



THE CHALLENGER SALE: Taking Control of the Customer Conversation

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Overview

The challenger sales model is a novel method of customer interaction. Statistical data show that “relationship builders” focus too much on customers and are less effective than “challengers”. Challengers are assertive (but not aggressive), and always aim to challenge customers’ old ways of thinking. They aim to teach customers about their novel solution, destroy the customer’s old paradigms, and provide fresh insights. It’s not about what you sell, but rather how you sell.

“The real question isn’t how to stop reps from being too assertive, but rather how to get them to be assertive enough.”

Foreword

Throughout the history of sales, only 3 major breakthroughs have been made. First, selling was bisected: “Producers”, only focus on making sales, and “collectors”, look after existing customers. The second breakthrough, introduced in E. K. Strong’s 1925 novel *The Psychology of Selling*, argues that selling requires a specific skill set that can be learned. Lastly, a breakthrough in economic research during the 1970s discovered that small sales require entirely different selling techniques than large sales. It’s been 30 years since the last breakthrough – it’s time for a new one.

“How you sell has become more important than what you sell.”

Most people believe that forming relationships is the most crucial aspect to selling, but customers now prefer a seller who illuminates helpful, insightful, and innovative ideas. Good relationships are a *result*, not a *cause*, of customer satisfaction. The best sellers push boundaries and demonstrate “depth and expertise”.

“We live in an era where product innovation alone cannot be the basis for corporate success.”

Introduction

From a study performed with 6,000 respondents from 90 different companies, there are 5 main types of sellers:

1. The hard worker.
2. The lone wolf.
3. The reactive problem solver.
4. The relationship builder.
5. The challenger.

Surprisingly, the relationship builder was a *less* successful seller than the more assertive challenger.

Chapter 1. The Evolving Journey Of Solution Selling

In the last 20 years, solution-selling has become a reliable and successful sales model. It shifts from selling individual products, and moves toward selling product bundles, which meet a wider spectrum of tailored needs. A recent study by the author concluded that 75% of businesses sought to shift to solution-selling. Since the turn of the century, customers have become less likely to take risks, and remain wary of complex selling. To counteract this, you must prepare sales reps to generate new demand, pay attention to the techniques of the most successful reps, and be adaptable.

Chapter 2. The Challenger (Part 1): A New Model for High Performance

“A challenger is really defined by the ability to do three things: teach, tailor, and take control.”

When economies are distressed, conventional reps cannot reach their quotas and compete against star reps. How do these star reps do it?

1. *The 5 types of reps have distinct characteristics.*
 - a) **The hard workers** believe that time and effort directly correlate with results.
 - b) **The relationship builders** provide the best service possible.

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