your attention to being a customer. Is there emphasis placed on ensuring that customers feel valued and appreciated? Or is no news simply good news?

It surprises me how blasé leaders are about customer retention when competition is pretty stiff in almost every industry imaginable.

Pretend you have a problem. Reach out to your sales rep or the service department. Try to communicate with them through the website, chat, phone, email, Twitter or Facebook. Was there a response and how long did it take? Was it easy or challenging to wade through your processes? Were you able to talk to someone on the phone? Did they listen carefully before prescribing a solution? How did you feel about the interaction – did the representative care or did they try to get rid of you as quickly as possible?

The preoccupation with expecting sales reps to continually find new accounts is short-sighted. Losing customers is a costly proposition. Look at how Sales, Marketing and Service can leverage a combination of strategies to create WOW experiences that deepen loyalty and retain customers. In the end, retention generates a far greater return than hoping that potential new account will close any time soon. ■

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

Accelerate, Capture, Optimize: The Rule of Three for Growing Revenue

There are many rules of three, the three rules of survival, the three-Act Rule in theatre, the rule of three in photographic composition. The rule of three is especially prevalent in story-telling and marketing.

Think of the 3 stooges, 3 little pigs, and "Snap, Crackle, Pop." Things just seem to work better, stick in our memory better, and roll-off our tongues better, when they come in threes.

It should come as no surprise then that the rule of threes applies when it comes to growing revenue. Today, I'll be talking about **Qvidian's sales execution solutions** that are specifically geared to help with all three rules for growing revenue; accelerate, capture, optimize.

Accelerate

The speed at which you on-board new salespeople or train existing salespeople on new products, certainly plays a factor in revenue growth. Qvidian's Sales Playbooks is a framework that delivers tailored guidance, sales best practices, and the perfect selling content to salespeople as they navigate their opportunities.

Sales Playbooks are aligned to buyer stages and various selling situations. Utilizing Sales Playbooks accelerates ramp-up of new initiatives and is great for reference afterward.

Capture

Salespeople need to capture a prospect's attention, interest, and business. Sales Playbooks intuitively associate content and resources to help sales teams better differentiate and align with each buyer's business challenges. This is important because, 58% of buyers stay with the status quo and a contributing factor is the salesperson's inability to present value effectively. Salespeople can capture a prospect's attention if they know the right thing to say based on that particular prospect's unique profile. They can capture the prospect's interest if they demonstrate how their solution provides value and solves a real business issue. And, they can capture the business if they do those things consistently throughout the sales process, dynamically adjusting content and value positioning as needed.

It should come as no surprise then that the rule of threes applies when it comes to growing revenue.

Optimize

It's one thing to increase revenue. It's another to "optimize" revenue. Optimization is about performing and executing in the best way possible for each unique opportunity in a way that shortens the length of the sales cycle and ends with a positive outcome. Start by making sure all salespeople are aware of and can adopt the characteristics of top-performing sales people. Of course you'll need to know what makes top performers win. Qvidian's analytics help you gain greater visibility into how people, activities, and content impact the buying cycle and the outcome.

If I could grant you three wishes, I'd wish for your entire sales organization to accelerate, capture, and optimize each opportunity with the right materials and know-how throughout the sales process.

Special note: Qvidian's Connect Sales Success Conference is March 31 – April 2. Register now for this not-to-miss event.

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

Improve Forecast Accuracy by Getting Prospects to Opt-In

Wouldn't it be great if every prospect became a customer around your timeline? Okay, maybe that's a pipedream, since some of the prospects you call on will not be ready to take that next step with you. Here's how to safely stay in touch with those promising prospects until they're ready to buy, while insulating them from your competition.

If you manage a pipeline of sales opportunities, you know that a percentage of the people you call on won't be ready to buy, due to timing or the length of your sales cycle. So, we put these prospects on our "callback" list to follow up with them at some designated point in the future. Here's what that typical conversation sounds like.

You: "Now that I have a better understanding of your decision making process, it sounds like there are a few other priorities that you need to address before moving forward with this project. I certainly want to respect your time frame, so when would you suggest we reconnect?"

Prospect: "Give me a couple of months to clear off what I already have on my plate. Then I'll be in a better position to discuss this with you."

Sure, they may not currently be in a position to buy from you now. However, that doesn't mean they will be in the same position in the future.

You: "That sounds fair. So, would it make sense for me to reach back out to you in about 60 days?"

Prospect: "Yes, that works."

At this point, you thank the prospect and create a reminder to call them in about 60 days.

60 days later, when you attempt to reconnect with this prospect, you find out that, not only is this person no longer with the company, but the company made a decision to buy from your competition!

While there's no foolproof method to prevent this from happening, here's the missing conclusion to the prior dialogue that enables you to deliver value up until the time when they're ready to buy.

You: "Mr./Mrs. Prospect, thanks again for your time today. Before we conclude our conversation, I've noticed that in the past, when I have attempted to reconnect with someone after our first contact, many things have transpired. Changes in their position, in their company, or in their life have a tendency to divert even the best-laid plans. Since there are so many things that can happen over two months, I was hoping that I could stay in contact with you without stepping over the line and being annoying about it. With your permission, would it be okay if I reached out to you occasionally with any new information about our product, as well as other resources that you may find valuable for your business?"

Prospect: "Sure, that's fine."

You: "Great! Are there any specific topics of interest or resources you'd like me to share with you? Finally, would you prefer I do so through email, your office number or your mobile?"

Now, you have permission to stay in touch with information they want, along with how to do so, instead of sending out unsolicited information that will do nothing more than aggravate and turn off a prospect.

Sure, they may not currently be in a position to buy from you now. However, that doesn't mean they will be in the same position in the future.

A monthly newsletter, free trial, a resource they may find useful, information around a personal hobby you know they enjoy or a new product feature are several ways to deliver value during this "downtime," while keeping your finger on the pulse of every prospect you speak with.

This way, when things change on the prospect's side, you will be the first person to know before your competition does.

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

A Lack of Automation in CRM Solutions Keeps Adoption Rates Low

What's more startling – the fact that sales people often spend less than 35 percent of their time actually selling or that companies spend $18 billion on customer relationship management (CRM) solutions that are supposed to increase the effectiveness of salespeople?

There is definitely a cause/effect situation happening here and it's gone on far too long. According to a study by the Gartner Group, companies are spending nearly $20 billion on CRM, yet the adoption rate is less than 50 percent (other studies have shown a positive adoption rate as low as 26 percent). By Gartner's calculations, this means up to $9 billion is being essentially wasted on CRM solutions.

One of the issues sales reps are having with CRM is that it takes too much time out of their day to work with it, which is puzzling considering that most CRM is designed specifically to help sales reps make more sales. It's not always the fault of the CRM – in many cases, sales reps are just too reluctant to embrace a new process or are incredibly slow to adopt what could be a high-functioning CRM solution.

Instead of executing the interpersonal communications to which sales reps are uniquely suited, they're stuck entering data. There is no doubt that big data can lead to more insights that will eventually drive more sales. However, without the proper management of the data, it all becomes a time consuming waste of time, especially if it's so clunky that the sales reps ignore it rather than mine the data.

One option is to give the reps an incentive to go through this monotony. The other is to completely switch gears and offer a CRM solution with more automated features that take seconds rather than hours to execute.

Despite the low rate of adoption, about 80 percent of businesses say they are standing by their CRM, most likely because of the amount of money they've already got invested. About 85 percent of companies are using their CRM as a central repository for all their information. Less than 20 percent of companies have automated processes involved with their CRM solutions, which is a major flaw when data integration is the goal.

While CRM has done a great job in offering a centralized location for customer data, the data needs some context, which many CRM solutions don't offer. If CRM adoption rates are going to improve, an increase in the availability of automation and contextualization solutions is paramount. ■

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

The Changing Face of Sales: Here Come The Girls

The face of professional life is changing. Already, in some twenty-seven industrial democracies, woman lead the race to college degrees . With 10 percent more female graduates than male in most European countries, women are arming themselves with higher education, and preparing themselves for new roles.

Add this confident female energy to a powerful consumer base, with its demands for sustainable businss practices and – in come the girls!

Even in traditionally male dominated environments like Sales, female candidates with new approaches and fresh perspectives are highly sought-after. But women considering careers in Sales are advised to disregard old-school rhetoric about the male nature of the job and actively promote their own 'key differentiators'.

Here are four areas in which women can make a real difference to changing the face of modern Sales:

Show off the strategic side:

Employers seek female candidates for their fresh thinking and educated instinct for strategic sales practices. To harness this perception, demonstrate how strategy informs each aspect of your working life.

- Demonstrate your capacity for independent, lateral thinking. Show that you are a self-starter, able to identify problems and inefficiencies and proactively address them with strategic solutions.
- Forward-focus your thinking to constantly refining your strategy based on fresh ideas and emerging innovations and solutions. This approach underpins the growing importance of strategy as an essential tool for digital-age sales.
- Show how you can promote discussion and joined-up thinking, to devise strategies and tactics that drive the company's goals and objectives.

Join the team:

The traditional image of the lone-wolf salesman, with an exclusive portfolio of clients, is utterly outdated. Women are viewed as strong team players. Push your team credentials.

- Expert opinion asserts that women are adept at building relationships and thrive within a team structure. Highlight your ability for developing productive relationships with colleagues – citing examples of where you achieved this in your academic or working career, or in your wider life.
- Don't ignore the social element. Irrespective of seniority, be enthusiastic about getting to know your coworkers. Be out front about establishing two-way communication and an atmosphere of trust. Show that you can be an asset to colleagues in terms of problem solving – without appearing to be self-regarding or opportunistic.
- A capacity for nurturing productive working relationships is also a solid basis for a leadership role. Abide by a view of sales as teamwork, where resources are shared, and activities and targets are a collective concern. Besides this, show your willingness to take initiative and lead in any way necessary.

Think digital:

Digital proficiency is now eagerly sought-after by most employers, and it's easy to see why. Digital practice has altered the operational models that underpin sales. For woman entering the field, displaying a real interest in digital – and that doesn't have to mean a vast technical expertise – will add a vital edge to your offering.

- Most salespeople now have access to a gamut of market data, but still too many are unable to use it adequately. A capacity to parlay data into actionable information is crucial for strategic planning – particularly in terms of a business's digital presence. Women are viewed as being particularly adept at informed planning. Exploit this and push your digital credentials. Show that you have a capacity for data analysis – even if today this is simply a good grasp of Google analytics.

Just over 50% of our population is female, but this is not reflected in the number of women in our profession.

- Develop a social media brand for yourself – and present this to your perspective employers as proof of your transferable digital skills. For example, LinkedIn has become an essential networking tool in various Sales sectors. Use this platform to build your brand: set up a page, devise appropriate messaging about yourself and your skillset, build a professional network, join relevant groups, engage with other and what they are communicating.
- In your digital dealings project the friendly and professional voice and the kind of content that your customers will want to engage with -- from insightful blog posts to informative tweets.
- Businesses are keen to adopt a scientific approach to market development. In any sector, talented candidates with the ability to glean information about their customers, understand them and anticipate their needs, are prized. Nurture your ability to interpret customers' future needs and behaviour, based on their engagement with your content and your communications, across multiple channels.

Get networked:

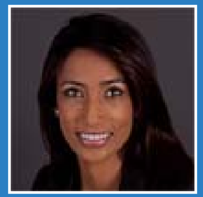
In the digital era networking is more important than ever. Competitive sales firms are increasingly astute in terms of online networking, as a means of developing new business relationships and cementing existing ones. Women are viewed as keen networkers and are prized in Sales for their capacity to build relationships across demographics.

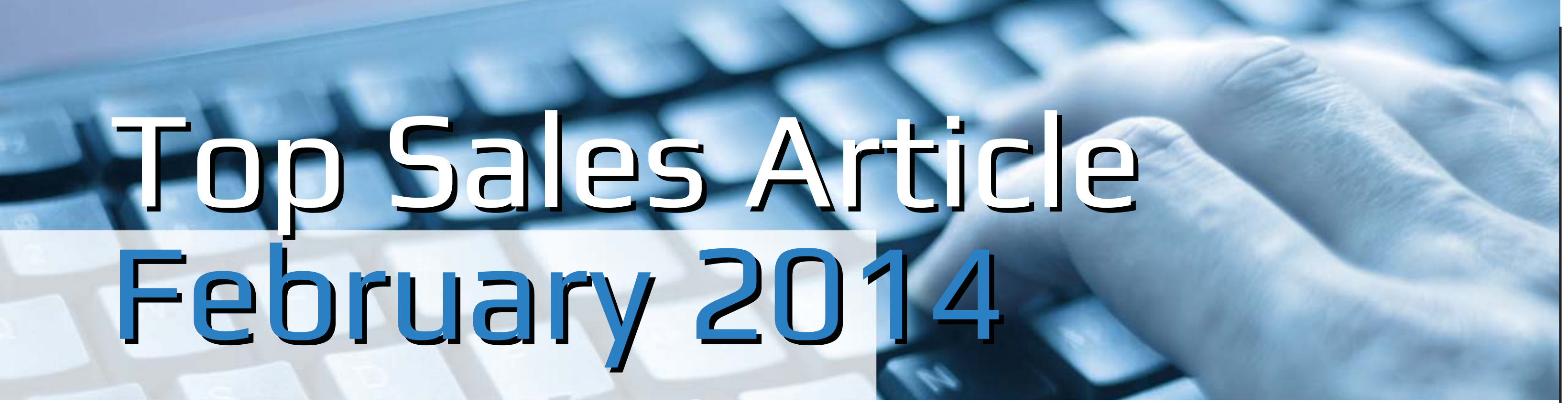
- Your ability to cultivate an identity and a brand experience for customers on appropriate online platforms will give you an edge. It will reinforce employer confidence in your ability to build networks and grow relationships – hence generating leads, sales and cultivating new markets.
- Networking is about relationship building, not the 'hard-sell'. Your concept of relationship building should be about building rapport and trust with your customers. Through friendly relationships, cultivated across channels, you will inform the customer about your offering and the company's successes without having to resort to hard-sell tactics.

Just over 50% of our population is female, but this is not reflected in the number of women in our profession. Despite efforts to balance organisations, being a woman is not enough in itself to capture the interest of employers today, nor should it be.

Embrace the challenge and promote yourself into your next role as a digital-age sales pro, unencumbered by outdated images of the salesman. Be instead the strategic, connected, creative asset any modern sales organisation needs.

To find out more about **Candice**, visit: **www.opensymmetry.com**





Top Sales Article February 2014

FEBRUARY 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 January was **Deb Calvert**

Is the Customer Always Right? Really?

Buyers are more empowered than ever before. They have more choices, more leverage in a tough economy and a competitive environment. They also have social media, a powerful new way to share their experiences – good or bad – about the companies they buy from. With all that power, buyers make demands and set high expectations. They know that sellers are afraid that they'll take their business elsewhere. So they threaten to do so when they are unhappy with service, selection or price.

What's a seller to do under these circumstances? Given the power shift, is it still valid to operate with a philosophy that "the customer is always right?" If so, where do you draw the line?

Let's start with the original premise. If it were true that the customer is always right, then there would be no need for salespeople. If the customer were always right, there would be no need to consult, advise, support, make recommendations or sell to them. If the customer were always right, then sellers would accept every objection at face value and all negotiations would cease. And, of course, no business could stay in business.

It's not true that the customer is always right. But the customer is always the customer.

Let's work from that perspective. Since the customer is always the customer, we should treat them like the customer. That includes:

- Respecting that they do have the right and the power to take their business elsewhere.
- Working to earn their business and their referrals.
- Providing service that meets their reasonable expectations.
- Understanding their needs well enough to offer solutions that meet their needs.

Selling them those solutions by educating them, challenging misinformation, and showing them the relevant benefit of choosing your product or service.

Sellers go astray in this relationship at two extremes. Sometimes, sellers become so desperate for a customer's business that they yield to unreasonable demands. Sometimes, sellers become complacent or arrogant ....

Read More Here ▶

Top Sales Blog Post February 2014

FEBRUARY 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. January's winner was **Colleen Francis**

Six Steps to (almost) Complaint Free Air Travel

As a seller like me, you probably fly a lot.

There's one difference, while most people LOVE to complain about airlines, I am almost always pleased with the service. Why does this happen? Because I plan for success, and expect success.

Here is why and how.

Why: While occasionally everyone will encounter a grumpy gate agent, rude flight attendant, or long delay, the vast majority of complaints that I hear are 100% preventable. In other words, passengers are complaining about situations they created!

You must plan ahead.

Six steps to (almost) complaint free air travel:

1. Complaining that you got bumped from a flight? NEVER book a ticket without a confirmed seat. This is my #1 must have rule for stress free flying. If you book a flight, and can't confirm a seat, it almost always means that the plane is already oversold. Why take the chance? Find another option. As a plus, if you book seats in advance you reduce the chances of having a middle seat!

2. Airline lost your luggage? Don't check bags! I only check bags on direct flights when I have extra materials (books, handouts etc.) for a workshop that can't be shipped. I think I checked bags 3 times last year, and only on direct flights. I simply don't want to risk losing my luggage on a connection. Pack less, use the hotel's dry cleaning and buy toothpaste when you land. Or stay at the Hyatt Grand where they supply it for free! Another option if you are flying domestically is to ship your bag ahead.

3. Can't get on an earlier / different fight because of checked bags? See #2. Another reason for carrying on your bags is flexibility. You can be moved to another flight easily if troubles arise.

4. Running for a connection again? Don't book a connection with less than 1 hour in between flights. Summer and winter storms will happen. Plan for them by giving yourself extra time. When flying overseas, I will fly into JFK, Toronto, or Vancouver the night before and stay at a hotel so there is no risk of ....

Read More Here ▶

Become a Business Anthropologist

Babette Ten Haken

Transacting business incorporates more skills than selling or creating superb technical deliverables. The marketplace is global and digital. Buyers and sellers conduct business on a flat-world playing field. Do the digging involved for successful business transactions. Become a business anthropologist.

Business anthropologists factor in social and cultural aspects in their customers' organizations which impact business transactions. These aspects often are those "little things" one ignores or dismisses as being unrelated to the deal you are trying to close. These seemingly insignificant variables may be more responsible for stalling or derailing sales than we give them credit for.

Before you throw more resources and one more demo at your customers to "seal the deal", consider whether you have conducted sufficient business anthropology about your target customer.

Engaging in business anthropology is hardly glorified customer discovery. After all, customer discovery focuses on why your product or engineering solution is optimal for your customers. Business anthropology turns your gaze horizontally throughout their organization. Business anthropology allows you to determine why your optimal solution isn't perceived by your customer as optimal at all.

In order to become a business anthropologist, you need to thoroughly understand the culture and context of your target customers. How many of you pay attention to this critical aspect of the business transaction? More often than not you are too busy selling and engineering. You fail to unearth the small causes creating those large obstacles which always seem to crop up once the deal is on the table.

Why not be proactive and anticipatory in your efforts and uncover the roadblocks, attitudes, biases and baggage that impede forward progress in transacting business?

Business anthropology is an all-hands-on-deck approach to business development. You will involve non-traditional sellers within your own organization to conduct much of the digging. Often, the "stuff" you are looking for resides in perceptions and insights gleaned from their speaking with their peers in your customers' organizations. Non-traditional sellers in anyone's organization see the business world a whole lot differently – and sometimes far more simply – than the folks focusing on hunting and gathering, selling and doing.

Who are the people in your organization who can become business anthropologists along with you?

The critical aspect to business anthropology is your collective interpretation and analyses of what you all have heard and observed in your conversations with your customers' organizations. Depending on where we sit around the business table, we see the same things differently. Your competitive advantage depends on how astute a business anthropologist you become.

When prospecting, developing and negotiating the sale, you are doing nothing less than attempting to: a) infiltrate; b) understand; and c) become integrated within your customer's culture. Your solution may not be the least bit disruptive. However, you remain an outsider – a cultural disrupter - until you are welcomed into their tribe.

Business anthropology turns the entire business development process into something other than sales-as-usual. This process doesn't involve the usual selling suspects either. Your best anthropologists are those resources inside your own organization which are the most like their peers inside your customers' cultures.

Non-traditional sellers are best able to have those peer discussions, that critical business anthropology, within your customers' organizations. There are fewer barriers involved: non-traditional sellers are approaching peers, not the VP of Sales. Their peers feel just as marginalized and out of the big-picture loop in your customers' cultures as your own resources used to feel. They have a lot to say.

How many of you pay attention to this critical aspect of the business transaction? More often than not you are too busy selling and engineering.

Often, it's that casual comment, that insignificant garnish thrown into these peer conversations that can create your competitive advantage. Your loading dock guy speaks with their loading dock guy and unearths how many shipments arrive late, damaged, or have to be returned due to quality issues. Your receptionist (who also leads the vanguard for customer service in your organization) speaks with their customer service folks and uncovers that your competitors don't make it very easy to do business with them once that contract is signed.

Creating your business anthropology team moves your non-traditional sellers outside their biases. Goodness, they don't want to sell! That isn't part of their job description. Business anthropology, however, involves digging. Everyone likes to dig in the dirt, don't they? It's the basis of stealth competitive intelligence and critical points of entry into being accepted in your customers' organizations.

Often, these chinks in your competitor's armor, and your customers' cultures, are overlooked in your selling efforts and your focus on triggers, features, benefits and strategy. Perhaps your customer's concept of quality is mediocre – because that's what they are used to receiving. The insight offered by your business anthropology team can make a priority out of seemingly insignificant issues.

It's easier to address "insignificant" issues than it is to try to disrupt larger systemic ones. Your team's ability to utilize business anthropology leads you to communicate your solutions as simple – and non-disruptive – insertions into existing corporate culture. You are addressing issues which are pervasive in your customer's organization. Like you, your customer tends to overlook them because they appear to be unimportant.

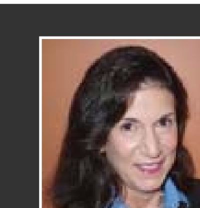
As customers "see" things with new eyes, you bring value to their business tables. Business anthropology is the key to your researching, interpreting, analyzing, infiltrating, and becoming assimilated into your customer's culture. When you are assimilated, you are trusted.

This month, focus on conducting business anthropology. Answer the following questions:

a) How can the non-traditional sellers within your organization conduct anthropological due diligence to uncover attitudes, perceptions, emotions, biases and priorities before you move forward in the selling part portion of the business development cycle?

b) Who are the targeted individuals within your customers' corporate cultures whose insights can influence the transactional decision you are trying to achieve?

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



Four Problems In Your Sales Pipeline

Here are four common problems that are all visible from a quick look at your pipeline.

Nothing From Above

The first and most pernicious problem you can easily spot with a quick glance at a sales pipeline report is nothing moving from above the funnel into the sales process. Look, prospecting is more difficult than ever. There are plenty of companies and salespeople who sell what you sell. Your dream clients are busier than ever.

The only way to remedy this problem is to invest your time and energy in prospecting and opening new relationships.

Dead On Arrival

The second problem easily recognizable in a pipeline report is zombie opportunities. They look like an opportunity but they were dead on arrival. Just because a prospective client is receptive and open to discussing the business doesn't mean it's an opportunity. And last end until they are ready, willing, and able to initiate change within the organization, it isn't an opportunity. It's a lead.

You don't get to decide it's an opportunity. Your prospective client decides it's an opportunity when they decide to engage in the process of change.

Stuck and Stalled

I don't know how many pipeline reports I've seen with opportunities that are measured in dog years. There are plenty of complex products, services, and solutions that require a long sales cycle, but when the "days in stage" number is measured in triple digits (or something greater) that opportunity is stuck or stalled.

Much of the time your prospective client has trouble building the consensus around change. Other times, a salesperson has left an interaction with the prospective client without gaining the next commitment. And sometimes opportunities stall because something changes on the part of the client.

Look, prospecting is more difficult than ever. There are plenty of companies and salespeople who sell what you sell. Your dream clients are busier than ever.

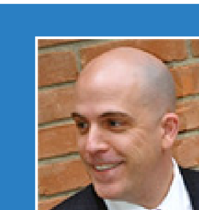
The best thing you can do with stuck or stalled opportunities this to work to generate ideas and actions that will help your prospective client make and keep the next commitment. If that can't be done, then these opportunities must be removed from the pipeline.

No Process

I've heard many sales managers and salespeople say that they have a process, but that process isn't visible by looking at their pipelines. Opportunities are all bunched up in discovery, even though the salesperson will say it's closer to closing. And sometimes opportunities are entered until they are won. When the sales force automation looks sloppy, you can be certain the sales process is not being followed. And without following the sales process, it is likely you are losing opportunities you should've won.

Take a look at your pipeline reports. Look for problems with deal flow because new opportunities are being created, because some opportunities are really leads, because some opportunities are stuck or stalled, and because your processes and being followed. Then make the requisite changes.

To find out more about **Anthony** visit:
http://thesalesblog.com/



A Tale of Two Sales Funnels

How Poor Funnel Structure Defeats Sales Coaching & Reduces Sales

This is a story about two companies' sales funnels. One company has a sales funnel that improves win rates, the other doesn't. "Company A" uses the most common approach, orienting its sales funnel to the steps of its sales process: qualifying, solution identified, quotation provided, demonstration delivered, etc. You know the drill.

Company B uses a funnel based on the customer's buying process. Each stage of the funnel identifies specific actions that customers take when they are moving forward in their buying process. It is these "customer go forward actions" that salespeople seek to achieve as they progress an opportunity through their funnel.

Company A's funnel causes everyone, both salespeople and sales managers, to focus on the steps of their sales process. Sales opportunities are tracked based on sales tasks performed by the salesperson.

Because of the inward focus of Company A's funnel, a sales opportunity can seem to be progressing quite nicely because the salesperson is doing everything the funnel described. But if the customer slows down their buying process or the rep makes a mistake, nobody knows until it's too late because neither the rep nor the sales manager is measuring the success of each sales call based on customer actions. They often get blindsided when a "sure-thing" is lost, or goes radio-silent.

In short, **the sales behaviors defined in Company A's funnel are an inaccurate metric because sales reps are so often out of sync with customers' views.**

Another flaw in Company A's approach is that it is based on sales process statistics that are lagging indicators (data collected after a process is complete) – such as how many calls, appointments, demos, and quotes have been made. Therefore, most coaching done by sales managers at Company A is what I would describe as "performance management." That's where a sales manager reviews what a sales rep has already done. Typically, then, the manager cracks the whip by saying, "make more calls, and do it faster!" Meanwhile, the rep is thinking, "That's the same advice you gave me last month and it didn't help."

Over at Company B, things are run differently. A few years ago they became alarmed about poor user adoption of their CRM system. Salespeople were not inputting information in a timely manner, so the accuracy of the information being recorded was questionable. Not good.

> **For years, most sales organizations have a self-concept that "we are customer-focused." But in practice the tools many of them have been using are built around their sales process.**

Company B recognized that simply providing more training on CRM usage wasn't the answer. They wanted their sales force to be more motivated to use CRM. But that would only happen if sales managers used CRM to become more effective sales coaches - proactively coaching salespeople through big deals in a constructive way so that reps won more deals and made more money.

Providing sales managers with improved visibility on customer actions in the earlier stages of a deal was a big reason why Company B switched the focus of their sales funnel to be focused on the buying process. Most sales managers are instinctively drawn to intervene in the latter stages of a deal, to help close it. But from the customer's perspective, it's in the earlier stages of the buying process when the size of the deal is determined – so better sales coaching during the earlier stages of an opportunity is crucial to making major sales.

To build their Buying Process Funnel, Company B identified buyer actions for each stage of the buying process. These became criteria in the sales funnel that indicate a customer has completed one step of buying and is moving on to the next. Salespeople can now review those criteria to help them answer the question, "What specific action do I want my prospect to take at the end of this meeting?" They want to get the customer to commit to go-forward actions linked to these criteria. The better a sales rep becomes at having customers complete next-step actions, the smoother and more predictable the sales funnel becomes.

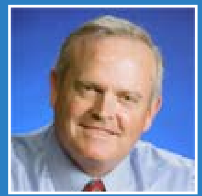
Now, if and when a buyer chooses not to move forward, a buying process action criterion is not met and so alarm bells go off at Company B. Sales managers are alerted to the problem right away, and can intervene while there is still an chance to fix the problem and get the opportunity back on track.

Company B has discovered that with a Buying Process Funnel they get far better usage of their CRM system by both reps and managers. Sales coaching is improved. Sales forecasts are more accurate because everybody is more focused on what the customer is doing.

For years, most sales organizations have a self-concept that "we are customer-focused." But in practice the tools many of them have been using are built around their sales process. This disconnect leads to ineffective sales coaching and poor win rates.

If your organization suffers from some of these same problems, take a hard look at your company'sales funnel, and the sales training program it maps to. Implement a buying process focused sales funnel in 2014!

To find out more about **Kevin** visit:
www.toplineleadership.com



The 2014 Sales Problem

Having already conducted multiple company Sales Kickoff Events this month, the 2014 trend is becoming clear: Reps are getting better, yet it's getting harder to sell. It's like climbing a mountain top but now with equipment that is better, lighter, sturdier and easier to use. It's still a tough and challenging mountain and teams can get bogged down even with apparently improved tools, approaches and strategies.

It's a problem worthy of note and insidious in its impact on teams that may go quarters unaware of threats that can undermine their year.

3 Issues

There are **3 major issues** that we're seeing in the sales practices and efforts of otherwise high-performing sales organizations. These issues are tricky as they are a part and parcel of the new selling era and key to success. Yet like a recipe where one adds too much salt, the end results are negatively impacted if one is not paying attention to details and subtleties.

1. Old School to New School Crossover – There's been **sales methodology overload** with so much having been communicated over recent years to salespeople and management about the new ways to sell. *Be it Challenger Selling, New Solution Selling, even SPIN Selling, etc.*, the modern young and the veteran salesperson is often struggling in the crossover and development of means, tactics, techniques and strategies of selling. It's become somewhat of a hodgepodge of selling philosophies and a mixed bag of semi-developed skill sets that I am now seeing consistently across sales teams.

Solution: *It really does involve teaching young and old dogs new tricks. It is possible and powerfully effective. It takes company commitment to understanding and wisely implementing a leveraged selling process/approach that is customized for their marketplace. It's no longer about 'off the shelf' or packaged selling programs (Old School). It's time to get everyone onboard and on the same page with the right modern approach.*

It's a problem worthy of note and insidious in its impact on teams that may go quarters unaware of threats that can undermine their year.

2. Social Media Bandwagon – The pressure to play in social media is undeniable. The application of these tools in professional selling is powerful and profound. It is the new way to research, engage, and build a following of advocacy, endorsements and referrals. **LinkedIn, Twitter** and **Facebook** are the big ones. The problem here is twofold: **a) Overkill** – reps can easily spend too much time in various groups, blogs and chats producing and digesting comments and content, and **b) Customer Sophistication** – just as reps and companies are upping their social media game, so are the prospect customers and end-user targets. These are no longer cool differentiators as everyone's doing it. Customers are overloaded and no longer impressed.

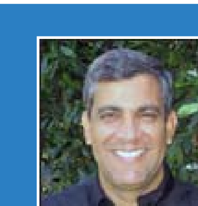
Solution: *Prudence takes this to the next level. Social Media is here to stay and so needs to be corralled and harnessed as appropriate for your environment. There are best practices that are now fundamental. There are also practices that are distractions and time-wasters. Social Media Selling now becomes a subset topic of focus in the Sales Enablement and Sales Effectiveness Training realm.*

3. It's the Story, Stupid, But… – As I often have to remind myself, good selling really always comes down to the articulation, the pitch or the "story" (being the latest buzzword). Nothing new here, one might think, yet there really is. Salespeople with a good Story but out of context in the **Sales Process** is like a driving a Lamborghini on a residential side street. It's beautiful but not optimized. We're seeing (and teaching) storytelling but it is not a panacea for sales effectiveness. It has to be placed in and around the execution of a deliberate and defined selling process designed for optimization.

Solution: *Developing contextual sales storytelling application and nuance is what today separates wheat from chaff. Managing the Prospecting to Presentation phase is fraught with necessary qualification requirements and checklists, probing questions and now challenging provocations and whiteboard/storytelling landmines. This needs to be defined, clarified, taught, practiced and field-implemented so that best practices get institutionalized across an effective storytelling selling machine.*

So we welcome 2014. Do not lose heart or be discouraged, as recall every year brings new issues and challenges. The good news here is that all of this is manageable and fixable. But it does need to be addressed across enterprise sales teams and reigned in before sloppy and ineffective sales practices become infectious and damaging. ■

To find out more about **Michael**, visit:
http://www.mxlpartners.com/



The New Era Of The Cold Call -

How Natural Selection is Moving Sales from Outbound to Inbound

The trend for inside sales is not coming—it has fully arrived at our doorstep. Rising fuel and labor costs have soared, and because of intense competition, the prices of our products and solutions have largely flat-lined—as have sales achievement levels. Companies have been forced to examine the complete cost of outbound sales and what they discovered was startling. According to inbound marketing leaders Hubspot, the **average cost per inbound lead is 61% lower** than an outbound lead.

Research by Sirius Decisions supports the Hubspot data and indicates that, on average, inbound leads cost less and have higher conversion rates than outbound leads, though an integrated approach between the two is generally the more optimal.

Inbound marketing techniques such as strategic SEO, building thought leadership positioning through blogging and particularly the prolific use of social media communication tools allow sales executives to target relevant prospects so they can learn about products and services on their terms. Today's educated consumer will find you—the question is, will you be ready?

Virtual tools empower sales professionals like never before, driving a new economic equation for businesses in this economy. According to **Dave Stein, CEO of ES Research,** *"Customers everywhere increasingly prefer virtual interactions with sellers. Trend data reveal that sales organizations are shifting resources from outside to inside sales. Inside sales growth is 30% faster than their outside sales counterparts. The number of Inside Sales departments is projected to grow from 800,000 in 2009 to over two million this year."*

So why is selling really going inside?

The traditional "cold call" once seemed indispensable to the selling process—the time and expense incurred were a basic cost of doing business. But **according to a recent study by InsideView, over 90 percent of CEOs stated that they NEVER respond to cold calls. The return on cold calling has decreased so drastically that it is essentially dead.**

The good news is that there are better choices. For many companies, social media channels and web conferencing tools have made the cold call an option, not an inevitability. Advances in technology mean that we can now effectively conduct face-face meetings online and manage five, six, or even seven meetings in one day. In addition to our virtual face-to-face schedule, we can reach out to prospects through social media channels and step into the world of the "Educated Consumer."

But according to a recent study by InsideView, over 90 percent of CEOs stated that they NEVER respond to cold calls. The return on cold calling has decreased so drastically that it is essentially dead.

Regardless if you are selling B2B or B2C, your prospects are online and getting younger each day due to the growth of the Millennial generation. Consumers continue to diversify the online channels they use to discover brands and information, increasingly relying on the Internet for information. According to Forrester Research, 43 percent of users aged 24 to 32 used social networks as their primary resource for brand and product information. Overall, social networks are the preferred means of discovery for nearly one-third of all Americans regardless of age, up from 18 percent in 2010.

The model of modern sales is simple and more effective without the traditional cold call. The Educated Consumer demands relevant knowledge about their business and their specific needs, and sales people must respond with timely intelligence in order to achieve successful engagement. Instead of wasting valuable time with dozens of cold calls that never manifest in true relationships or closed deals, sales professionals should instead focus their efforts on prospects who have already entered the buying cycle and demonstrated interest in what they have to offer.

By targeting prospects using modern tools like LinkedIn and Twitter, sales executives can identify companies ripe with opportunity and cultivate intelligence on market shifts, new product offerings, acquisitions and more that ties your product to prospects needs and making the sales conversation relevant again. Inbound sales teams may be a reaction to a shift in the economic market, but with the right tools in hand, the shift to the future looks bright indeed. ■

This is an extract from a brand new eBook called ***"Evolution of Sales – The Survival Guide"*** from PGI, which also contains contributions from Tamara Schenk, (Miller Heiman Research) Ralph VonSosen, (LinkedIn) Nita Sha, (Hubspot) Brendan Cournoyer, (Brainshark) Colleen Stanley, (Sales Leadership, Inc) and Scott Tapp, (PGi) Downlaod your free copy **HERE**

Frontline Sales Managers Need Enablement

Michael Jordan is one of the most brilliant basketball players ever. His discipline to become world class, to achieve the brilliance that inspired millions of people, is well known. But he wasn't nearly that successful as a coach.

It's the same in sales organizations. It's not necessarily the best salesperson who makes the best manager and leader. Both roles couldn't be more different from each other. Managing one's own performance versus coaching a team to its best performance requires a completely different skill set—self-management versus leading others. Look at Vince Lombardi--not the best football player, but definitely one of the best coaches ever.

Many newly appointed frontline sales managers are thrown into the new role with little-to-no training or coaching. They find themselves between a rock and a hard place—between competing challenges that come with the new role, such as customer-management strategies; becoming a business manager; and becoming an effective coach. The resulting consequence is an onboarding time between one and two years. What sales organization can afford that? None.

When it comes to increasing sales productivity and executing your sales strategy, frontline sales managers have the most important role in any sales organization. Let's assume a 1:10 control span and then imagine the business damage a bad frontline sales manager can cause versus the business wins an excellent frontline sales manager, acting as a great coach, can create. As a sales leader, you should leverage this potential – with the right first steps.

"But we have enablement and training functions." I hear you. Unfortunately, most enablement functions don't consider frontline sales managers as a specific target group. If they do, most of the time they offer the same content and training services that are provided for frontline sales professionals. That actually falls more in the category of information sharing rather than effective role-specific enablement. But it is exactly in this area where the synergies are the biggest and where the low-hanging fruits couldn't hang any lower:

It's not necessarily the best salesperson who makes the best manager and leader. Both roles couldn't be more different from each other.

First, build a task force of excellent frontline sales managers who are well known for their coaching skills, along with enablement experts who also cover sales methodology. They should take the existing enablement services on content and training that are provided along the customer journey for frontline sales people and then define the must-haves for each stage. Next, the frontline sales managers get coaching guidelines to be used in conversations with their team members as they proceed along the customer journey. Finally, the top frontline sales managers can act as mentors for the new managers and help them learn how to coach effectively based on these guidelines.

That's an investment not only in equipping your frontline sales managers with the tools to increase their effectiveness. You are also ensuring that what the sales professionals learned in training is now getting reinforced on a regular basis due to coaching by the frontline sales managers.

"Practice does not make perfect. Only perfect practice makes perfect."
--Vince Lombardi

To find out more about **Tamara**, visit:
http://blog.tamaraschenk.com/
http://de.linkedin.com/in/tamaraschenk
http://twitter.com/tamaraschenk

Sometimes when you Throw Peanuts, All you Get is Monkeys

3 Steps to Generating High-Quality Leads

For the past six years close to 70% of marketers identified "Generating high-quality leads" as their number one challenge. Sadly, most companies are no closer to overcoming that challenge today than they were in 2008.

The problem is that it is a lot more fun to talk about marketing automation, personas and social media while enjoying a Cosmo than it is to talk about lead and market definition.

As I sat down to write this blog, I read an article by Ardath Albee **(Marketing Interactions)** who had just read the B2B Lead Generation report from Buyer Zone. She wrote:

"…my heart sunk a bit. That nearly 50% [of marketers] are sending inquiries directly to sales as "leads" was disheartening enough. But when asked where they'd spend budget if they had money to burn, the answer from 31% of B2B marketers was to buy more leads. The majority of marketers said that increasing lead quantity was the key to their success… Have we learned nothing? Do marketers walk around with blinders on? Or is it wishful thinking that force feeding our funnels can solve all of our problems?"

Here are three things you can do right now to dramatically improve lead quality (and ROI on marketing and sales investments):

1. Don't send raw, unfiltered leads to sales

2. Value non-lead dispositions such as "Pipeline" and "Nurture"

3. Don't measure "cost-per-lead." Measure "cost-per-sales-ready-lead"

Don't send raw, unfiltered leads to sales

The whitepaper **"Why Your Sales Force Needs Fewer Leads"** quotes a Gartner Customer Relationship Summit speaker who stated: "Having fewer, but higher-quality, leads provides more value to sales employees and improves the visibility and accountability of marketing." Further, SiriusDecisions states: "It's a bizarre, often co-dependent relationship; working at arm's length, sales has the latitude to dismiss the leads marketing creates as not qualified or nurtured enough, while marketing can claim they are holding up their end of the bargain when you consider things purely from a volume standpoint."

The whitepaper provides ten attributes of a well-qualified lead and closes with the following: "By not passing unfiltered, unqualified leads to your sales team–and focusing instead on delivering fewer, yet more qualified prospects–you have the very real potential to significantly impact your organizations ability to generate revenue."

On average there are 30 – 70 leads for every 1,000 suspects you market to. Most of the time marketing's analysis of campaign results starts and stops with the number of leads.

Value non-lead dispositions such as "Pipeline" and "Nurture"

On average there are 30 – 70 leads for every 1,000 suspects you market to. Most of the time marketing's analysis of campaign results starts and stops with the number of leads. In addition to leads there will be 30 – 70 Pipeline dispositions (a specific next step in the near future— generating a substantial number of additional leads) and 250 Nurture dispositions that will result in four times the lead rate over the next year assuming that you effectively nurture these prospects. Ignoring the value of these other dispositions increases the cost per lead by up to three times. The opportunity cost is enormous!

Don't measure "cost-per-lead." Measure "cost-per-sales-ready-lead"

In **"Point C: From Chaos to Kickass"** I report on a client company that measures success on a cost-per-lead basis. The result? Marketing states that it delivered 9,000 leads to sales last year and sales reports that they received ZERO leads from marketing. Of the 9,000 non-leads, 6,000 came from content aggregators at a cost of $23.15 per lead. At sales request we audited those leads and found that just 1.28% of them were qualified. So, the cost-per-sales-ready-lead was $2,662.24 (as compared to $1,357.25 per proactive outbound leads that sales prefers). Marketing's response was that they would just discontinue having us pre-qualify the leads and send them straight to sales. Sales simply ignores them. The wasted cost to this company: $138,900 per year. This, folks, is happening today in a small division of one of the largest software companies in the world. Based on my experience it is happening in most companies—and the bigger the company the bigger the problem.

To sum things up, I quote a really good guy in our industry, Milap Shaw from **Nexsales**: "In discussing quality versus quantity of leads, sometimes when you throw peanuts, all you get is monkeys

To find out more about **Dan**, visit: **www.pointclear.com**

Focus On
Colleen Francis

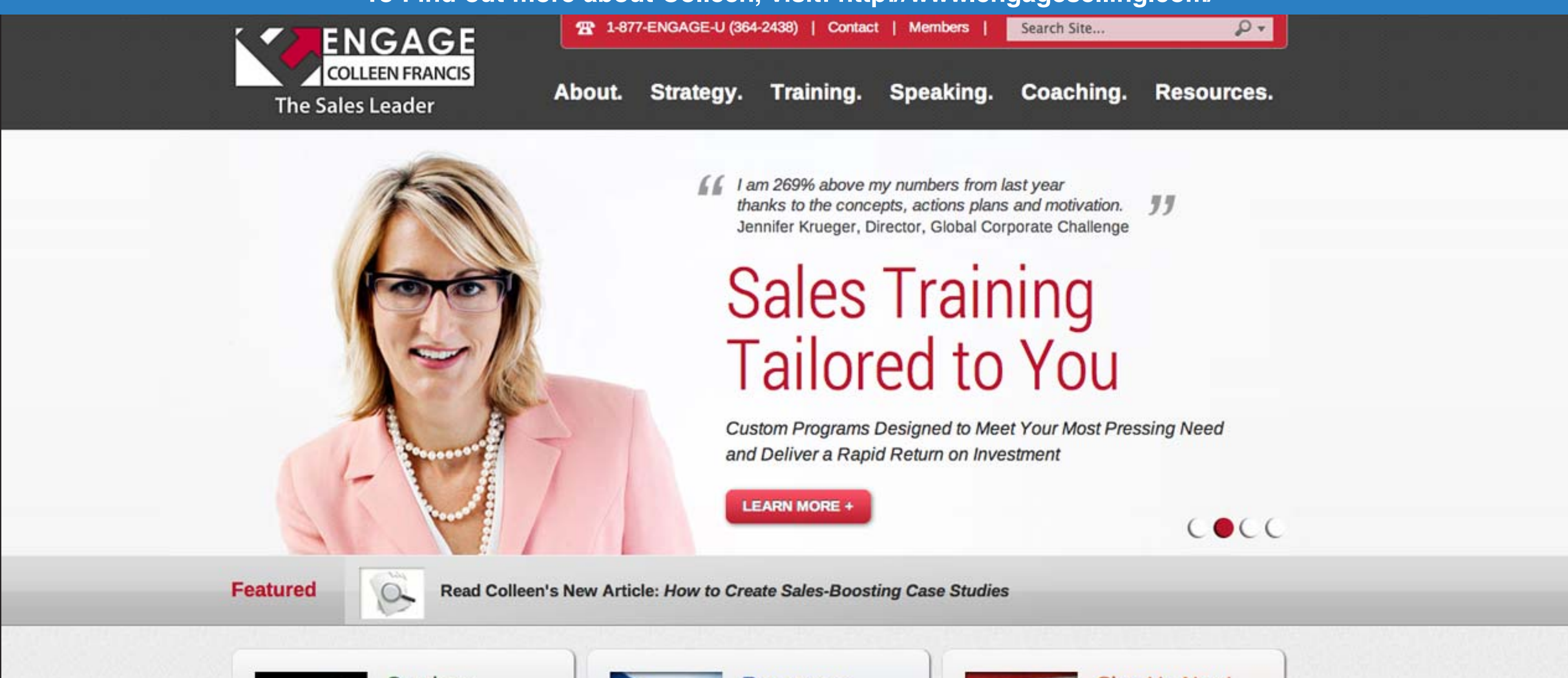
Colleen is driven by a passion for sales - and results. A successful sales leader for over 20 years, she understands the challenges of selling in today's market and that business leaders can no longer rely on approaches to sales based on techniques from decades ago.

Colleen works with business and sales leaders to design, implement and hone their sales teams to seize market opportunities. Whether designing strategy to target a new market or working with a team to improve their productivity, Colleen's results have attracted clients such as Merck, Abbott, Merrill Lynch, Royal Bank of Canada, Dow AgroSciences, Adecco, Trend Micro, UBM, and over 1,000 other leading organizations.

Time and time again, clients who work with Colleen note her frank, no-nonsense approach to solving problems and addressing opportunities. Always with an eye to results, Colleen has become renowned for her use of measurement and accountability to inspire sales team performance.

Colleen has been distinguished as a Certified Sales Professional (C.S.P.), is a past President of the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers and is a member of the Canadian Speaking Hall of Fame. Sales and Marketing Management Magazine has called Colleen and Engage Selling: One of the top 5 most effective sales training organizations in the market today!

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



Krystle Vermes

The Tablet: The New Toy Every Financial Advisor Wants

Tablets are everywhere, and they're starting to show up in the workplace. It's like the new, shiny toy that every professional must have, regardless of whether he or she is in sales or marketing.

But how much value is there to this fun, enticing little device that seemingly everyone owns these days?

Tablets in the workplace

Tablets are becoming the go-to device for wealth management firms because they bring one key benefit to the table – mobility. As more people yearn for ways to access everything from key work documents to presentations on the go, tablets are growing in popularity.

It isn't just tech-savvy twenty-somethings who are finding a use for these new gadgets – big companies are diving into this portion of the technology industry as well. Take The Financial Times, for instance.

Read Write reported that the Times had spent more than $1 million over the course of six months on tablets for its staff. It's just one of many large players going full throttle into the future through this mobile device.

Now, app developers are also concentrating their efforts on creating more robust software that enhances the average tablet user's experience. The overall goal is to develop apps that work best on tablets over any other platform, increasing the value of this device.

As tablet-based apps become multifunctional, they'll also start to be more essential in the workspace.

The best choice for your company

Perhaps your business isn't at the stage yet where investing in tablets for every person in your company is necessary. If this is the case, do a little more research into how these devices could potentially benefit you, your sales and marketing teams in the future.

Everyone wants the latest toy, but if you were to buy each new toy as it came out, you would end up with some items that are simply impractical for your purposes.

Dive into the specifications of tablets available for purchase, as well as which options might be best for employees. Find out which software your staff may be most comfortable using, as well as how they intend to use it for everyday tasks.

Everyone wants the latest toy, but if you were to buy each new toy as it came out, you would end up with some items that are simply impractical for your purposes. Taking the time to do your homework beforehand can ensure that you're never splurging and spoiling yourself without looking at the big picture. ■

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

Do Salespeople Really Sell?

In meeting with clients recently, I've been hit with this question often. They're not asking me the question directly. Rather, I keep asking myself the question after listening to sales managers complain.

Why am I pondering this question? I see salespeople wasting too much time doing one of two things. Either they are doing things totally unproductive (often at the request of their boss) or they are merely taking orders from customers (which is not selling).

The salesperson's role is to sell! That means to secure incremental business from customers. A salesperson who is asked to spend countless hours on stupid conference calls, filling out reports or checking on stuff is not doing their job.

At the same time, the salesperson who thinks they're successful because they collect orders from customers who would have given the business to anyone is not selling.

Is this an indictment on salespeople? Yes, but it's also an indictment on the entire sales community for allowing these activities to be considered selling. Every hour the salesperson spends on non-selling activities is less opportunity for them and their company to succeed.

Unfortunately, there have been too many cuts in organizations that have resulted in salespeople doing activities that historically fell to other employees. The assumption was made that salespeople could do these tasks during "breaks in the action."

I'm not blaming corporate downsizing. No, I am simply saying these dynamics are only going to change if we are willing to do something.

First, let's look at the easy one – taking orders. Why should we be excited over a "sale" that is nothing more than a customer ordering what they were planning on ordering regardless of the actions of the salesperson? I have a problem when the salesperson makes the "president's list" or "wins" the trip to Hawaii just because they have great existing clients, but did nothing to build the business.

There are numerous industries where the majority of sales are repeat/replenishment orders. This is business anyone could get! I call it "customer service selling." There's no need to get excited about this business. The salesperson should really be focused on getting the customer to order more than what they had planned to order. Objective should be on incremental volume.

Sadly, there are too many company cultures that reward "baseline selling." Baseline selling is another way of saying "customer service selling." Quit rewarding baseline selling.

If you're going to reward salespeople – and yes, they should be rewarded – then it should be on what they actually sell! If you're a salesperson, ask yourself what portion of your sales you truly are responsible for and what portion is merely "baseline selling."

Now let's deal with the big time waster – the countless hours salespeople spend doing stupid stuff. Oh, go ahead and say "nothing" you do is stupid. Sorry, but you're kidding yourself! Given enough time, anyone (including myself) can rationalize that everything we do is necessary. That's simply not the case.

Participating in conference calls that constantly hash out the same thing or long-winded updates that could be done in a short email are two examples of big time wasters.

Weak sales managers are quick to engage their salespeople in every activity sent to them by marketing or other departments. I have three words to these sales managers: "Do your job!" Behave like a sales leader and block those requests. Or, if you can't block them, at least minimize the time they consume.

I'm not saying you, the sales leader, should automatically do them yourself. No, your role is to challenge everything that flows down to you. It's your job to ensure your salespeople are focused on what their title says they are to do: Sell!

I see salespeople wasting too much time doing one of two things. Either they are doing things totally unproductive (often at the request of their boss) or they are merely taking orders from customers (which is not selling).

Salespeople, are you devoting your best time to handling company requests? I hate to admit it, but early in my sales career, I found myself in a position where I knew I would be promoted faster based on how quickly I handled requests from corporate, rather than on what I sold. I know there are many of you reading this right now who are in the same position.

What should you do? Do these requests, but not at the expense of your selling time. This means doing these requests at odd hours of the day. Get over it if you're now whining about time. Top performing salespeople do what it takes to succeed.

Your primary job as a salesperson is to focus on securing incremental sales. Let's not complicate it with a lot of other things. Focus on incremental sales first. Sales leaders and managers, challenge yourself each day to equip your salespeople with more time to sell incrementally.

If you want to only concern yourself with re-order sales – what I call "baseline selling" – then do yourself a favor and get out of sales. Move into a customer service position. ■

To find out more about **Mark** visit:
http://thesaleshunter.com

Meet the 2014 Top Sales World Team

A very special thank you to our Top Sales Sponsors for their continuing support and loyalty

TOP SALES WORLD

INSPIRING THE GLOBAL SALES COMMUNITY

FRONT ROW SOLUTIONS · iMeet · INSIGHTSQUARED · membrain · Objective Management Group · PEDOWITZ GROUP · OneSource · Perfect Pitch 24 · pointclear · SEISMIC Content in context. · Revegy Visualize. Execute. Win. · clearslide · KnowledgeTree · WittyParrot · 22Touch · TopLine leadership,inc.

If you would like to learn more about the benefits of becoming a TSW sponsor and our existing Partner Program, please email us:
sponsorship@www.topsalesworld.com