



Refuel Your Fire by Jill Konrath

"While your time is a finite resource, your energy level is a renewable one. Slogging away at your desk isn't the answer to getting more done ..."

TOP SALES WORLD

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Three Temptresses That Could Kill Your Company This Year: Inbounditis, Marketing Automation and Big Data

Jonathan Farrington in conversation with Dan McDade



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Three Temptresses That Could Kill Your Company This Year: Inbounditis, Marketing Automation and Big Data

The Big Monthly Interview: Jonathan Farrington in conversation with Dan McDade

On this month's cover is Atlanta, GA entrepreneur Dan McDade, founder of PointClear, an "allbound" lead qualification and nurturing firm which he established in 1997. Dan is the author of **The Truth About Leads**, an insightful book that sheds light on the little-known secrets that help focus B2B lead-generation efforts, align sales and marketing organizations and drive revenue. He recently received a silver award from Top Sales World for his eBook, **From Chaos to Kickass**, wherein he details the benefits of prospect development optimization.

I recently interviewed Dan about his concerns so far in 2014 and found his responses to be both enlightening and entertaining. Not only will readers benefit from his expertise, but they will enjoy the discussion as well.

Jonathan Farrington (JF): Dan, apparently at the top of your pet peeve list is what you refer to as "inbounditis." What is inbounditis and why is it a temptress that could kill companies in 2014?

Dan McDade (DM): Inbounditis is a condition found primarily among marketing and sales executives. Early symptoms appear when there is a misalignment between marketing and sales efforts. Left untreated, the revenue backbone of a company will gradually deteriorate and inevitably

result in a compromised sales pipeline. When a company begins to focus its resources primarily on inbound leads and neglects efforts towards nurturing and precision targeting, inbounditis will present with the following symptoms:

- 1) deal sizes decreasing as inbound leads increase;
- 2) high-performing reps avoiding inbound lead follow-up; and
- 3) the percent of sales accepted leads decreasing while lead quotas increase.

This is not just my opinion. One particular client we worked with for a total of ten years went all-in on inbound and found that their deal sizes shrunk to 1/3 of what they had been with a more balanced approach. The result



was a ruptured pipeline.

Pundits point toward an empowered buyer who is 70% through the buying process before a sales rep needs to get involved. BALONEY! Unless you are selling a low-priced commodity, to wait for the buyer to feel ready to talk to you is business suicide.

JF: You also appear to have a bee in your bonnet about marketing automation. Are you against marketing automation?

DM: Not at all. We use marketing automation. What I'm against is using it as an email marketing spam cannon. Also, despite what you hear, marketing automation can cause more low-value leads to be sent to your sales force

faster than ever before.

Senior executives are a lot less likely to spend time filling out forms to provide analysts with their digital body language. They are, in fact, 2.5 times more responsive to a quality multi-touch (call, voicemail, email) approach than their more junior counterparts. Few if any companies can afford to sit back and wait for a prospect to hit a magic number and then contact them. If you doubt me, go fill out one form on any marketing automation vendor's site and see how long it takes you to be bombarded by calls and emails. Marketing automation companies are among the most aggressive outbound marketers that exist today.

JF: What else do you have for our audience?

DM: There is a lot of talk about "Big Data," but I'm concerned that most companies are ignoring "Little Data." For example, if you run a marketing campaign and ignore all dispositions other than leads, you waste about 2/3rds of the money you spent on that campaign. To not identify or work Pipeline and Nurture dispositions is the equivalent of forfeiting \$2 of every \$3 you spend.

For example, if you run a marketing campaign and ignore all dispositions other than leads, you waste about 2/3rds of the money you spent on that campaign.

According to a December 2013 [Harvard Business Review](#) article, "the biggest reason that investments in big data fail to pay off ... is that most companies don't do a good job with the information they already have. They don't know how to manage it, analyze it in ways that enhance their understanding, and then make changes in response to new insights. Companies don't magically develop those competencies just because they've invested in high-end analytics tools. They first need to learn how to use the data already embedded in their core operating systems, much the way people must master arithmetic before they tackle algebra. Until a company learns how to use data and analysis to support its operating decisions, it will not be in a position to benefit from big data."

[Sirius Decisions](#) reports that 25 percent of the average B2B database is inaccurate, 60 percent of companies surveyed had an overall data health scale of "unreliable," and 80 percent of companies have "risky" phone contact records

Sobering little data! The problem with most big data clean-up exercises is the money is gone before any value is recognized. In most cases, you can derive close to 100 percent of the value of database clean-up with about 20 to 30 percent of the investment.

JF: Sum it up, Dan.

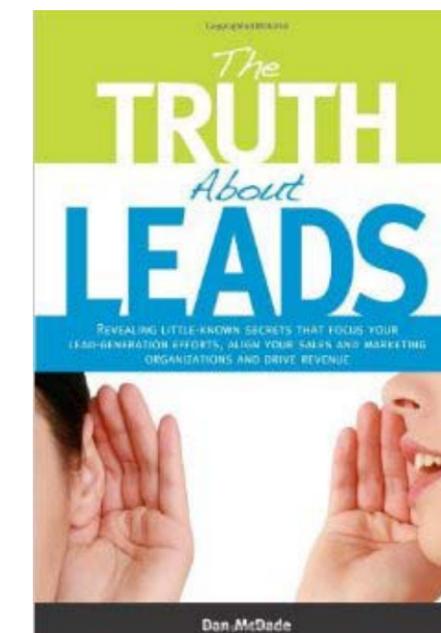
DM: My friend, Dan Waldschmidt wrote "Sometimes the Experts are Idiots." Here are some thoughts he shared.

"In 1899, Charles H. Duell, Commissioner of the US Office of Patents, astutely noted, 'Everything that can be invented has been invented.'"

"In 1943, Thomas Watson, chairman of IBM, observed, 'I think there is a world market for maybe five computers.'"

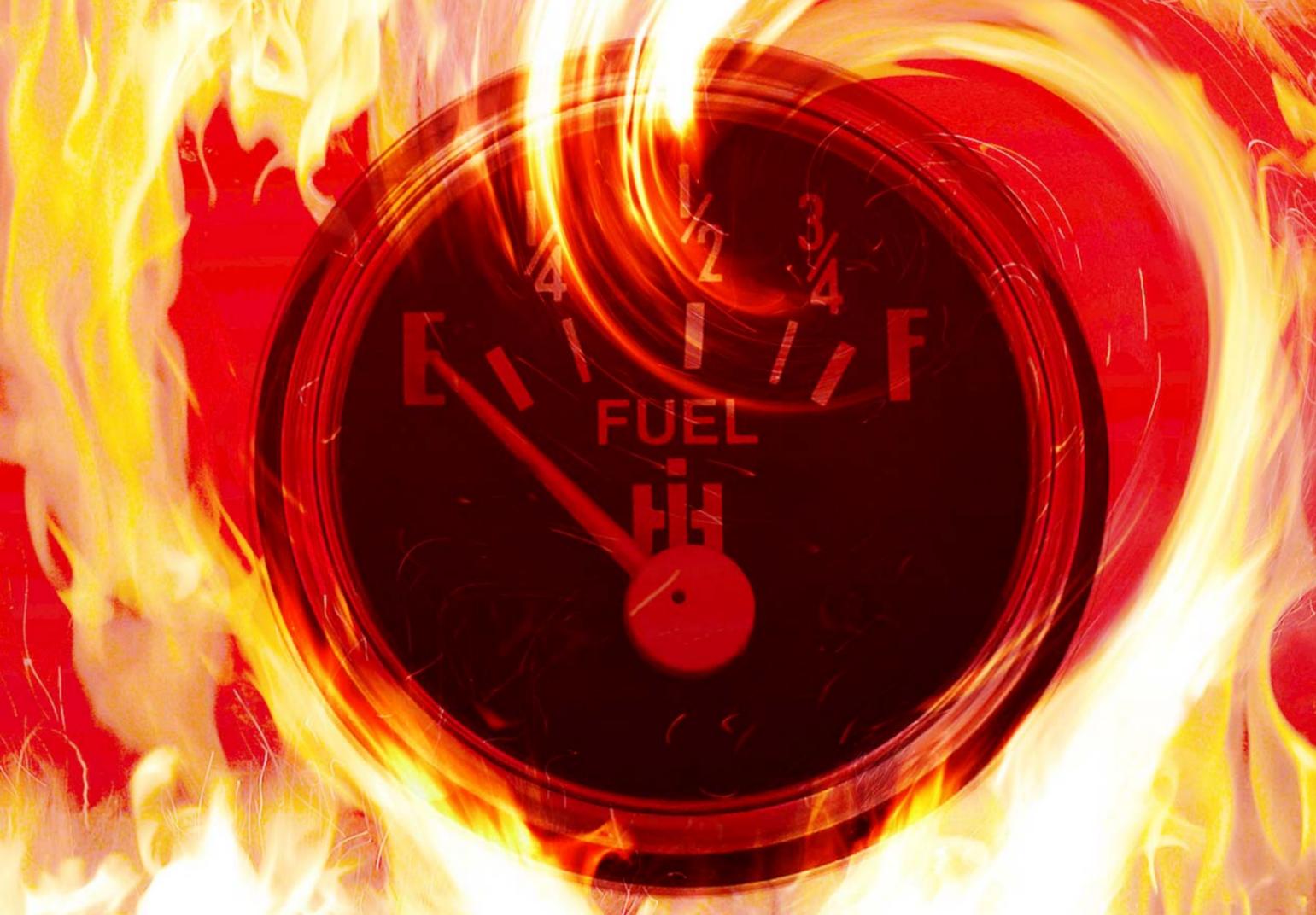
"In 2007, Steve Ballmer, the CEO of Microsoft, proclaimed, 'There's no chance that the iPhone is going to get any significant market share.'"

To summarize in the simple, yet poignant, words of Dan Waldschmidt, "ignore the experts—just go be awesome." ■



To find out more about Dan, <http://www.pointclear.com/>





Refuel Your Fire

It was only ten a.m., but I felt like I'd already put in a full day. After an intense planning session with a business partner and a one-hour conference call with a hot prospect, my energy was sagging. Not good. I needed to finish a big project for a client. The deadline was looming, but I'd hit a stuck point and my mind was fried.

So I did what any self-respecting, stressed-out person does under pressure: I spent a few minutes reviewing my notes, then put on my tennis shoes and left the office. After a twenty-minute walk on a beautiful summer day, I returned refreshed.

When I sat down at my desk again, I was clear on what needed to be done next. The bottleneck was gone. The project would be completed before the deadline.

While your time is a finite resource, your energy level is a

renewable one. Slogging away at your desk isn't the answer to getting more done. Nor is pounding the phones all morning long without a break or working twelve-hour days.

You know what does help you get more done? According to Professor

K. Anders Ericsson of Florida State University, the best strategy for maximizing your productivity is to work in ninety-minute intervals. Beyond that, you run out of oomph, your mind wanders, and before you know it, you're futzing around online or grabbing a goody.

As a seller, your success depends on your thinking, ideas, skills, and insights. You need to be mentally agile, all day long. That's tough to do when our workaholic culture tells us that burning the midnight oil is what it takes to get ahead. But your body is physically incapable of delivering peak performance when you're pooped.

Refueling your fire is even more essential when learning so many new things. Here are three strategies you can use to keep yourself sharp and avoid burnout:

Get off your butt. Your body craves movement—and so does your mind. In fact, your brain actually works best when you're not actively thinking. Wander around your office. Walk the stairs. Go stretch somewhere. Get outside if you can,

Take time each day to refuel your fire. When you do this, you increase your productivity. You'll be laser focused, better able to handle the ups and downs of your job.

even if it's only for a short period of time. And take time to exercise at least three times per week for an hour. You will feel so much better and your brain will have an opportunity to rest and recalibrate as well.

Do something fun. This isn't a joke. Talk to your colleagues. Play some games. Give a friend a call. After fifteen minutes or so, return to the task at hand. When you're refreshed, you'll assimilate all that new information faster and will be able to rapidly improve your skills.

Get more sleep. If you're getting less than seven hours of sleep each night, your memory circuits are not operating at full strength. Your performance can be significantly improved by sleeping eight or more hours nightly. If you have a home office, you might even consider taking a midday nap.

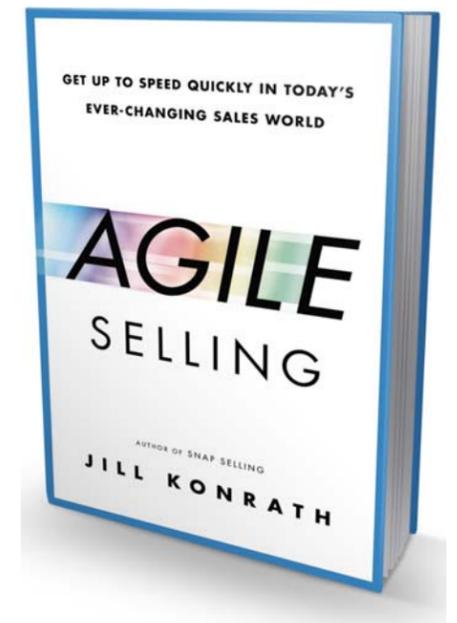
Detach from devices. It's hard when they're your lifelines, but shutting down during breaks, evenings, and weekends gives us a real breather. Turn off your cell phone for a period of time. At a minimum, don't check e-mail. Before you say it's impossible, give it a try. Even a couple hours of unconnected time is enough to renew your energy.

The chronic stress of overwork is debilitating and, it turns out, probably counterproductive. Several years ago, I read that French workers who put in thirty-six-hour weeks were

more productive than Americans who averaged fifty-plus hours per week. Imagine that: Long hours and high stress levels do not equate to getting more done.

Take time each day to refuel your fire. When you do this, you increase your productivity. You'll be laser focused, better able to handle the ups and downs of your job.

Manage your energy daily to perform at optimal levels. ■



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To find out more about Jill, visit:
<http://www.jillkonrath.com/agile-selling>



Replacing your company's most important asset may cost more than you think!



When employees leave a company, they take with them the skills acquired and knowledge gained while at your company. Studies show that having to replace a sales rep can cost a company 2-3 times that rep's annual salary due to time lost in ramp-up, training and time out of the territory.

Furthermore, when adding all of the direct and indirect costs, the total cost of employee turnover can make a huge difference on your bottom line. For any company, a lost employee is lost money.

Direct and indirect costs of hiring

Having the right resources on staff is a must to the success of your sales and leadership teams. It is more important than ever to find and retain the best team possible. Here is a list of costs relating to hiring:

DIRECT COST

- Placement Fee
- Screening Resumes
- Advertising
- Interview Process
- Training
- Relocation
- Admin Expenses (Application Processing, Sending Rejection Letters, Scheduling Interviews, Orientation)
- Assessment Testing
- Background Checks
- Legal Fees
- Travel Expenses
- Sign-on Bonus

INDIRECT COST

- Consulting Fees
- Ramp-Up
- Company process orientation time spent
- Contractor Fees
- Lost Revenue (due to void in sales territory)
- Project Slippage or Lost Opportunities due to time spent on hiring process
- Exit Interviews
- Increase in Unemployment Tax

As companies recognize the mounting lost revenue due to a bad hire, they begin to search for the most effective ways to hire the right employees and retain a valuable sales team. The purpose of this white paper, prepared by Chally Group Worldwide, is to help you avoid many common mistakes in the hiring process.

The Nine Most Common Hiring Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

To err in hiring is human – and very expensive. Many “standard” hiring procedures are actually common mistakes, so to choose more competent sales candidates, prepare to revise your hiring methods. Learn the nine hiring errors managers often make, and then eliminate them from your hiring practices to help you choose only the cream of the crop.

Mistake 1: relying only on interviews to evaluate a candidate

A study conducted by the International Personnel Management Association analyzed how well job interviews

Learn the nine hiring errors managers often make, and then eliminate them from your hiring practices to help you choose only the cream of the crop.

accurately predict success on the job. The surprising finding: The typical interview increases your chances of choosing the best candidate by less than two percent. In other words, flipping a coin to choose between two candidates would be only two percent less reliable than basing your decision on an interview.

Experts offer two reasons why interviews, while the most common selection tool, are such poor predictors of sales success.

- Most managers don't structure an interview beforehand and determine the ideal answers to questions (develop a scoring weight)
- Candidates do much more interviewing than most managers and are more skillful at presenting themselves than many managers are at seeing through their “front”

Mistake 2: using successful salespeople as models

Duplicating success may seem like a good idea, but the reasons people succeed are not clear from just measuring the characteristics of top performers. More importantly are the differences between top performers and low performers. For example, a comprehensive study of more than 1,000 sales superstars from 70 companies showed that the top three characteristics shared by high achievers were:

- The belief that salesmanship required strong objection-answering skills,
- Good grooming habits, and
- Conservative dress – especially black shoes.

However, a study of the weakest performers at these companies revealed that these same three characteristics were their most common traits as well. The lesson: You must “validate” critical success skills by comparing large enough samples of top performers and weak performers to find the factors that consistently distinguish the two. Otherwise, you may select well-spoken, energetic candidates who fail quickly but with style.

Mistake 3: too many criteria

Only through a method called “validation” can you make more effective hiring decisions. The government originally used validation research to prove that employment selection practices predicted job success and weren’t discriminatory. Similar to a process insurance companies use to predict accident risk or the likelihood of health problems, a validation study can dramatically improve your odds of hiring the right people. Not only does it identify critical job success factors, it weights each factor’s importance. Consider these two surprising and important findings from a validation study:

- The most critical factor for predicting success in any job is usually as important, or more important, than all other factors combined
- The most accurate prediction of success on the job is based on no more than six to eight factors. Add any more, and you risk diluting your criteria, watering down the prediction of success, and killing selection accuracy

Many consultants and distributors of pre-employment tests maintain that certain personality factors help ensure management or sales success and offer psychological theories to support that belief.

To hire winners, decide on six to eight factors that separate them from weaker performing individuals. Ignore factors that are not validated, or you may end up hiring nice guys who finish last.

Mistake 4: evaluating “personality” instead of job skills

Certain personality traits – high energy, honesty, a solid work ethic – seem to practically guarantee success, yet they don’t. Many consultants and distributors of pre-employment tests maintain that certain personality factors help ensure management or sales success and offer psychological theories to support that belief. However, solid statistical research from many objective sources shows little correlation between any personality factor and any specific job. Producers of competent and reputable “personality type” tests (like the Myers-Briggs) admit their tests are useful for self-awareness and training

but not for hiring. Only tests of job skills or knowledge are proven to predict job success consistently. You might enjoy knowing your sales candidates have self-confidence and energy, but knowing whether they can answer objections and close sales is definitely more important.

Mistake 5: using yourself as an example

Your own sales success might lead you to believe you can spot candidates with potential, but don’t count on it. A famous lawyer once said, “The attorney who would represent himself has a fool for a client” – a saying that also applies to managers hiring new salespeople. Many managers who reached their position by virtue of their sales success believe they can instinctively recognize a good candidate, when they are unconsciously just using themselves as a template. When you use yourself as a model, your ego often gets in the way, and that bias can skew your objectivity in judging others – a fatal hiring flaw.

Mistake 6: failure to use statistically validated testing to predict job skills most critical to success

In some companies, committees use deductive reasoning or brainstorming to identify criteria for candidate selection. This technique may encourage team building and a spirit of cooperation and participation, and may even focus the organization on the importance of hiring the right people. Unfortunately, two main flaws make it less effective at pinpointing why candidates fail or succeed. First,

the committees tend to focus on theories instead of facts – theories that suggest, for example, that high self-confidence guarantees a better employee. Second, they focus on attitude and experience instead of ability and skills. Skills are a much more significant and consistent indicator of success potential. Incentives can motivate a skilled person, but motivation and good intentions won’t improve an unskilled candidate.

To explain why managers often rely on reasoning or common sense to assess candidates’ attitude and personality, experts suggest that doing so is easier than measuring their skills. Gauging skill levels often requires carefully developed tests or on-the-job trials many managers are unwilling or unable to conduct.

Mistake 7: not researching why people have failed in a job

Research consistently shows that people fail in a job due to factors different from the criteria used to select them. Though most managers can list the most common reasons people have failed, they seldom make that information part of the process of choosing selection criteria for new candidates. Managers who identify these “failure points” and build them into the selection process can reduce hiring mistakes by as much as 25 percent. In most competitive sales situations, for example, the average prospect buys from a new salesperson only after six contacts. The average unsuccessful salesperson gives up after three contacts. While some of that

salesperson’s techniques may be adequate, the tendency to give up after three rejections was never uncovered or evaluated.

Mistake 8: relying on general “good guy” criteria

Everyone may want to hire good people, but being a good person does not ensure success on the job. Sales success skills are now so specialized that you need specialized hiring criteria as well. A coach filling a spot on a baseball team, for example, bases qualifications on the team’s skill. At the Little League level, the selection criteria for a player – dexterity, confidence with the ball, desire to play – are broad. As we reach the high school or college level, the criteria are more specialized, focusing on the four general skills required for success: running, hitting, throwing, and fielding. At the professional level, different playing positions require such specialized skills that no pro scout would rely on four general baseball skills to choose a Major League player. In sales, too, reserve broad, “good guy” criteria for entry-level hiring. When you need a more experienced salesperson, use more specialized criteria.

Mistake 9: bypassing the reference check

Various recruiting and placement agencies report a fairly high

percentage of false information presented in résumés and job applications. As many as 15 to 20 percent of job applicants try to hide some dark chapter in their lives. For some positions, one out of three résumés submitted may contain false information. To find out who’s pulling the wool over your eyes, make the extra effort to verify the information your applicants provide. An individual who twists the facts to get a job will probably bend the rules on the job. Checking references may seem tedious, but it beats the frustration and cost of hiring someone you need to fire in two weeks.

With the discovery of hiring mistakes comes the opportunity to make positive change. Even if you are content with most of the people you’ve hired so far, remember that ongoing improvement is the key to success. When you’re willing to revamp your standard hiring procedures, you open the door to a stronger sales team that can lead your company in a new and more profitable direction. ■



Download the eBook
9 Most Common Hiring Mistakes & How to Avoid them

To find out more about Howard, visit:
<http://chally.com/>





Are Inside Sales and Consultative Selling Mutually Exclusive?

I don't write about Inside Sales as often as I should. After all, everyone else is writing about it, some bloggers are devoted to it, and if you read what the inside sales bloggers are writing you would think that inside sales is king. Of course, it is the king of the top of the funnel where everything begins, but with few exceptions, selling rarely ends in that department.

It's important to separate inside sales into its 5 most common forms:

1. As a replacement for traditional outside sales. They are quota-carrying salespeople responsible for

the entire sales cycle but doing it from the comfort of a desk. This is technically "inside" but the comparison to inside stops there.

2. Traditional inside sales where salespeople field incoming calls from

people seeking prices and quotes and placing orders. This form of inside sales has been around since the telephone.

3. Customer Service, where the focus may be upselling and/or cross-selling, has been around for ages.

4. The top of the funnel group is responsible for generating leads and/or scheduling calls and meetings for more traditional salespeople.

5. Inbound, the newest group, where salespeople work the contacts generated by websites, social sites and from getting found.

In this discussion we'll focus on group #2, traditional inside sales, where salespeople field incoming calls from existing loyal customers, existing disloyal customers, and potential customers.

Throughout the history of selling by phone, these calls have traditionally taken the form of, "Yes, can I have a price on 2,500 microwidgittes?"

And during the same history, the inside salesperson responds with something like, "Sure. They are \$1.29 each but with a quantity of 2500 the price goes down to \$1.19."

Then, the caller either places the order or says, "Thanks. I'll let you know."

That call is incredibly transactional and if they buy now, or later, a sale cannot be any more transactional than that. So where does consultative selling fit into that approach?

To properly answer the question we must explore the context a bit more thoroughly.

Are there any downsides to this? Could this approach really be hurting us? Is there a problem with this type of efficiency? Hell yes!

Let's look at the three types of potential callers and the potential downside:

Are there any downsides to this? Could this approach really be hurting us? Is there a problem with this type of efficiency? Hell yes!

1. Loyal customer - what could possibly be the problem with this call being so transactional? After all, aren't we all in a hurry? There are two problems though. The first is that while this loyal customer will place their order with you, your persistent competitors are working their asses off trying to make your customer their customer. The second problem is that when the average call takes just under a minute, it is impossible to develop relationships. And one thing that hasn't changed in all these years is that without that strong relationship, especially with the people they call all the time, it is easier for your competitor to lure this customer away!

2. Disloyal customer - they do buy from you, but only when your price is lower or your competitor doesn't have what they need. It may not be possible to change this customer's behavior, but you can't even try unless you get more than one minute on the phone with them! You need the relationship, even if it's to earn the right to have a deeper conversation about this behavior and how you can help them save time (less calling, fewer shipments to receive and fewer invoices to pay), and money (better prices when they buy everything from one source, in greater quantities, and over an extended period of time). This requires having an actual conversation and taking a consultative approach.

3. Potential customer - they don't buy

from you today but they continue to call for prices. There could even be more of these calls than those from your loyal and disloyal customers! How can you possibly turn these callers into customers UNLESS you take a consultative approach and have a conversation about why they call, why they don't place orders, what might be going on, displeasure or unhappiness with another vendor, changes in their strategy, or anything else that might provide a clue and topic for the appropriate conversation?

This is all fairly simple in concept but executing is more difficult because inside salespeople have been trained to be efficient, not consultative. Inside salespeople have been trained to do one thing well, not multiple things. This really involves training inside salespeople to have conversations that are similar to those that should be taking place on the outside.

Are inside sales and consultative selling mutually exclusive? They seem to be today but they shouldn't be. Companies are failing to leverage all of the calls they receive and seem intent to spend more money on marketing to generate more calls and inquiries! It costs a lot of money to generate a new customer. It costs even more to have a disloyal customer. It's a waste of money to let potential customers slip right through the earpiece of the phone. ■

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



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Getting the Sales Rep Engaged Early Boosts Leads

The sales force needs leads to do their job effectively. However, exactly whose job is it to find these leads? For years, it's been the responsibility of the sales force to assist in generating leads, nurturing a prospect and turning it into a conversion.



However, times are changing and more companies are finding their marketing departments are fulfilling that need.

Years ago, companies would do very little of their research on a product/service before they'd talk to a sales rep. Now more of the research may be completed before that conversation takes place. Buyers are using social communities to do their research and they're talking with peers.

Does all of this mean the job of the sales rep has taken a back seat to marketing? The fact of the matter is

that it's possible that the sales force is being left out of the employee engagement conversation. Any company executive will tell you that an engaged employee is worth far more to the company than an employee who is simply doing the least required of them. However, it's debatable whether a sales rep is engaged because they're doing better or they're doing better because they're more committed to the work, i.e. engaged.

Recent research from a study titled, "For Optimal Sales Performance Pay is Not Enough" shows that high-performing sales employees may be as much as two times as likely to be highly engaged as those who are performing at lower rates (44 percent

Does all of this mean the job of the sales rep has taken a back seat to marketing?

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



compared to 24 percent). Regardless, a sales rep that has the fire in their belly will generally outperform everyone.

An emotionally vested sales rep will generate twice the revenue as one who is not. Some companies believe that the sales force is driven by money and therefore leaves them out of plans they formulate to see more passion, companywide.

A lot rides on the information the sales force feeds back to the organization. However, due to the reporting tools at their disposal, most sales teams see a lackluster result when it comes to consistent sales reports. One area that could lead to better engagement among the sales force is offering them a mobile app that allows them to quickly and easily file a sales report from the field that populates various parts of the companywide CRM.

It's no secret that sales managers' biggest insight into what their sales reps are doing and how they're performing is through sales reports. It's also not a secret that only 50 percent of sales reps are comfortable enough with their sales reporting tools that they'll use them on a consistent basis. ■

We've Got to Stop Meeting Like This

Picture yourself in a meeting with your buyer. If you are meeting in person, you're on one side of the table or desk and your buyer is on the opposite side. If you are meeting by phone, there's an equivalent divide with each of you on opposite ends of the line. It's time you stop meeting like this. It's time to break down that divide.

It isn't the physical divide but what it represents that's preventing you from forming meaningful and lasting connections with your buyer. It is the metaphorical divide, the one you can actually do something about, that restricts your connection.

This divide is ironic. Outside of sales, I can think of no other job that

gives someone in one position a better chance at understanding the other party's perspective. The reason sellers ought to be elegantly and wholly equipped to understand buyers is this: **We are all buyers, too.** We live and breathe and make decisions just like our buyers. Then, somehow, we mysteriously forget what it's like to be

a buyer when we don our seller role.

More sales can be made when you think like a buyer. More connections can be formed when you demonstrate sincere understanding of and appreciation for your buyer's situation. More time can be saved when you align yourself with the buyer, moving to the same side of the table to come alongside your buyer (metaphorically speaking).

Here are ten major differences between buyers and sellers. Consider what it would be like to set aside your seller tendencies and thoughts. Take some time to consider the buyer's perspective in each of these 10 differences. Empathize with your buyer, drawing from your own experiences as a buyer.

Here's an obvious and common example. Instead of focusing on your own desire to get a quick sale, focus instead on the buyer's desire to get a problem solved. Talk about the problem and the solution. Don't talk about closing the sale.

The fundamental divide in this example happens because sellers view the close of a sale as the end point. But buyers see the entire sale as

	THE SELLER	But	THE BUYER
Desires...	a quick sale, closed business		a solution to a problem
Talks about...	theoretical outcomes		actual results needed
Is fearful of...	being rejected		being taken advantage of
Emphasizes value of...	product or company distinctions		personally relevant differentiators
Is motivated by...	extrinsic goals and incentives		intrinsic drivers for change
Is sizing up...	the buyer's budget and urgency		the seller's trustworthiness
Has a goal to...	complete the transaction		get results after the transaction
Starts by thinking...	the buyer is a potential ally		the seller is a potential threat
Thinks rapport results from...	small talk and common interests		seller offering new insights
Sees sellers job as...	providing information		facilitating a solution

a means to an end – the end the buyer is focused on comes after the sale with the solution in place and producing results. Looking at the end point from the buyer's perspective will make you, the seller, a trusted advisor.

Now try this. Think about how it feels when you are approached by a seller. Imagine yourself on that car lot or in that furniture store where you last entertained the idea of making a major purchase. How did you feel when the seller began the pitch? What were you thinking about the seller, about your own vulnerabilities in that moment, about how you wanted to proceed?

All those feelings, suspicions, doubts and apprehensions you experienced are similar to what your buyer may be working through when you are in your seller role. It isn't about you, and you shouldn't take this reaction personally. It's a pre-conditioned response triggered by negative experiences in the past (just as it is for you when you are a buyer).

If you check yourself before and during your meetings with a buyer, you'll continually be reminded to nudge yourself back to the buyer's

side of the table. Soon, you will break habits that create that great divide. You'll replace seller-driven behaviors and perspectives with a buyer-based focus.

If you spend time with this list and immerse yourself in relating to and empathizing with the buyer in all ten ways, then your interaction with the buyer is bound to change. Your buyers will see you in a different light. They will reciprocate and mirror your empathy. They will trust you and value

Soon, you will break habits that create that great divide. You'll replace seller-driven behaviors and perspectives with a buyer-based focus.

time spent with you. Your sales will advance more quickly and more often toward a close even though that isn't where your mental energy is directed.

Feeling a little skeptical about this? Then put this to the litmus test. Once more, recall a time when you were a buyer. Think about the best buying experience you ever had and the seller who made it such a good experience. What was different about that seller as compared to others?

I've asked hundreds of buyers (many who are also sellers) this same question, and the answer never varies. The best buying experiences we have always involve a seller who "gets" us. We feel understood because the seller seems oriented more to us, the buyers, than to his or her own motivations.

When you are selling, don't forget what it's like to buy. Stop meeting with buyers from across the divide. Bridge that gap and make a connection. ■

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



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of your team!

"It doesn't matter what you're selling – human behavior has changed due to the amount of data available to us on the internet and we all have to adapt accordingly and change our game plan... relationships are still important but they must be backed up with value and that value has to be emphasized and tied in every step of the way."

This training could not have come at a better time for me ... it's shown me how to think from the buyer's perspective and how to dig deeper to make sure that the most pressing need is uncovered. A solution that addresses that need will be high value and will trump any objection in terms of pricing or preference."

*-Catherine Louis
Washington D.C.*



24 EDGY Beliefs of Successful Sales Leaders

Successful leaders see the world around themselves differently than everyone else around them. They think and act differently. That's because they believe differently than everyone else. Here are a few beliefs that drive extraordinary results for sales leaders everywhere:

1. Never expect your customers to be as excited about what you were selling as you are.
2. Give more value than people pay for and customers will keep paying you long after it seems reasonable.
3. A smile or remembering a customer's name are better sales strategies than offering discounts or flash sales.
4. You exist because customers allow you to exist. Never forget that.
5. The best customer retention strategy is a great customer service plan.
6. Your employees need to believe that what they do is more important than just turning a profit.
7. Customers don't always know what they want — even though they will tell you that they do.
8. Just because you have a good idea doesn't mean that people will automatically buy it. They won't.
9. Outrageous service is the best glue for building sticky customer relationships.
10. If you're selling everything, your customers are buying nothing.
11. Trust is easy to lose and hard to build. Think about that before you try to "get rich quick".
12. Customers don't care about what you get out of the transaction. They just want to feel like they are winners.
13. Keep it simple. You don't get bonus points for making your message complex and confusing.
14. It's hard to go wrong when you stay focused on making sure your customers stay happy.
15. The best marketing you can create is another happy customer.
16. You're not giving value if you're giving digital goods and calling them gifts or rewards.
17. The best sales strategy is a great marketing plan and a delightful customer service process.
18. Customers only remember what you've done for them now. Not all the work you've done earning the relationship in the past.
19. There's always a new company or product waiting to deliver happiness to your customers when you no longer think it is a priority.
20. No amount of free services or cocktail parties can fix a horrible customer experience with your company.
21. Despite an impossibly long list of legitimate excuses, when it comes to relationships: "It's always your fault".
22. Making customers feel awesome isn't something that you do, it's who you are.
23. Delivering delightful customer experiences isn't just about who you hire. It's about making sure that each encounter is memorable.
24. Nothing gets fixed or broken overnight. Things start to break when no one is watching to put them back together. ■



To find out more about Dan, visit:
<http://danwaldschmidt.com/>



Your Father's Sales Process...With a Twist

There's a rekindled debate going on about a tired topic: sales process. With new emphasis on the buying process and alignment and technologies driving process and sales enablement, the whole subject matter has become somewhat academic and fairly complex. It's enough to cause minds to close and eyes to glaze over.



After all, as one results-minded VP of Sales put it, “**All we really want to do is sell more stuff!**” And that is the point.

But top producing sales individuals, teams and successful organizations get there today by doing what the best have always done but with special attention to a new level of detail. A

twist, if you will – a cognitive variation on a focused theme that today makes all the difference between success and mediocrity.

It involves the actions in and around **P3**, which is highlighted in my recent article “[The 4 P's of Enterprise Selling.](#)” It's about the **quality of sales engagement**, for the rep and the

prospect. I call it **Opportunity Engagement** – engaging qualification, probing and presentation of ideas. In fact, this is your father's sales process, only now you've got to do it better than he was ever required.

The Next Sales Generation

I literally do talk about this stuff with my children. I have 2 top-producing sons actively working for top tier sales organizations. They have been the recipients of sought-after sales advice and unsolicited Dad-lectures on sales process clarity, messaging nuance, qualification scorecards, probing discovery, activity metrics, forecast accuracy, motivational mindset, partner relationships and sundry other keys to sales effectiveness. Between weekly conference calls, breakfasts or lunches, I teach and preach sales best practices and see great results with them and MXL clients.

But a pattern has emerged in this modern era. If not a process makeover, I'm seeing the need for a refocus in this area of **Opportunity Engagement**; that is, those early sales cycle calls or meetings where ideas, agendas, needs and information collide.

A Non-Trivial Return to Fundamentals

Sales **Opportunity Qualification** has always run parallel with opportunity

Probing Discovery. That is, early in all sales situations – particularly in more complex deals – a salesperson needs to qualify while also asking probing questions to understand the prospect's situation/environment/problem/pain/need/etc. Whether one is a BANT bigot or pick-your-favorite qualification method. I personally push the Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How approach – see [Rule #33: Qualify, Qualify, Qualify](#) from my book [42 Rules to Increase Sales Effectiveness](#). The key is to uncover the real deal through effective, inquisitive probing combined with clear and deliberate qualifying.

No, it's **not enough to merely qualify** the opportunity. And it's **not enough to merely probe** the opportunity. You've got to do both, with skill, finesse and thoroughness, because the real deal (truth) is in the details. The best salespeople figure this out and don't bring in the big guns (SE's or Specialists) or move on to Demos, Trials, Proof of Concepts, Presentations, Proposals, etc, until they are good and ready and know the score. In some cases literally with Opportunity Scorecards and other tools we use to help teams get it right.

And the probing is a developed art. No need for science – keep it simple. Who needs a 9-box solution value

No, it's not enough to merely qualify the opportunity. And it's not enough to merely probe the opportunity.

schema that takes days to teach and understand when you can get at it with a **4-step NEWS framework**? See [Rule #32: Become a Probe Master](#). Understand the **Now** (ask pointed “lay of the land questions”), then **Explore** for issues and challenges (posit known market/business trends and pressures). Follow-up with questions to uncover the **Why** behind the issues, and then **Summarize** what you've heard and cycle back to step 2 for more. It's simple and it works, but you need to be consciously aware of moving down these parallel paths of qualifying and probing.

The Real Twist

But the real miss today, and thus the need for the twist, is in **Presenting the Message**. This of course often gets blended into the same call/meeting where Qualifying and Probing have been happening. Can you see the collision coming? If not deftly handled, the communication of the sales message/pitch/deck/overview/etc. is convoluted, overwhelmed, or stands in stark isolation, lonely and ineffective.

This is why sales can be too intense for small children or those easily nauseated. It takes intestinal fortitude and learned skill and nuance to engage strong prospects in a compelling dialogue that extracts qualifying information, clarifies investigated mysteries, while communicating content domain

expertise that intrigues, educates, and leaves them wanting more (a follow-up meeting).

But that's **still** not all of it.

Here it is: in early sales **Discovery Calls/Meetings**, the effective modern salesperson has to also **teach the prospect how to sell** their stuff internally when they hang up the phone or walk out of the prospect's office. If they can't do that, the deal is at risk. Many sales have been lost because a prospect walked into his boss' office and tried to explain the product/solution about which you just met and discussed – and he can't sell it. He's vague, confused, focused on features instead of the fix on their business issues and problems. All it takes is for the skeptical boss to merely say “We don't need that” and your deal is cooked. Happens all the time unfortunately. That's why executive whiteboards and title-specific sales talk tracks are invaluable today.

Nothing New Under the Sun

So we're back to preaching and teaching what we've always done. As I always say, “Strategy is great, but execution is everything.” In fact, great **sales process execution** including **great qualifying, purposeful; probing discovery**, and **great sales messaging skills and strategies** will never go out of style.

Truth be told – they're needed now more than ever. ■

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



Will You Hit Your Number This Quarter?

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Will You Hit Your Number This Quarter?

At some point or another, every Sales VP hears this question from his CEO: “Will you hit your number this quarter?” This question may seem innocent at first, but it often spurs a sense of panic within that Sales VP. Why? Because, all too often, he just doesn’t know the answer.



1. Identify Your Business’ Distinct Segments

Does your Win Rate drop when you’re trying to sell to larger customers? Is your sales cycle shorter for one of your products than the others? If you want to predict how the rest of the sales period will unfold, you need to know what your business segments are and how they affect your sales process.

2. Analyze Your Current Pipeline

If you stopped creating new opportunities for the rest of the selling

period and only relied on the open opportunities in your pipeline, how close to your number would you get? Using historical data to forecast which of your open opportunities will close by the end of the selling period will help you see how much additional pipeline you need to generate.

3. Project New Pipeline

The number from step #2 will almost certainly be much lower than your bookings goal. That’s ok -- you still have time to make up the shortfall by generating additional opportunities that will close before quarter’s end. How many of these opportunities can you realistically create? Take your average sales cycle(s), subtract that number from the number of days you have left in the selling period, and figure out how many new opportunities you can create in that amount of time.

4. Select additional levers

Creative sales managers can find additional ways to generate revenue, even at the 11th hour. Closing deals themselves, leaning on their network, or offering discounts are just a few examples.

Want more details about how these 4 steps can help you forecast your end-of-quarter bookings total? Check out our [FREE eBook](#) on the topic. ■

But guess what: CEOs see through this ruse. The Sales VP doesn’t know if he’s going to hit his number, he’s just too afraid to admit it.

Usually, the Sales VP will hem and haw and provide equivocal, rambling answers about how he will hit his number if a couple of unexpected big deals come through or if a few breaks go his way.

But guess what: CEOs see through this ruse. The Sales VP doesn’t know if he’s going to hit his number, he’s just too afraid to admit it.

We’ve all been there before but we don’t have to resign ourselves to this state of uncertainty. In fact, I’ve come up with a simple 4-step guide to help all Sales VPs determine (on any day of the quarter) whether they’ll hit their number, and here it is:

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





72.6% OF SALESPEOPLE USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR SELLING ACHIEVED QUOTA MORE OFTEN THAN THEIR PEERS!

Selling today is tough. Decision makers are harder to reach. They aren't just more informed, but busier. They block emails and phone calls from salespeople they don't know.

More than having a great looking LinkedIn profile, Social Selling is a new approach to selling that requires a strategy for cultivating relationships with hard to reach buyers. Training, ongoing mentoring support and measuring the right activities leads to improvement in sales results.

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Your Platinum Mentor Guide is Barbara Giamanco. She is a globally recognized expert in Social Selling. Barb is the co-author of *The New Handshake: Sales Meets Social Media* and published author in the Harvard Business Review. She has a proven, 30-year track record in generating sales and capped a corporate career at Microsoft, where she led sales teams. Throughout her sales career, Barb has sold \$1B in products and services.

Learn more at www.scs-connect.com or call 404-647-4925 (USA)



Selling Moves Outside In

Over the last few years, there have been various predictions about the future of selling. How many salespeople will be needed, what sales skills will be required, how salespeople will use technology and whether or not field sales will ultimately be disbanded in favor of nothing but inside salespeople.



A 2013 study conducted by InsideSales.com predicted a roughly 4% increase in growth with inside sales teams, and an average headcount investment of 26% being made in bringing inside sellers on board versus field sales personnel.

Indeed the transition makes sense.

With continued advances in technology, not every sales opportunity requires a personal visit from a sales representative. Factor in the additional costs and relative inefficiency of having salespeople driving around to appointments, and it is easy to see why the popularity of inside sales teams is growing.

But there are challenges.

One challenge faced by sales leaders is finding and hiring the right talent. To assume that field salespeople can easily make the

transition to inside selling is a mistake. Having begun my sales career with MicroD (now Ingram Micro) as an inside sales representative, I can tell you that it is a tough job. Listening skills are critical. Without the benefit of seeing and responding to body language, inside sellers have to listen well and their verbal communication must be top notch.

Inside sellers also need to rely much more heavily on technology than their field sales counterparts are probably used to. Prowess and proficiency in researching and

With continued advances in technology, not every sales opportunity requires a personal visit from a sales representative.

engaging prospects and customers via multiple channels: phone, social CRM, social media, texting, webinars or video hang-outs are not optional skills. These are part of today's modern sales playbook and toolkit.

Bring on the Training.

AA-ISP conducted a survey of leaders and individual contributors in 2013 that concluded that of the five top challenges, the number one challenge is in the area of people development – coaching, developing and training inside salespeople.

Ranking number two was the recruitment and hiring of talent. If hiring talent with the right skills is a challenge, it makes it clear that a much higher level of investment must be made in training people to do the job well. The problem is that isn't happening to the degree required.

Similar to the leaders, sales representatives who responded to AA-ISP's survey mentioned training and development as a top challenge, although it ranked fourth behind leads, career advancement and "red tape" procedures.

As Inside Sales as a profession has matured, inside salespeople must have a full grasp of the entire sales cycle and being skilled communicators, presenters, negotiators and consultative sellers.

To address today's skills gap, investments in training and development should be a sales leader's number one priority! ●

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



Why Salespeople Don't Use CRM & What to Do About It

Albert Einstein had a sign on his office wall:

“Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts.”

Albert should have been in Sales Operations, because his sign explains why so many companies who make huge investments in CRM systems like Salesforce.com and others can be totally frustrated with low sales rep adoption rates and inaccurate forecasting results: **Not everything that can be counted counts.**

Why do so many salespeople resist the usage of CRM systems? One reason is that because of flawed CRM funnel structure, sales managers are unable to coach salespeople effectively. While managers can monitor activity levels after-the-fact, flawed funnel structure

inhibits managers' ability to coach sales skills, strategy, knowledge, etc. So your reps don't sell more when they put information into CRM, and they wonder, “Why am I doing all this extra work? What's in it for me?”

To explain flawed funnel structure, here is a typical funnel structure built into a CRM tool. The funnel is based on the steps of that company's sales process:

1. New opportunities
2. Qualification
3. Needs analysis
4. Value proposition
5. Proposal
6. Negotiation/close

Notice that these steps describe what the company expects a sales rep to do, not what it wants customers to be doing. When you track sales this way, an opportunity can appear to be progressing quite nicely because the salesperson is doing everything the funnel describes. But if the customer slows down their buying process, or if your rep makes a mistake, nobody knows until it's too late; because neither the rep nor the manager is measuring the success of each step by **tracking buying behavior**.

Let's assume, for example, that your sales rep has moved swiftly through their sales process and got as far as submitting a proposal. But you have no idea whether the customer understands their needs or if they understand the economic impact if they do nothing. A sales-process-focused CRM doesn't tell you if the customer is comparing your solution to those of your competitors or has established the priority of their buying criteria.

So when CRM indicates that the rep submitted a proposal, you might think that deal is almost done. But the reality could be very different. And your sales manager has missed a lot of opportunities to coach the rep to get better at helping the customer complete their actions of buying.

As Albert told us, not everything that can be counted counts. Where your sales rep is in the sales process doesn't count. What does count is –

what is the customer doing? Where is the buyer in their buying process?

When you have this kind of sales-process-focused disconnect built into your CRM system, managers have no option but to use data like call frequency as a policing tool. I have not yet met a salesperson who enjoys getting interrogated.

How then can a company create a situation where sales reps are more motivated to use the CRM system? The key is to re-align your funnel – and your company's sales process – on the buying process. This will help you in three ways:

1) Improve forecast accuracy by forecasting based on customer-go-forward actions

When the sales funnel is aligned with the customer's buying process, each stage of the funnel identifies specific actions that customers take when they are moving forward in their buying steps. Tracking that a customer has, say, allocated funds for a buying decision or has acknowledged to your rep the importance of your company's differentiators is a lot more meaningful in terms of evaluating the status of a deal than knowing that your rep has completed needs analysis.

So when CRM indicates that the rep submitted a proposal, you might think that deal is almost done. But the reality could be very different.

2) Sales increase because your reps are keeping more prospects moving forward

Part of defining your customers' buying process is being able to identify when they have completed one step and are moving on to the next step – that is, identifying “exit criteria” for each buying step. Salespeople can then consider the criteria in CRM to help them answer the all-important question for sales call planning: “What specific action do I want my prospect to take at the end of this meeting?”

Do you agree with me on the following point? - Most salespeople sell too fast, especially during the early stages of an opportunity. Concentrating your reps' attention on achieving the exit criteria will help reps slow down each meeting and help your customers to complete their buying process more quickly (for more information on this topic, read my 2011 book [“Slow Down, Sell Faster!”](#))

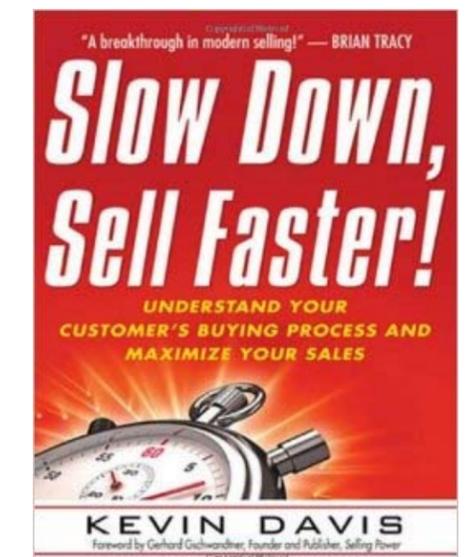
3) Improves sales managers' visibility in the funnel so reps receive better coaching

When you're tracking deals in CRM based on customer progress (not just sales rep activities), you will notice sooner if a deal slows down or falters. That means you as a manager have a chance to get involved sooner and coach the rep how to get the deal back on track. Voila! – The rep has

now benefitted from your CRM, and will see much greater value in keeping their records up to date.

In short, when you have clearly defined exit criteria for the buyer in each stage, you'll get far more impact with both your CRM and sales coaching. Sales forecasts become more accurate because you'll know more about where your customers are in their buying process; a rep's overly-optimistic and subjective opinion is replaced by far more objective evidence of buyer behavior. And coaching discussions with reps will be more effective because you'll be focused on developing reps' skills in moving customers through their buying process.

To get higher CRM adoption do what Albert Einstein would do - start counting what counts..... buyer behavior. ■



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



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360 Leads redefines sales lead generation as clients sell millions

360 LeadsTM (360leads.com) formally launched its category redefining sales lead generation company at a kick-off event held at its Canadian headquarters. The company has been honing its precision-based lead nurturing process over the past year for clients targeting North American markets, with an overwhelming success rate. Select clients in professional services, automotive, publications and manufacturing attended hundreds of qualified sales meetings, built ongoing sales pipelines and secured millions in new business.

“360 Leads is transforming how companies obtain qualified and profitable sales opportunities” said President & CEO, Stuart Lewis. “Sales prospects are so close, yet companies struggle to connect with them. Our find connect grow philosophy connects our clients with the sales prospects they want by integrating the best attributes of digital, direct, inbound and outbound marketing into a truly holistic sales lead generation strategy.”

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- Outbound – appointment setting, renewal programs and win-back campaigns

“Everything we do focuses on connecting our clients with key decision makers, so they can grow their business. Our clients have been seeing payback on their 360

Leads’ investments upwards of 800% as related to sales, with one client achieving a more than 6,000% return”, adds Lewis. Select client success stories can be found online at 360leads.com/clientstories.

Pricing and Availability

Prices range from \$750.00 to \$6,000.00 per month depending on specific services, with most services being generally available across North America. Interested companies can learn more at 360leads.com or by calling 1-844-360-LEAD (5323).

About 360 Leads

360 Leads finds new customers for our clients by connecting them with key decision makers that will grow their business, anywhere in the world.

360 Leads is the only sales lead generation company that provides a complete precision-based nurturing process that is customized for each client to deliver optimal results. We integrate digital, direct, inbound and outbound marketing services while engaging the specialized expertise of our people, data and technology to deliver qualified sales opportunities. To learn more, visit www.360leads.com or call 1-844-360-LEAD (5323).

360 Leads is a 5th business[®] company, an integrated marketing strategy and communications organization headquartered in Toronto, Canada.

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3 Steps to Kicking Your Adrenaline Addiction

You may have a drug problem. Many sales managers today are hooked on a commonly abused, yet elusive drug whose widespread use seems to be flying under our radar. That drug of choice is adrenaline.



Especially in today's society, with the constant push to produce more, an overwhelming to-do list, tight deadlines, intense competition in the marketplace and pressure to perform, responding to hundred of emails a day and of course, the drive to hit sales quotas and close more business faster; all of these factors have created a new type of junkie, especially in companies with intense sales driven, result driven cultures - the Adrenaline

Junkie. Whether you're a CEO, VP, sales manager or salesperson, I can say with great certainty after coaching and working with hundreds of thousands of managers and sellers over the years, the majority of them are adrenaline junkies. The irony is, they don't even realize that they are!

The classic symptoms? Saying "Yes" when you mean "No." Overcommitting or overbooking your schedule, then finding it difficult to

deliver on deadlines or complete tasks. Procrastinating until the last moment. Believing you, "Work best under pressure." Being easily distracted.

Consider that an adrenaline addiction may be creating many of the problems, employee challenges and obstacles to a sale that you want to avoid. Tolerating stress, chaos, disorganization, poor planning, lackluster team performance or undesirable customers create situations that provide the adrenaline rush associated when working on overdrive.

Like any drug, adrenaline has its rewards. On the surface, it may appear that this legal, seductive drug provides a burst of energy to get something done, tackle a project or meet a deadline. Being superhuman enables you to accomplish more than what a mere mortal is capable of producing.

However, it's more dangerous than we realize. The body produces adrenaline when stressed, in pain or to protect us from imminent danger. While used to handle a crisis, you don't want the drug to control you and dominate your lifestyle. After a day of riding the adrenaline roller coaster, you crash.

Too much adrenaline from other sources (nicotine, chocolate, caffeine, etc.) can also lead to stomach and

heart problems, high blood pressure and anxiety. Aside from feeling drained, burnt out and exhausted, adrenaline lowers your productivity level and sets you up for failure. If you thrive on chaos, it's difficult to maintain your focus, concentration, peace of mind or mental clarity. If you're a salesperson, a congested mind does not allow for the space to create the best solutions for your customers during a sales call.

If you're overwhelmed with a pile of tasks, then you can't be "present" with or listening to your customers. This affects your ability to follow a sales process, ask the right questions, uncover your customer's needs and even create or recognize a selling opportunity, creating holes in your selling approach that many promising sales fall through.

Get Off the Adrenaline Train

To kick the habit, prevent sporadic results and get off the adrenaline train, shift away from using adrenaline and start creating the momentum that produces consistent, long lasting results. After all, once people realize they're hooked on adrenaline their first reaction is, "Well, if I'm not going to work off adrenaline, then what energy source will I use to get things done?" It's a process for people to accept that

If you're overwhelmed with a pile of tasks, then you can't be "present" with or listening to your customers.

an adrenalized lifestyle ultimately comes at a great cost. It's only when a person has the insight and achieves this level of awareness can they truly make the CHOICE to tap into a healthier energy source, such as momentum and consistency. Here are three things you can start doing to create a healthier lifestyle and work-style.

1. Just Say No

Are you a "Yesaholic?" Do you instinctively say, "Yes" first without considering if you can realistically deliver? The irony is, saying "Yes" and not following through creates what we wanted to avoid. That is, letting others down by over committing and not delivering, costing you frustration, happy employees, new or future business, a satisfied customer, even referrals.

Before you respond with a start/delivery date on a project or proposal, ask yourself, "Is this something I want to be doing?" "Do I have the time for it and if so, when?" In other words, "Are there activities that I've already committed to that take priority?" I'm sure your family would appreciate (be shocked?) if you made it home for dinner.

2. Develop A Healthy Relationship With Time - Underpromise

Adrenaline junkies often force the end result into an unrealistic timeframe.

Instead, increase (even double) the timeline you've allocated for each task by considering the worst-case scenario. This provides a buffer of time when completing tasks even if you experience some bumps along the way. One client said, "If I add 50% to each activity timeline, my day would end at midnight rather than 5pm!" Herein lies the greatest lesson. You're overcommitting!

3. Do Complete Work

"I've always been a great self-starter but not a good finisher." Sound familiar? Keeping incomplete projects alive becomes another source of adrenaline. Instead of continually stopping and starting something new, commit to seeing each task through to completion before taking on the next one. Once you've cleared out some space as a result of completing one task, you can add another in its place.

Like kicking any drug habit you'll experience withdrawals, so take the time to get ahead of the curve and catch up on all of the overcommitments you've already made. You'll reduce your stress level, experience more peace and calmness, create more time, become incredibly productive and enjoy a healthier energy source. You'll then be able to choose to redesign your life and career the way you really want. Take it from a recovered adrenaline junkie. ■

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



Top Sales Article April 2014

Top Sales Blog Post April 2014

APRIL 2014



Social Selling Today

In the midst of this communication revolution sales must adopt a new approach that incorporates social media. When we overturn the oldbusiness practices, what emerges is something one person called “smarketing.” Sales and marketing no longer work as two separate entities. Instead, they work in tandem.”

These words were written in early 2009 as the introduction to my book, *The New Handshake: Sales Meets Social Media*. At that time, I believed, as I do today, that adoption and integration of a social media strategy would align marketing and sales once and for all. These two camps have traditionally had adversarial relationships, often barely tolerating each other. Great strides are certainly being made, and there is still a very long way to go.

Social Media Marketing is NOT the same as Social Selling

Even today, there is confusion about the role social media plays in marketing and how that differs from where social media fits the selling process. Both play important roles in driving revenue. That makes strategic integration and hand-off points even more important. For example,

marketing may be creating awesome content for their salespeople to share, but somehow it never happens. My experience working with clients tells me that this usually happens because:

Salespeople don't know where the content resides, they are too busy to go search out what they need, and they often actually aren't sure how or why they should share content at all.

When planning a social selling initiative, which is far bigger than conducting a few training sessions, process and hand-off points between marketing and sales needs to be carefully considered.

Sales Has Been Slow to Adopt Social Selling

In the almost four years since the book was published (August 2010), I expected that sales teams would move quickly to adopt these new platforms and integrate their use into their sales process. I was wrong. Not that sellers wouldn't move to adopt social selling, but that they would move more quickly.

As more research and information surfaced to confirm that decision makers block sellers at every turn and have no time for “old school” sellers ...

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APRIL 2014



Looking for “Superstars” in all the Wrong Places

Everybody has heard of the 80/20 rule. This concept is based on the research of Wilfried Fritz Pareto, an Italian engineer, sociologist, and economist, who discovered that 80% of the land in 19th century Italy was owned by only 20% of the population....and it tended to stay that way over time. The concept is often applied to sales. It assumes that 80% of your sales will come from 20% of your best salespeople. Based on their anecdotal experience, most sales execs would agree with you. The actual ratio (based on Chally Group Worldwide's analysis of 900+ B-B sales forces across different industries) reveals that 52% of sales come from the top performers. Still an impressive effort and they are compensated handsomely for it.

Most sales execs would love to get more of these superstars...but they don't exist. So, many sales gurus and consultants suggest we study (for several hundred thousand dollars) how these superstars sell and then train everybody else to use the same techniques. Sounds good so far...and trials of the approach do show some improvement in sales from the average performers...for awhile. But

the average performers, no matter how many new sales techniques they learn, never produce even half as much as the superstars.

So what's going on?

Research by Arun Sharma at the University of Miami (FL) has exposed a flaw in the consultants' logic. Having studied broader differences in the behaviors of sales superstars across many industry segments, he found that their sales techniques with customers were neither unusual nor unique. Their competitive difference was largely based on their ability to manipulate their own company's resources more effectively to “prioritize” their customers. In fact, they typically managed to consume a significant percent of their company's internal resources.

Most sales execs do recognize that their top reps are expert at bending and stretching their companies' processes to take care of customers...and they're often difficult to manage as a result, but who will really fire a top salesperson, when there are quotas to meet and targets to hit? In reality, we may really be paying these superstars twice ...

[Read More Here](#) ►

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 April was **Barbara Giamanco**.

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. April's winner was **Howard Stevens**.



Yes, I Really Mean “No”

Do you enjoy hearing the word “NO” in any context, business or otherwise? “NO” dredges up our own emotional biases and baggage about rejection. Add “NO” to the list of Elephants in the Room that I discussed in my April Top Sales World article titled *Time to Shovel Elephant Poop Again*. “NO” means pushback, hesitation and reservation. We’ve all heard it, at one time or another.

“NO” is a solid, black-and-white term. When your customers tell you “NO” that’s what they really mean. The word “NO” is not your traditional sales folks’ cue to launch into their “overcoming objections” spiel. Your non-traditional sellers, on the other hand, hear the word “NO” and assume the fetal position while looking for a rock to crawl under. Why inflict that angst on them, just as they are starting to move outside of their comfort levels and become more

effective and productive at selling?

No one likes to hear the word “NO.” The question becomes whether or not a customer’s “NO” will continue to be that big surprise to you and your team.

“NO” signals business disconnect. “NO” is unexpected when you are focused on pushing your own selling agenda. When your customers (even your internal customers) tell you “NO”, your business development processes, sales strategies and value propositions are not aligned with their top priorities.

Instead of reacting to rejection and charging in to address their “NO”, consider developing a proactive and anticipatory strategy for avoiding this scenario.

How do you and your team of traditional and non-traditional sellers prepare for the term “NO” in your account development strategies? Develop a process which allows you and your team to understand the context and history of how “NO” is used - within your own company as well as your customers’ organizations. I offer four strategies for you and your team to work on this month.

1. Do your homework, together. Before you rush off to sell, back up your sales process and do your research. Utilize the non-traditional sellers on your team to gather information about your customers’ internal processes and practices. Often your non-traditional team members are better able to have

peer-level discussions with their counterparts within your customers’ organizations than you are, as a traditional seller. Share your findings with each other. Compare and contrast how you would approach your customers. Create relevant value propositions based on your collaborative input. Learn to view the business table from your customers’ perspectives instead of your own. Give yourselves credit for having a business development process that is more proactive than your customers’ own legacy systems. Become nimble in the marketplace.

2. Look for their areas of team dysfunction. It is far easier for customers to tell you “NO” than to say “Yes.” Consider how you are giving them that opportunity to hunker down within their own status quo. “Yes” involves work on the part of your customers. They may not be willing to work together on your behalf because they don’t work very well together in the first place. If you work with customers who constantly push you away and require more information from you, consider that their “NO” signifies that your customers’ houses are not in

No one likes to hear the word “NO.” The question becomes whether or not a customer’s “NO” will continue to be that big surprise to you and your team.

order. Your homework is to determine the history and context of their dysfunction. When projects become stalled or derailed, your customers’ revenue streams suffer, not just yours. How can you develop a value proposition, and process, which acknowledge this situation and represent a positive means of improving their own revenue outcomes and, of course, yours?

3. Invite everyone to the party early and often. No matter what the size of your customers’ companies, there are usually one or more individuals who are purposefully overlooked or avoided when making decisions. Sometimes these folks are higher-ups. Determine whether the people you work with are, in fact, intimidated by them. Leaving these decision makers out of early discussions results in their being blindsided at the end, when their signature is required for the capital purchase of your product or service. Ouch! Sometimes these folks are the naysayers, who seem to come out of the woodwork whenever there is a decision to be made. As a result, these individuals show up late to the party, and make sure their presence is felt when they show up. If there are naysayers in your customers’ organization, find out who they are and why they are traditionally left on the outside looking in. Your proactivity about this situation can head off the drama of this scenario, even if it is an ingrained legacy habit within your

customers’ organizations. (It’s a specific form of #2). Avoid adopting the internal dysfunction of your customers’ organizations.

4. Identify legacy decision-making processes. Develop a solid understanding of how your customers make decisions. People don’t make decisions by thinking and evaluating in a straight line. However, organizationally, your customer’s decision-making process may be just that: a constant hand-off from one decision maker to the other until everyone has taken a look at your proposal. Determine why this system is perpetuated inside of their organization. Consider that buying teams can be comprised of up to seven individuals, or more. This type of straight-line decision-making process perpetuates loss, rather than profit. Straight-line legacy decision-making processes can be improved by getting everyone seated around the decision making table, simultaneously and perhaps virtually. Consider the impact on your customers’ internal productivity if you take the time to choreograph this type of discussion.

Develop effective value propositions and processes around each of these strategies. *Showcase* to your customers what it’s like to work with you and your company. *Differentiate* your own capabilities while making a huge difference to theirs. ■

To find out more about Babette, visit:
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Transforming Dysfunctional to Performance

Dysfunction: the word comes up in conversation every day, usually in relation to crazy families, nutty reality show contestants, and all-around gossip. But what happens when the word dysfunction can be applied to your sales team? In particular, when a dysfunctional sales team is preventing you from getting the results your company needs to move forward, how do you identify the root cause of the problem, eliminate it, and transition from dysfunctional to high-impact?

Dysfunction on your team may be inherited or may be something you've created inadvertently, but the important thing to understand is that it can be identified and fixed.

Signs of Dysfunction

As we always hear, the first step to a solution is admitting you have a problem. Keep an eye out for some tell-tale signs within your sales team

and your company at large that indicate you may face a problem.

The Company Isn't Focused on Sales. If product management, development and engineering are the

main focus at your company, and the CEO or head of sales has a background in finance, product management, or development—not sales and marketing—the company as a whole may not be sales-focused and that may trickle down to your team.

The Team Isn't Focusing on Numbers with Visible Reminders. Take a minute to look around. Are sales targets written on the walls, on whiteboards, tacked to cubicles? If not, there's a lack of focus on those numbers for your team, and that's a problem.

The Sales Group Doesn't Know Its Funnel or Projections. Ask your sales team and managers to define their funnel—ask them what they're working on and what's closing soon. Question them on their revenue forecasts and margins. If they can't give you simple, concise answers, they're not functioning smoothly. In fact, the topic of hitting targets, bonuses, and commissions should be frequently discussed within the team—if it's not, they're not focused on selling.

There's No Sense of Urgency. Get a feel for your sales team at the end of a month or quarter. Activity should be almost frenetic at this point—your team should be on the phones and selling. If reps are taking 90-minute lunches or doing a lot of chatting at the water cooler when hitting their targets is on the line, you've got a problem within the team.

Your Sales Room is a High School Cafeteria. Of course, dysfunction comes in the most obvious of forms as well. Much like high school, gossip and rumors on the

sales team can lead to nothing but trouble and means that the team is off focus. Playing the blame game is a problem as well: when your team is blaming shipping, support or finance for their losses, you need to root out why they're not accountable.

Sometimes dysfunction isn't really a harmful thing for your team—and the only way to know this is to be measuring your results. If your team is hitting its targets and acting legally, morally and ethically, does it necessarily matter if someone's a bit quirky or has some strange work habits? Perhaps not. But in all other cases, it's important to root out the source of the problem so your team can focus on its purpose: selling and results.

Eliminating Dysfunction from the Team

Once you've identified the signs of dysfunction on your sales team and determined that it's a problem that's inhibiting your ability to generate revenue, it's important to take action to turn the situation around. This could range from simple steps like clearer communication or the tweaking of goals, to more drastic measures like eliminating problem staff members or

By examining your practices, your people and yourself, you can develop a team that performs and generates revenue for your company.

making changes to your compensation plan. The following are steps you can take to mitigate dysfunction on the team.

Focus on the Pipeline. Highly functional sales teams focus on the pipeline, build camaraderie and surge forward at month and quarter end. They're extremely results-oriented and they focus their office work and activities on obtaining those results. If your sales team isn't getting results, the first step you should take is to manage by walking around the floor. Make sure the room isn't quiet and listen to the conversations going on to help you determine why your reps are not hitting their targets.

Is it because the pipeline isn't filled, or because they have poor closing skills? Dig deep: if the pipeline's not full, decide what the root of the issue is. Consider whether the problem is willingness or ability. Are your reps being lazy or ineffective, or are they working with a bad product or problematic sales process? Whatever the issue is that's preventing your reps from working with a full pipeline and closing deals, identify and eliminate it.

Examine Individuals' Behavior. It's a cliché, but it's true: one bad apple can spoil the whole bunch. In many cases, this issue can be one you inherit from a previous sales leader, but a problem employee still needs to be dealt with.

Take a look at the individual members of your team and how they're behaving in professional situations. Are the reps taking their jobs seriously, or are they playing games or enjoying themselves, possibly at the expense of the company's reputation or relationship

with the client?

Signs that you're going to have issues with a particular team member include a resistance to forecasts or measurements—often, they'll claim they don't have time to measure because they're "too busy selling." If a rep has a heavy reliance on a small number of accounts or they complain about changes to marketing, product or process, they may be part of the issue on your team. In some cases, these issues may be inherent to someone's personality (as opposed to something you can solve by training and mentoring), and that may mean they're not going to be a good fit for your team.

Look at the Environment You've Developed. In large part, you can create your own dysfunction by putting the wrong compensation plan in place, fostering extreme competition, or leading by the stick, punishing or penalizing without ever rewarding. When it's time to assess the health of your team, don't forget to look inward to see what you could do better.

In sales, compensation is king. As much as it can motivate employees, it can also create an extremely hostile environment when done poorly. Changing your compensation plan partway through the year or changing rules or territories unexpectedly can create this type of negative environment. It encourages your reps to fight, hoard deals, hide deals or

game the system. In the end, your sales team will most likely behave the way you pay them to behave, so pay attention to your compensation plan and ensure you're paying your employees for the habits and achievements you want to see.

Hiring can make a difference to your team's environment as well. Hire the right people for the type of sales your company makes. A rep who's excellent at closing multimillion dollar deals with long sales cycle may fail on a team that needs monthly results with smaller revenues. Fit and skills are important, so keep your sales process in mind when hiring, and don't get dazzled by impressive numbers that aren't relevant to your specific business.

Strategies to Take Your Team to High Impact

Even if you're able to get the dysfunction out of your sales team, it doesn't mean you've necessarily created a high-impact team. There are some strategies that will help move your team in the right direction once you've solved for dysfunction.

Create excitement around the pipeline: Develop leads at every stage and ensure your team is confident about the pipeline.

Rally around a simple, single concept: Be focused and constant in reinforcing a single concept for a selling period (typically a quarter) so your team knows exactly what they

should be aiming for.

Protect your team: Make sure the entire company knows not to bother your team or create non-revenue-generating meetings or activities during the last week of the month or the last week of the quarter, respecting that killer sales time for your team. Rally the entire company around the fact that the sales team is generating revenue.

Coach for opportunity, not discipline: Reward your team verbally or with an email when deals are won or saved, or when reps hit their quota. It's as important to let the team know when they're doing well as when things are wrong or need to be corrected. Make progress public within the team and the entire company, and celebrate both big successes and small victories.

Create a two-phase coaching program: Sales VPs should meet with reps one-on-one for about 30 minutes each week to run through deal analysis and talk in confidence around their pipeline. To foster camaraderie, teams should also meet once a week to share ideas.

Separate the manager from selling: If you have your own territory as a sales leader, you're essentially competing against your reps. Pass off your accounts to your team and coach them on how to improve their performance.

Ridding your sales team of dysfunction can be a difficult process—but making it successful should be energizing and fun. By examining your practices, your people and yourself, you can develop a team that performs and generates revenue for your company. ■



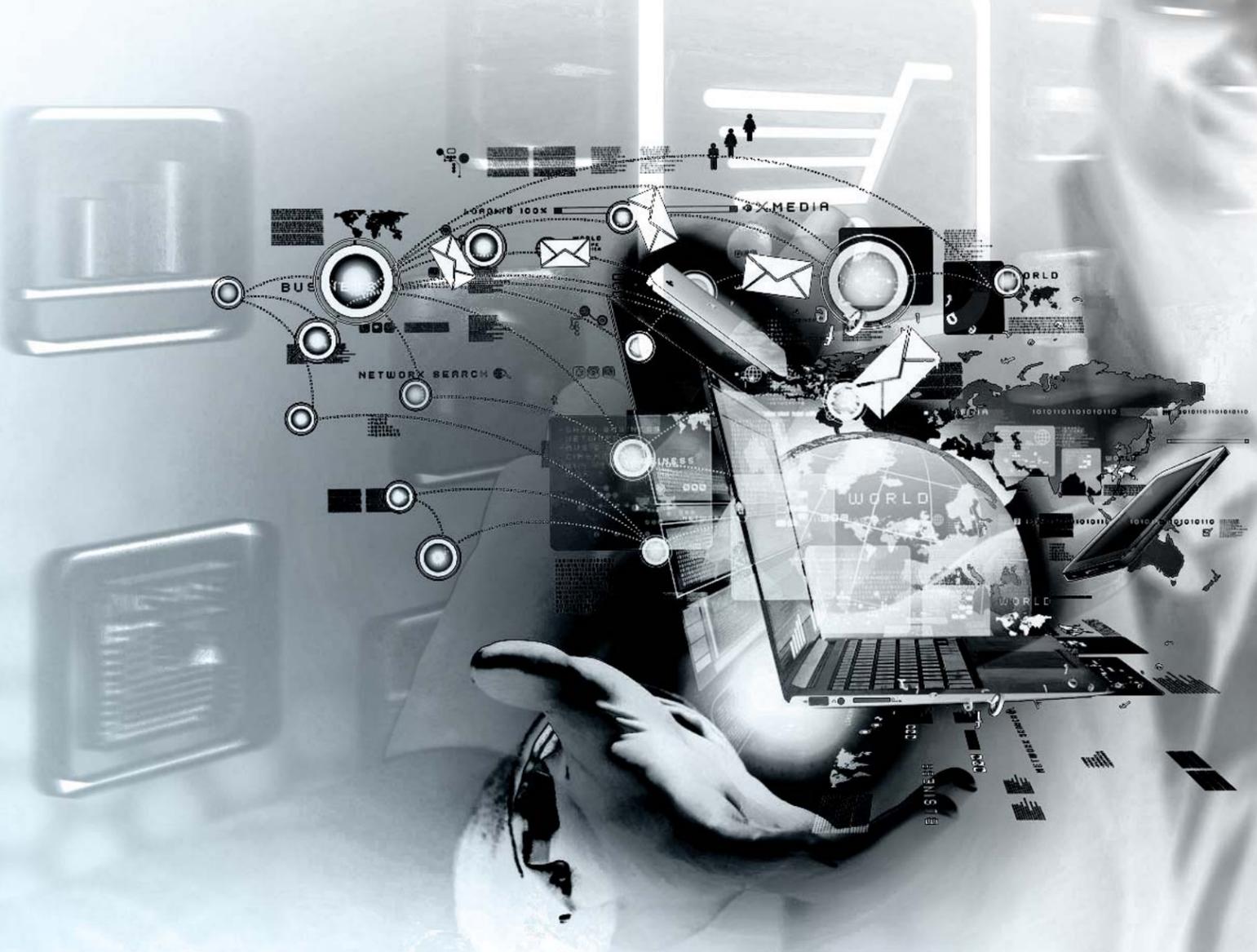
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What Is Sales Enablement, And Why Should We Care?

The term sales enablement has been a hot topic for the past couple of years: reports from Forrester and SiriusDecisions talk about its importance, conferences are held in its honor and no sales executive wants to be caught not enabling their sales team. But what is everyone really talking about? What is sales enablement, and is it actually important?

Part of the struggle with the term sales enablement (besides the fact that enablement isn't actually a word) is that its definition has been evolving over the past several years from the tactical to the strategic. Five years ago, most people would define sales enablement as providing sales reps with the materials they need to properly

represent the product. A mid-level manager in product marketing delivered all of the sales enablement benefit that the company needed.

But five years ago, tablets didn't exist. A salesperson didn't use mobile technology for much more than email on a Blackberry (remember those?). Salespeople didn't do things that much differently in 1999 vs. 2009.

But things are vastly different today. Almost every sales rep has a tablet, Internet connectivity wherever he or she goes and a vast trove of information about his or her prospects and customers thanks to technologies like CRM and marketing automation.

With that evolution, sales enablement has evolved from a product marketing function to a higher-order imperative. Borrowing a bit from Don Peppers, I define sales enablement as the ability, by any sales rep, to systematically deliver a one-on-one customer experience.

Given my definition, it's not difficult to understand why sales enablement is of the utmost importance to any B2B company with a large sales team. Executing on sales enablement leads to increased revenue per sales rep. It leads to competitive differentiation. It leads to higher customer satisfaction

If there was ever any question as to whether or not a sales enablement strategy is beneficial, these statistics answer it.

and lower churn rates.

And because of this increasing importance, companies are beginning to take notice. Sales enablement isn't just a multi-billion dollar technology category that ranges from training tools to mobile content management platforms, but it has also become a director-level job title.

Just recently, I met an individual with more than 20 years of experience in the sales operations department who received a promotion to this newly created role with departmental responsibilities that span from marketing, sales, sales ops and HR.

So where should executives begin when thinking about how to execute their own sales enablement strategy? I think of sales enablement in six categories.

- 1. Rep onboarding:** How quickly reps can be trained and begin full quota-carrying activities.
- 2. Time efficiency:** How reps can spend more selling. The average rep only spends 35 percent of their time actually selling.
- 3. Continuing education:** Ensuring reps are knowledgeable about new products and brand messaging.
- 4. Customer knowledge:** CRM software, the most popular being Salesforce, gives reps valuable insight into any customer account.
- 5. Cycle acceleration:** Activities that shorten the sales cycle, which can range from marketing automation to

turnaround time on contracts.

6. Content delivery: The lynchpin to sales enablement, being able to deliver the right sales materials at the right time on any device to ensure the one-on-one experience occurs in a repeatable way.

Due to the low adoption costs of many of these SaaS sales enablement solutions and the competitive advantage they offer, sales enablement is becoming a focus for a wide range of companies.

In 2009, businesses that invested in these tools and other resources to speed up the selling cycle saw a 51 percent improvement in lead conversion rates, according to the research group Aberdeen. About 54 percent saw an increase year-over-year in sales reps meeting quotas. If there was ever any question as to whether or not a sales enablement strategy is beneficial, these statistics answer it.

We're witnessing a software arms race. The companies that figure out how to evaluate, implement and execute their sales enablement strategy will spend more time in front of customers, sell more effectively and have happier, more loyal customers. Sales enablement is still young – there's plenty of time for it to grow, redefine itself and become a cornerstone of business operations. Your company can play a critical role in what it means to position sales team success. ■

To find out more about Daniel, visit: <http://www.seismic.com/>





The Changing Face Of Professional Management

Old ways of doing business no longer work. The increasingly intense competitive challenges of the world economy force everyone, everywhere, to adapt in order to prosper under new rules. In the old economy, hierarchies pitted labor against management, with workers paid wages depending on their skills, but that is eroding as the rate of change accelerates.

Hierarchies are being replaced by networks; labor and management are uniting into teams; wages are coming in new mixtures of options, incentives and ownership; fixed jobs melt into fluid careers.

As business changes, so do the traits needed to survive - let alone excel. All these transitions put increased value on emotional intelligence. Competitive pressures put a new value on people who are self-motivated, show initiative, have the inner drive for outdoing themselves, and are optimistic enough to take

reversals and setbacks in their stride. The ever-pressing need to serve customers and clients well, and to work smoothly and creatively with an ever more diverse range of people, makes the ability to empathize all the more essential.

At the same time, the meltdown of old hierarchies increases the importance of traditional people skills, such as building bonds, influence and collaboration. And that is as true for employers as it is for employees. The task of the leader draws on a wide range of personal skills. Research has

shown that emotional competence makes the crucial difference between mediocre leaders and the best. Indeed, emotional competence makes up about two thirds of the ingredients of star performance in general, but for outstanding leaders, emotional competencies - as opposed to technical or cognitive cues - make up 80 to 100% of those listed by companies as crucial for success.

Star performers show significantly greater strengths in a range of emotional competencies, such as the skills of persuasion, team leadership,

political awareness, self-confidence and achievement drive. Empathy, one of the key elements of emotional intelligence, is central to good management. It is difficult to have a positive impact on others without first sensing how they feel and understanding their position. People who are poor at reading emotional cues and inept at social interactions are very poor at influencing others in the workplace.

Empathy has become more relevant as the whole world of work changes. These are troubled times for workers - it seems that no one is guaranteed a job anywhere any more. The creeping sense that no one's job is safe, even as the companies they work for are thriving again, means the spread of fear, apprehension and confusion. An attitude of self-interest is, understandably, growing more common for employees confronting downsizing and other changes that make them feel their organization is no longer loyal to them. This sense of betrayal or distrust erodes allegiance and encourages cynicism. And once lost, trust - and the commitment that stems from it - is hard to rebuild.

If employees are not treated fairly and respectfully, no organisation will gain their emotional allegiance. Sensing others' development needs,

If there is anywhere emotional intelligence needs to enter an organization, it is at this most basic level.

and bolstering their abilities, is emerging as second only to team leadership among superior managers.

For sales managers, developing others' abilities is even more important - indeed, it's the emotional competence most frequently found among those at the top of the field. This is a person-to-person art, and the effectiveness of counseling hinges on empathy and the ability to focus on our own feelings and share them.

Research suggests the best 'coaches' show a genuine personal interest in those they guide, and have empathy for and an understanding of their employees. Trust is crucial - when there is little trust in the coach, advice goes unheeded. This also happens when the coach is impersonal and cold, or the relationship seems too one-sided or self-serving. Coaches who show respect, trustworthiness and empathy, are the best. One way to encourage people to perform better is to let others take the lead in setting their own goals, rather than dictating the terms and manner of their development. This communicates the belief that employees have the capacity to be the pilot of their own destiny.

Another technique is to point to the problems without offering a solution - this implies the employees can find the solution themselves. And people hunger for feedback, yet too many managers, supervisors and executives are inept at giving it or are simply

disinclined to provide any.

Virtually everyone who has a superior is part of at least one vertical 'couple' in the workplace. Every boss forms such a bond with each subordinate. Such vertical couples are a basic unit of organizational life. Therein lays the blessing or the curse - this interdependence ties a subordinate and superior together in a way that can become highly charged. If both do well emotionally - if they form a relationship of trust and rapport, understanding and inspired effort - their performance will shine. But if things go emotionally awry, the relationship can become a nightmare and their performance a series of minor, even major disasters.

While vertical couples have the entire emotional overlay that power and compliance bring to a relationship, peer couples - our relationships with co-workers - have a parallel emotional component, something akin to the pleasures, jealousies and rivalries of siblings.

If there is anywhere emotional intelligence needs to enter an organization, it is at this most basic level. Building collaborative and fruitful relationships begins with the couples we are a part of at work. Bringing emotional intelligence to a working relationship can pitch it towards the evolving, creative, mutually engaging end of the continuum. Failing to do so heightens the risk of a downward drift towards rigidity, stalemate and failure. ■

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“The Expert” – Why Understanding Your Customer Is Key To Provide Perspective

If you have seven minutes to spare, I encourage you to watch “The Expert.” It’s absolutely worth your time.

A customer has budget for a new marketing project. This project requires a drawing with seven red lines, which consists of two with red ink, two with green ink, and the rest with transparent ink – and all have to be perpendicular to each other. Their conversation with a service provider makes for hilarious parody on sales calls.

Understanding the customer’s context

The conversation in “The Expert” offered many opportunities to get a deeper understanding of the customer’s context. But the salesperson did not use the opportunity to ask a few simple context questions at all. The salesperson’s primary focus should have been to discover this context to create a common foundation for all. Why and how should seven red lines serve the project’s goals? How should they fit into the overall picture? If the salesperson had used this time wisely, he could also have raised the question whether seven red lines were the right approach or not. Instead, they were all totally focused on the task - the seven red lines. Even worse, the salesperson and the project manager did a great job to blame the expert who seemed to be the only one who saw the ridiculousness of the request.

Understanding the customer’s concepts

What was it really that the customer and her design specialist tried to accomplish, fix or avoid? The only one who tried to understand their concepts was the expert. He did it according to his expert role from a solution perspective, not from an overall situational perspective. Also here, the salesperson should have established a common foundation before even bothering the expert with some seven red lines. Even the members of the customer team were not even aligned at all. The design specialist had no idea of the overall picture, she was only focused on the lines in the form of



a kitten and how to inflate a balloon, surrounded by having no idea what perpendicularity means in the first place.

World Class sales performers

According to our Miller Heiman 2014 Sales Best Practices Study, world class sales performers don’t provide a solution before they clearly understand what the customer’s needs actually are. Additionally, World-class salespeople have a solid understanding of the customers’ business needs. That requires doing some research prior to the meeting, to define what needs to be accomplished in the meeting. As in so many sales conversations, salespeople focus directly on a solution without having accomplished a deep understanding of the customer’s specific context and their concepts. As we have seen here, those behaviors lead to nowhere. World-class sales performers lead a customer stakeholder network through such an awareness phase to be able to provide a unique valuable perspective that helps the customers to achieve their desired results. Then, it’s about discussing potential “seven red lines,” but not earlier. ■

To find out more about Tamara, visit:
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7 Elements of Winning Sales Communications

If you're in sales, you are always communicating. Your silence on a question that's posed to you is also communicating something; not something good, that's for sure.

Winning sales communications move the deals forward. Anything less will stall or slow down the deals.

The Foundation for Winning Sales Communications

It may seem like the foundation is going to be ability to write well. While

that's an important skill to have, the foundation is really is the intent with which you approach the sale. Your intention has to be based on three solid pillars of serving, caring and providing value.

A. Intent to Serve: Your first and final intent has to be to help your prospects

with their needs with one or more of your offerings. Of course, you don't need to sacrifice your needs.

B. Intent to Care: You MUST care for your prospects concerns as if they are your own concerns. Put yourself in the shoes of your prospect and look at the deal from the other side of the table and see if the deal looks fair. If not,

you need to go back to the drawing board.

C. Intent to Provide Value: However basic this appears to be, this is an important pillar. Your intent to provide value should be unquestionable.

With that in the backdrop, here are seven elements of winning sales communications:

1. Responsive:

Even just a handful of years ago, B-2-B prospects were at a disadvantage, overwhelmed with new possibilities and solutions. Today it's exactly the opposite. By the time a prospect reaches out to you, they've more than likely already researched potential solutions online, and they are much further along in the buying cycle. Sure, your offerings are differentiated from your competitors'. But as markets become more crowded with competing vendors, sales and marketing messaging is increasingly commoditized.

When offerings look more or less the same from a feature/function perspective, [responsiveness takes the center stage](#). Respond late to a customer inquiry or other request, and even with a reasonably good offer, you might end up losing the deal to someone else who was more nimble. Problem is, there's only so much time in the day, so responding in 10 minutes instead of 10 days requires the right tools and mindset.

Example:

"Hi [FIRST NAME],
Thank you for your inquiry.
Please find below my responses to your specific questions.
<<Important: Your SPECIFIC

responses here>>

Also please know that as long as we work together, I will try to respond to any call or email within 12 hours (and I'll try to be much faster!). While our solutions and services are unique in the market, at [COMPANY] we also differentiate ourselves by our responsiveness and dedication to customer care and satisfaction.

Best Wishes,

<<Your Name>>

Not only have you set an "SLA" for yourself that you can be proud of, but your prospect will now take special note of how long it takes for your competition to respond.

2. Right

The response has to be accurate on many fronts. This seems like a given, but think of all the emails and other materials that are riddled with "unintended hyperbole", exaggerating to the point that it's nauseating.

**Why is NOW so important?
Simple. If there is a fire in the building, nobody is thinking about what they should have for dinner on an upcoming date night. They want to deal with what they MUST deal with right NOW.**

A few examples:

- We build world-class inventory software
- We make the world's best burgers
- We are the gold standard in compensation consulting
- We have the industry's leading ecosystem of fully-integrated interfaces to all major functional applications and officially-certified business processes

Unintended hyperbole is on one end of the annoyance spectrum. On the other end, you have "willful misrepresentation" of facts to make your offering look superior to competing vendors' offerings. In the latter case, you might be able to win in the short-term, but only at the expense of your longer-term credibility and opportunities in the account.

More often, negligence is the culprit; sellers rely on content they know may not be the most recent or accurate.

Being right is often nothing more than ensuring that sales-ready content is easily vetted and approved by the right stakeholders. This shouldn't require circulating documents or lengthy meetings. More importantly, once vetted, the content needs to be readily accessible (meaning at the "point of use") at the front lines of sales engagement.

3. Relevance

The dictionary meaning of relevance is to be "important to the matter at hand." There is no "now" in the definition, but you better believe that "now" is strongly implied. What you send out or otherwise communicate

has to be relevant to the recipient's matter at hand NOW..

Why is NOW so important?

Simple. If there is a fire in the building, nobody is thinking about what they should have for dinner on an upcoming date night. They want to deal with what they MUST deal with right NOW.

In the venture capital world, there is a common (almost clichéd) statement – “you need to focus on pain killers, not vitamins.” This is very apt even in selling.

You can be relevant or you can be history. Your choice.

Example:

Rather than, “At ACME Lead Generation Inc., we offer a broad range of the most proven, integrated, and reliable lead generation services for businesses of all sizes”

Try:

“As a startup, I know that time is of the essence for you to acquire new customers. Your window of opportunity won't be open long to establish yourself as a true player in the market.

That's where [COMPANY] can provide immediate help to fill your pipeline with the right kind of prospects, and we can do it within two weeks.”

4. Robust

Robust means strongly formed or well built. In the context of sales communications, it simply means your response should be **free of fluff**. A response filled with fluff may “appear to be substantial” but remember that it's not the length of the response that

counts, but the quality of it.

Reading your communication should make the recipient WANT to take the next step. Your response has to **move the needle** and without substance, you will not be able to achieve that.

Being robust in your response is more than just being thoughtful; you need to respond in a way that addresses the “sub-text” of the question.

For example, a query such as “Who are your investors?” might be prompted by a deeper concern, such as, “How can you prove to me that your business won't die next year?” Being robust really means taking the time to think and answer the core question that may not even have been asked.

Example:

“Hi [FIRST NAME],

In response to your question about our track record, I won't lie to you by saying we are the most proven and established vendor in the market. But I do believe we are positioned better than any other vendor to address your unique business requirements, which I understand to be:

1. [bus requirement & how you address it]
2. [bus requirement & how you address it]
3. [bus requirement & how you address it]

And I know we can execute within the required timeframe, by:

1. Milestone A
2. Milestone B
3. Milestone C

To put your mind at ease about our longevity as a going concern, we were selected by [CUST 1], [CUST 2], [CUST 3]. And we were awarded [AWARD 1] and [AWARD 2].”

The above response is robust in that it is free of fluff, contains very specific and targeted information, and it also addresses the underlying concern of assuming too much “vendor risk”.

5. Respectful

You need to be respectful in two areas:

First, treat what's important to the prospect as if it's important to you. Every query or other request should be treated as special. However simple, silly, or common the query appears to be, there was a reason it was asked, and it's your responsibility to answer it with care. You might have been asked – and answered - the same question a thousand times, but the person asking the question doesn't know that..

Second, remember there is a cost of consuming your response. If your response is sloppy, overly-broad, or “not well-formed,” you just dramatically increased the “content consumption cost” that your prospect must spend trying to find the right answers to their questions or concerns.

When it comes to sales communications, always remember that “more or less is rarely good enough.”

The way to decrease the cost of consumption on the other end is simple – increase your own cost of preparing that communication with care.

But how can you scale if you keep increasing your costs of preparing the right kind of communications? All it requires is the use of the right tools and the mindset of content reuse. See how we reinvented the copy/paste phenomenon to address just these kinds of situations.

Example:

Instead of,

“Hi [FIRST NAME],

Please find attached [THREE DOCUMENTS] that I believe will answer your questions. If they don't, let me know and we can have an additional call to address them.”

Try:

“Hi [FIRST NAME],

That's a good question, and you are not alone in asking it. In fact, before we signed a deal with [EXISTING CUSTOMER], they had a similar concern.

I know your time is valuable, so instead of just attaching some documents for you to read through, I have crafted some specific responses below that I believe also take into account your unique business requirements.

If you would like additional background, I can provide you with [DOCUMENT TITLE], which [DESCRIBE]. Let me know if that would be helpful.”

This response is all the more powerful because it will put your prospect on notice that your competitor may (and likely will) send over entire documents.

6. Responsible

It is your responsibility to your organization to sell, but really it is your responsibility to sell only what is RIGHT for the prospect. In the long run, your superior selling skills may help you sell ice to Eskimos, but in the long run, that strategy will fall flat with seriously negative consequences.

No customer will be happy if the solution is not right for him or her. You can only imagine the long-term pain of having a lot of unhappy customers. It's just not worth it.

With every communication or customer contact, you have an opportunity to show that you truly care. It is your responsibility to use those opportunities to do the right thing by your prospect or customer.

Example:

“Hi [FIRST NAME],

I reviewed my notes from our initial call, and while I believe there is a good opportunity for our [SOLUTION NAME] to uniquely address your business needs, I need to do some more discovery before I can definitively say that we are a fit for [CUSTOMER NAME].

When we first engaged with [EXISTING CUSTOMER], it took asking some specific questions to ensure we were a fit....”

Not only is this a responsible reply, but it will likely lead to an additional

opportunity to engage with the customer and learn more about their business needs.

7. Remarkable

This is the final AND most important challenge for you. Can you positively surprise your prospect or customer with your response so much that they go out of their way to spread the word about your communication?

Can you make the response so memorable that they “subscribe” to your future communications – meaning they look forward to your future communications with an open mind.

My friend Corey got a set of questions about the [WittyParrot](#) product. There were about six specific questions. Corey could have answered those questions with ease. He didn't do that. He took some extra time to use our own product to answer those queries.

And the reaction?

Exactly.

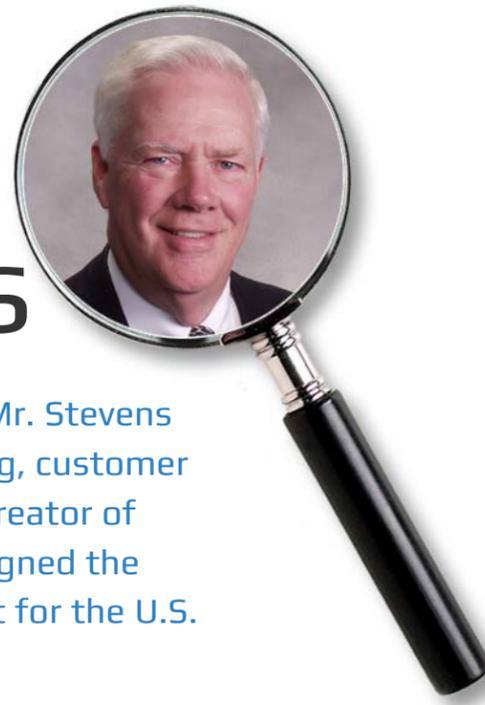
Wow was the reaction.

Remarkable in simple terms means to create an impression that is so good that the recipient of the communication can't hold back from talking (positively) about it to others. This is the foundation of Word-of-Mouth Marketing that can help you stretch your sales and marketing dollars

To find out more about Rajesh visit:
<http://www.wittyparrot.com/>



Focus On Howard Stevens



Howard Stevens is Chairman of Chally Group Worldwide, Mr. Stevens specializes in leadership development, succession planning, customer and market analysis, and sales benchmarking. He is the creator of the original sales product lifecycle classifications and designed the major 5 year longitudinal study of leadership development for the U.S. Department of Defense and NASA.

A licensed clinical psychologist, he is also known for his research and programs to develop a professional sales curriculum at the university level.

With diversified interests, he is the author of several books on sales and management including Achieve Sales Excellence, The Quadrant Solution (published in multiple languages) and Selling the Wheel. He has written many articles and is a frequent speaker and radio and television guest.

His World Class sales benchmarks

program has been presented over 500 times across 30 countries for corporations, trade associations, government agencies, and universities.

He has been a guest on CNN, Bloomberg USA, National Public Radio, Radio Free America, and other business-based programs. Mr. Stevens also taught "World Class Sales" benchmarks at the Columbia University Graduate School of Business and other universities, and serves on the Sales Advisory Board

for Ohio University and the Foundation Board of Wright State University.

Besides Chally, he also founded the Ohio Institute of Photography and is listed in Who's Who and many professional references.

He has been professionally associated with several Washington-based groups where he has consulted for the Justice Department, the Defense Department, the Intergovernmental Personnel Agency, and the Atomic Energy Commission. ■

To Find out more about Howard, visit: <http://chally.com/>

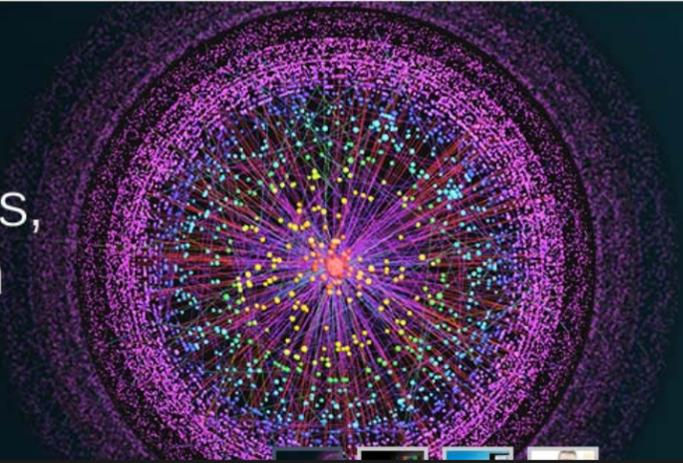


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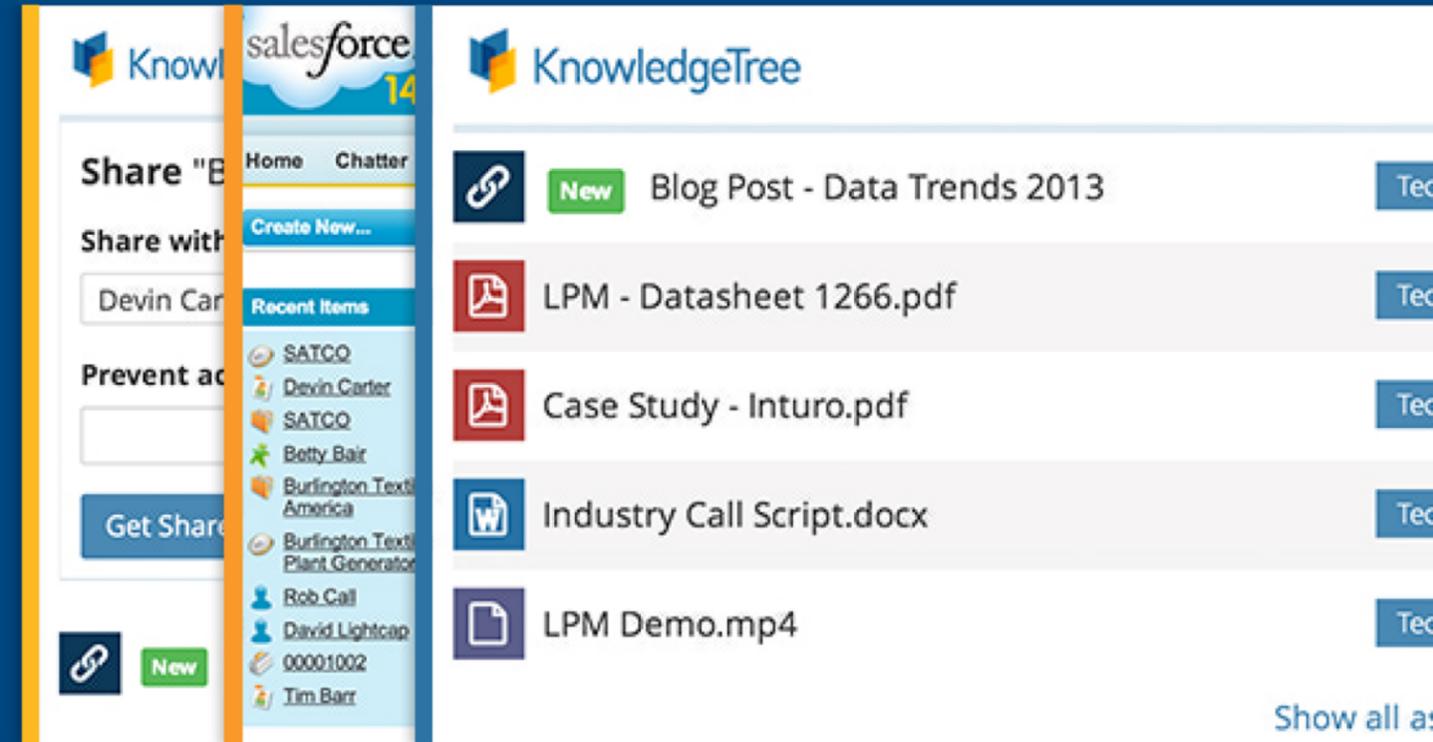
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Coming Next on Top Sales World

2014 Top 50 Sales & Marketing Influencers and More

Who really are the sales and marketing experts, gurus, commentators, authors and spokespeople who genuinely influence the way we think, sell and market our companies/products/solutions? In 2012 we decided to find out – not subjectively, or for that matter, purely objectively. And in 2013, we updated that list.

In May we shall again be using the services of a small team of professional researchers who will rigorously examine the credentials of five hundred possible “candidates” to arrive at the top fifty

The criteria we use to benchmark each individual’s impact within the sales space is:

- Social media presence – Twitter/ Facebook/ Klout score/LinkedIn authority.
- Quality, regularity and popularity of written work – books, blog posts, articles, EBooks etc.
- Active engagement with recognized resource sites.
- And not least, a commitment to continually advance selling and marketing practices.

We will be publishing this year’s list in June’s magazine, which will be out on May 28th.

2014 Top Sales Convention

We are delighted to announce that the inaugural Top Sales Convention will be held in Philadelphia on

November 19th/20th: The venue will be confirmed at the end of May, along with the incredibly impressive speaker line-up, and all other details. Please reserve these dates in your diary as you really will not want to miss out on what promises to be a superb two days.

Top Sales Library

The largest and most significant sales library is set to open its doors over at Top Sales World on May 28th. The shelves will be stacked with every conceivable resource any frontline sales professional and sales manager could possibly need: There will be videos, books, webinars, podcasts, articles, tips, white papers ... you name it, we will have it for you. All the resources will be filed by topic and also by author – all of the top sales experts in the world are contributing. This is, quite possibly, the most ambitious project of its type ever undertaken, and we are sure you will return again and again.

New Look Top Sales World

As well as launching all of the above at the end of May, do anticipate a brand new look and feel to Top Sales World. We are creating dedicated “areas” which will cater specifically to the needs of every salesperson – and manager. We will have Social Selling, Inside Sales, Consultative Sales, Sales Management etc. So you will simply go straight to the most appropriate place and find resources provided by experts in that particular field.

Excited? So are we! More soon ...



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