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To nominate go online to www.ismm.co.uk/BESMA or contact June Kelly on 01582 840001 to request your nomination form. Nominations close 10th November 2014

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Learning on the job

Knowledge and skills acquired in selling determine its status as a profession



SO WE LIKE TO TALK ABOUT selling being a profession, or on its way to becoming one — but to be one it needs a strong ‘underpinning’ in education and learning. In recent years we’ve

seen a strong move in several industries to introduce, or reintroduce, sales academies and schools — and some of the best ones have ISMM qualifications regulated by government, in the shape of Ofqual. Many more firms are now playing their part, alongside renewed government interest in the skills agenda, in providing salespeople with a professional development framework.

Meanwhile there has been less progress in the educational field, although the recent announcement of a new sales leadership programme at Sheffield Hallam University, in partnership with sales training firm Huthwaite International, is most welcome, and it joins the long standing MA at Portsmouth as shining examples. At undergraduate level, a search on the UCAS site reveals only a handful of colleges that offer anything on ‘selling’ rather than marketing, and a standout is Coventry University, which has a single subject HND in sales and account management, and a BA in strategic sales management.

Interestingly, even in the US it seems that selling isn’t as strongly represented in higher education as some feel. As Bob Kelly, chair of the Sales Management Association in the US, wrote recently: “No matter the \$800 billion spent annually on the sales organisation, or its 20 million-large workforce in the US alone — top business schools allocate scant attention to sales-related education. Their few professors dedicated to sales do their work in an academic ghetto, in the bleakest corner of the marketing department.”

Well, there are certainly more sales courses relative to the population in the US, but not nearly enough for Kelly’s liking. He says things are worse at postgraduate level: “If top business schools are indifferent toward undergraduate sales education, their interest actually diminishes at the graduate level. Those top MBA programmes that address sales at all provide an emphasis ‘à la carte’, with elective offerings sure not to distract from marketing’s centre-of-the-plate status.”

Bright spots are selling competitions such as the World Collegiate Sales Open, held in the US (and which we carried an article on recently), and its national counterpart, and also a sales conference organised by

students at MIT Sloan. The common thread is that students are largely raising the visibility of selling themselves, as well as attracting direct interest from companies in recruiting them.

Given the great interest in competition here (think everything from Big Brother to Dragon’s Den) maybe a college sales event would be a fine innovation for us. The point though is that while there are more high-quality sales development programmes in mostly large companies, where salespeople have built-in time and support to gain qualifications (and see our various case studies in *Winning Edge*), many others are out on their own, making do with basic product training and the occasionally open course.

As our review of Jill Konrath’s book, *Agile Selling*, shows, so much today depends on rapidly learning so many things — not only all the stages of the sales cycle and, critically, what best to do in new situations, but also the intricacies of a prospect’s business and organisation. Above all, it is about getting into an agile learning mindset so “instead of getting bogged down in problems, you create challenges you can solve”.

Large companies obviously have an advantage in establishing formal and informal sales learning, and as Merlin Stone points out in his review of solution selling in this issue, much of selling in more complex industries is about teamwork, but someone still has to orchestrate the critical process of value creation as opposed to mere value communication. But in industries outside the IT and services leaders, there may well be many salespeople and managers who are not investing enough time and resources in the constant learning necessary to keep on top of rapidly changing markets.

We have been very impressed with the appetite of frontline salespeople working towards ISMM accredited diplomas to take on the extra workload that boosts both their job and career prospects. Anyone can sign up with one of our education partners to do the same, and we are busy providing seminars and networking opportunities around the country. There is certainly no shortage of top sales trainers and consultants out there.

When you add it all up, few other highly paid jobs have as many major and minor skills and as much knowledge required as sales, which is why it really is a profession.

‘When you add it all up, few other highly paid jobs have as many skills required as sales’



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LOOKING FOR A NEW CHALLENGE?

Recent research suggests that hiring for sales roles is on the increase

RECRUITMENT What do hiring managers say about their plans for recruiting sales professionals over the next six months? Recent research by specialist recruitment consultancy Robert Walters finds only 3% expect to downsize sales teams.

In a further sign of growing market confidence, the survey shows that 70% of organisations looking to hire will be focused on permanent recruitment, rather than temporary roles.

The report outlines key findings such as readiness to hire, the most sought-after professionals and popular channels for recruiting.

Almost two-thirds of sales hiring managers say the growth of their business or new business streams will have the greatest effect on hiring, up from 50% at the start of the year.

The biggest focus for those hiring will be junior or mid-level sales professionals, with 78% looking to hire at this level. But prospects also look good for more senior roles. Nearly half will be recruiting



managers, and a third sales directors.

Skills shortages are predicted to have a significant impact on sales hiring. More than half of managers feel skills shortages will make recruitment more difficult, with a further 21% uncertain of their impact on the business.

Using a recruitment consultant – preferred by 71% of sales hiring managers – is the most popular hiring

channel, outscoring internal human resources (59%), company website advertising (47%) and networking (44%).

Stuart MacSween, manager at Robert Walters, says: "Investment in sales teams is a sign that employers are anticipating further growth in 2014. As they look to build headcount we expect to see an increase in the number of sales professionals seeking a new challenge."

YOUNG GUNS GO FOR IT

Millennial salespeople reveal a ruthless streak

MOTIVATION With up to 40% of the workforce expected to retire in the next 5-10 years, a new study suggests that businesses across the UK will increasingly be shaped by millennials – defined as workers aged between 25 and 34.

This millennial dominance is leading to change. The research, by Xactly, a provider of cloud-based incentive solutions, reveals key differences in how millennials are most effectively rewarded at work in comparison with other generations.

The survey of more than 600 UK businesses finds that 46% of millennials prefer to be in direct competition with their peers, compared with just 21% of 'baby boomers', or those over 55. Furthermore, five times as many millennials have put achieving their personal targets ahead of customer interests in the last year in order to succeed, compared with those over 55.

The research also suggests a range of motivations among age groups for selecting a career in sales, with millennials more driven by status than other generations.

Christopher Cabrera, CEO of Xactly, says: "The research illustrates what we constantly see in sales – young starters coming in keen to gain status and make a name for themselves. As they get older, salespeople focus on finding roles that cater to their increasingly refined skill sets and take pride in doing their job better than others."

He adds: "Once you have these insights into how different generations engage in sales roles, you have the ability to recruit the best people and the knowledge you need to know how to motivate and reward them in the most effective way possible."

RELATIONSHIP FLAWS

Sluggish sellers leave customers in limbo

TECHNOLOGY While companies that use a top customer relationship management (CRM) system for selling are faster at contacting leads by phone and email than the average Fortune 500 company, they still fail to respond at rates that meet buyers' expectations, and so are missing a substantial revenue opportunity.

This conclusion comes from a study by Velocify, a specialist in cloud-based intelligent sales automation software. As Nick Hedges, president and CEO at Velocify, explains: "There is no denying CRM solutions have made a significant impact on the effectiveness of sales organisations, but this study provides evidence that CRM solutions alone are not enough."

Hedges continues: "A clear gap exists at the initial point of contact with a prospect. Even the savviest of CRM users are letting ripe leads die on the vine by either failing to respond, waiting too long to contact an inquiring buyer or giving up on the lead too soon."

The study finds a staggering 19% of inquiring prospects waited days or weeks to get an initial call from companies that use CRM systems. This suggests that, despite an estimated \$20bn annual spend on CRM, a major opportunity exists for sales organisations to improve lead response practices to drive better buyer experiences, increase revenue and improve return on marketing investment.

Talking point CONSUMERS SOLD SHORT

“Nine out of ten UK consumers believe most brands put more effort into attracting new customers than into looking after existing buyers. This leaves customers feeling frustrated, with 49% even considering a switch in their loyalties if a provider's special offers are only available to new customers.”

Source: Study by **The Grass Roots Group**, a provider of employee and customer engagement solutions

COACHING STILL NOT UNIVERSAL

Many companies are not embedding coaching in the salesforce

DEVELOPMENT A global survey by Forum EMEA and the Sales Management Association has found that a quarter of managers are still not coaching their sales teams despite admitting that coaching is the single most important tool for driving sales performance.

The research, 'Measuring sales management's coaching impact,' has data from over 200 companies, employing a total of more than 500,000 salespeople. It finds that the main obstacles to effective coaching are that managers are too busy, don't know how to coach, aren't expected to coach and are not held accountable for coaching.

Those that do coach often do it badly, with little structure, vision or purpose. The report

shows that, on average, sales coaching is given more to underperformers, new starters or those that specifically request it, revealing that managers tend to coach more when they have to rather than as part of their daily management routine.

"Managers are using coaching to raise poor performance to acceptable levels rather than as a positive management intervention with predefined objectives and a focus to elevate performance across all salespeople," says Forum. High performing companies provide 15–20% more coaching than underperforming organisations, it adds.

Look out for a comment article on this research in the next *Winning Edge*.

SALES PROS GET A READING LIST

Pipelinr provides a new sales library

RESOURCES Los Angeles-based Pipelinr CRM has created a public sales reference library for sales teams, managers and students of the sales profession. The library aims to be a resource for practical information, trends, techniques, strategies and advice from sales professionals, experts and Pipelinr partners, with content written to be informative while also entertaining.

Pipelinr recognises that automation requires the B2B salesperson to be more of a consultant than in the past. Traditional interruption techniques, such as cold-calling, are less effective, while content marketing is changing the way prospects find information and decide what products and services they need. At the same time, social search has allowed prospects to get instant feedback, opinions and recommendations from other customers.

"In order to compete in this changing landscape, the salesperson must have a high level of expertise to gain the prospect's trust in the company, the product and the salesperson themselves," says Nikolaus Kimla, CEO of Pipelinr CRM.

He continues: "We have a passionate belief in education and helping others to succeed. We are committed to being a centre of excellence for information, advice and debate around sales topics and trends and we're pleased to launch this unique sales reference library as a first step to a much broader educational initiative."

Kimla has added to the library himself, penning a new ebook, *Evolution in progress: How the entrepreneur is changing the world*, which explains his belief that entrepreneurs are at the forefront of an evolution in sales thinking. You can download it free from pipelinersales.com/library

Unhappy customers

Consumers are the least satisfied they've been with their customer experience since January 2011, according to the **Institute of Customer Service's UK Customer Satisfaction Index**. In the past year, only ten organisations in the top 50 have improved on their performance. **John Lewis** and **Amazon** are top.

Joining the dotcoms

A study by **Fasthosts Internet** finds that most British consumers welcome new domain names currently being launched, as they make it easier to identify companies on the net. Some 66% want companies to adopt sector-specific domains such as 'pub'.

Territory tool

A UK start-up, **Open Door Logistics**, has launched **Studio**, a free software app for sales territory design, management and mapping. Visit www.opendoorlogistics.com

Not only in America

DiscoverOrg, a provider of IT sales leads intelligence used by many US technology vendors, has grown its database to include UK organisations. Visit www.discoverorg.com

Magnum opus

US sales performance specialist **Chally** has published **The Future of Selling**, a nine-volume series offering "an encyclopaedic view of sales research." Visit www.chally.com

Antisocial behaviour

One in five UK businesses has yet to develop any sort of social media strategy, according to a report from direct marketing specialist **Catalogues 4 Business**.

Blasé buyers

Two-thirds of consumers believe the internet and social media have little or no influence over their buying behaviour, according to a study by email and digital marketing provider, **Pure360**. Only a quarter admit to taking notice of marketing messages.

Randstad and BESMA

Recruitment firm **Randstad**, which has a sales and business support arm and is a top five UK agency, is sponsoring the 'Customer Service Team of the Year' category at the ISMM's British Excellence in Sales and Marketing Awards (BESMA).

Growth driver

Avention, a leader in sales and marketing enablement and business information solutions, has appointed **Steve Pogorzelski** as its new CEO.

Price points

DAVID ABBOTT explains how understanding your customer's thinking can help you get a better price

THE PRICE CONVERSATION is usually the hardest part of any sales negotiation. You've met the customer's requirements or you wouldn't have reached that discussion, and I'm sure your particular product or service is fabulous with loads of unique features that differentiate it from the competition.

And then the negotiation follows a familiar path. You mention your price, and the customer sucks their teeth, looks you in the eye and tells you you're too expensive. Then they ask what you can do to make it cheaper.

Wouldn't it be nice if you could move the customer to a higher price before negotiations begin? You can, and it's all about the psychology of how we decide what something should cost.

'Wouldn't it be nice if you could move the customer to a higher price before negotiations begin?'

First of all, it's essential to realise that there is no intrinsic price for anything. There is no law of the universe that states that a string of pearls must cost £x, or cups of coffee are £y. As has often been said, the price of anything is what the customer is prepared to pay for it.

That, however, simply begs the question. What we really want to understand is how customers decide just what they are prepared to pay, and they do so using something called 'heuristics'. This is a fancy way of saying 'rules of thumb', or instinct or gut feeling if you prefer.

We like to think we are as logical as *Star Trek's* Spock, but that's just not the case. This is true for business-to-business sales almost as much as for consumer sales. There are innumerable examples where factors other than price influence the final sale – such as the relationship, a desire to avoid personal risk ('no one ever got fired for buying IBM') and the need to make rapid decisions when time is pressing.

If you still need convincing that professional B2B buyers are influenced by human factors, consider research into another group of highly-trained professionals who should be completely objective in their decision-making – judges. Researchers studied over 1,100 parole hearings heard by a number of judges over a ten month period. You would expect the judges to base their decisions on factors such as the severity of the offence, the behaviour of the offender, or the availability of a rehabilitation programme, but no, the greatest factor influencing their decision was how recently they had had a break... Immediately after a break they agreed to parole applications about 65% of the time, but this declined to almost zero during each 2-3 hour session.

So how do people actually make decisions about prices? Here are three of the 'rules of thumb' they use: **Price relativity:** First, customers compare one price with another. This seems obvious, but too often the customers are left to decide what to compare your



price against, usually choosing competing products whether they are as suitable as yours or not. Instead, you should guide the customer's comparison process by giving them alternatives to compare against that make the price for the item you expect them to buy look like excellent value for money. You don't expect them to choose the alternatives – you just want to give them the comparison points.

Price anchors: A price anchor is a number that the customer already has in their head. For example, a Londoner has an anchor for house prices that makes homes in the North seem ludicrously cheap. Conversely, a northerner looking for London properties will find prices exorbitant. Amazingly, price anchors can be completely arbitrary. When a customer is exposed to a number for a while, whatever it might be, it influences the price they will consider paying for something. The random number forms a temporary anchor. How might this work in practice? If your item costs £1,500, calling it the Gizmo 2500 means the '2500' creates a short-term anchor, and the actual price of £1,500 seems cheap. Alternatively, plant a number immediately before a price discussion, for example saying, "This will be the 2,500th unit sold."

Price vs value: Prices themselves communicate something about the product's value. I was involved with testing a B2B mailing with three versions, each to a third of the database. One version had our normal prices, one discounted prices and one higher prices. Amazingly, the version with higher prices outsold the others. People are reassured because they assume higher prices mean higher quality. Try starting with a higher price and see what happens.

So, try at least one of these three things before getting to the knotty face-to-face price discussion: give customers something to compare your price with (but don't let them decide what); try to create a price anchor higher than your actual price; and sometimes just try a higher price.

David Abbott is founder of sales and marketing consultancy Insight Best Practice. Visit www.insight-bp.co.uk

Are you looking to improve the performance of your sales team?

Find out at the ISMM's 2014 Developing Sales Talent Conference (DST), Thursday 16th October, Ricoh Arena, Coventry

Developing Sales Talent is the only UK conference for those who are responsible for developing the skills and performance of the sales professionals in their organisation.

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- How companies such as **brother** and **SIG** develop their sales professionals to achieve peak performance

DST ticket price is £249 (£225 for ISMM members), prices exclude VAT. Ticket price includes lunch, refreshments, car park ticket and free entry to Sales Expo.



Our speakers



Professor Nick Lee

Professor of Sales and Management Science at Loughborough University, School of Business and Economics – The Psychology of Developing Sales Talent



Stephen Wright

CEO of the Federation of Awarding Bodies – How to use National Occupational Standards and units from the Qualifications Credit Framework to provide a solid foundation for sales skills development



John Allison

UK Sales, Training & Development Manager SIG – Commitment and Passion for Talent Development: Is it Enough?



Phil Jones

Multi-award winning business leader and Managing Director of Technology giant Brother UK Ltd, Phil will be unlocking his secrets around successful selling



Ben Turner

ISMM – How Sales Academies are partnering with the ISMM across the world to develop sales professionals ...plus the latest news and information on ISMM sales qualifications



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On the move

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Computer, meet car

"Automotive supercomputer meets state-of-the-art sports car," says Audi about its 'all-new' TT, which can be ordered now from £29,770. There are two models – Sport and S line – and both include a 'virtual cockpit', which is based around a 12.3-inch display that completely fills the driver's instrument binnacle and replaces traditional analogue dials. You can choose between two modes: in classic view, the speedometer and rev counter are in the foreground; in 'infotainment' mode the virtual instruments are smaller. Sport models also include a multimedia interface with a touchpad for fingertip data entry, navigation preparation, the Audi music interface and Bluetooth connectivity. There is of course a quattro option.

Glass wear

Google has launched its Google Glass smartglasses in the UK, via the Google Glass Explorer programme, which is a sort of beta test for intrepid souls. "The Explorer programme lets people from all walks of life play an active role in shaping Glass ahead of a wider consumer launch," says Google. In case you've not heard, these glasses connect to your smartphone and have a head-up display that gives you hands-free info. You can get one now by going to google.co.uk/glass – but you'll need a cool £1,000 to get one. Maybe your team can club together – it'll make sales visits interesting.



Chrome bumper

Acer's Chromebook 13 fills a neat gap in the low cost portable market, combining a 13 inch screen with the 'lightweight' computing features of Google's system. As such it gives you more screen than all those 11 inchers but you don't have to move up to a cheap 15 inch, with all that means in poor battery life. This new Acer has a choice of high and low res displays, at least 11.5 hours battery life, 4 GB ram and 32 GB storage, driven by a Nvidia Tegra K1 processor, which is the key ingredient. Of course, you could always get a 13 inch Macbook Air – but it's costly. The Acer should be out here shortly.



Note perfect

Classy notebook maker Moleskine – yes the print note-taking specialist – has designed a series of notebooks that work with Livescribe smartpens to capture and transfer notes and images from paper to a computer or mobile device, giving you the ability to access your scribbles whenever you need them. You can also use Livescribe smartpens to record audio linked to written notes, and can even tag and flag items simply by tapping the on-page icons with the tip of the pen. Livescribe's latest model, the Livescribe 3 smartpen, connects to an iOS device via Bluetooth; other models are available. See Moleskine's site for details.



ROUND-UP



Beam engine

The latest projector to join the portable club is LG's Bluetooth MiniBeam, or model PW700, as it is designated. LG says it's capable of "projecting clear, vibrant images on any flat surface and can stream high-quality sound wirelessly to any compatible audio system". This tiny projector measures 172 mm x 117 mm and weighs just 580 g but it puts out a sizeable 700 ANSI Lumens of brightness with a 100,000:1 contrast ratio and 1280 x 800 resolution, and screen sharing options such as WiDi, Miracast and HDMI make accessing content stored on other devices easy. It should be out now.

Ready, headset, go

Bluetooth headphones brand, iT7 Audio, has launched an upgraded version of its around-the-head sports headphones, the iT7s2. The initial iT7s were endorsed by various sports personalities, but these headphones are also good for anyone on the move, as looped around the back of your head means that they are unobtrusive and you can make and take phone calls on the go using the built-in microphone. A rechargeable battery gives up to 8 hours' sound.



Well rounded

Don't be fooled by the look of this watch – it's actually got a screen and is one of the new wave of smart watches, and this Motorola Moto 360 has a much nicer round design than the square ones that seem to be more prevalent. It's powered by the Android Wear interface, and "with just a twist of the wrist you can see who's emailing or calling, what time your next meeting is or a friend's latest social post". It's also got voice control. It's due for launch imminently, we hear, and could be the smart watch everyone wants – until Apple's that is.



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Keep it real

Even ‘accidental’ leaders can rise to the challenge, says **GRAHAM JONES**

Have you ever considered why people get promoted to leadership and senior management positions in sales and marketing? Unsurprisingly, it is generally because they are good at selling and marketing. But this presents a problem: sales and marketing skills, experience and expertise do not guarantee that people have the desire and ability to deal with what at times can seem like an overwhelming challenge — leading people.

The expectations of their people and of themselves can be enormous, to the extent that they may secretly wonder if they are up to it. Some people who find themselves in leadership positions may not actually want to be leaders at all. I have come across several star sales performers who have struggled with the added expectations of a promotion that means they have to step up to be leaders as well. Unfortunately for all concerned, many of them are accidents just waiting to happen.

This is where the motives and mindsets of leaders are critical in determining their impact and tenure. My experience of coaching and working with leaders and senior managers has led me to realise that there are two broad sets of motives for being a leader that drive different behaviours and result in different impacts on organisations. I have consequently identified two types of leader, which I refer to as ‘real’ and ‘safe’.

Real and safe leaders exist on a continuum. At one extreme, safe leaders are driven so much by their need for rewards, and the status and power that comes with being ‘the boss’, that they are unwilling to put themselves on the line because of the threat of losing their position if they get it wrong. Safe leaders keep their heads out of the firing line; they are risk-averse and there is little or no innovation or challenging of orthodoxy during their tenure. In sales, they perpetuate the stereotypical focus on delivering short-term numbers. Safe leaders are also likely to allow the star performers to get away with behaviours that are detrimental to the team, tolerating a focus on their own targets and success sometimes at the expense of those of the team.

At the other extreme, real leaders are driven by the challenge and opportunity to put themselves out there and make a difference. Real leaders are highly visible and make things happen. Their focus may still be on hitting short-term sales targets, but they also spend time considering the future and the opportunities that lie ahead. They encourage challenge, innovation and risk-taking, as well as tackling tough issues as soon as they arise. And they are not afraid of confronting the



‘Real leaders are driven by the challenge and opportunity to put themselves out there and make a difference’

egos and behaviours that threaten the unity and performance of the team.

So how does all this tie in with those accidental leaders who find themselves in positions they are either inadequately equipped for or do not want anyway? The key is that they have a choice to make between being real and being safe.

Those who have the courage to choose the ‘real’ option, and those safe leaders whose conscience tells them to reconsider, must possess a resilient self-belief and be able to maintain motivation when things are tough. They must be able to remain in control when

the pressure is at its most ferocious, staying focused on the things that matter and harnessing thoughts and feelings so that they remain positive. Bouncing back from setbacks and learning from mistakes are also crucial in becoming real leaders in the sales environment.

The mindset and behaviours required are not easily learned but can be actively developed on the job in a variety of ways. These include:

- Creating and communicating visions to their teams. This ensures they are proactive in focusing on the future and, by going public on it with their team, become visible and ‘own’ it
- Setting goals that are clearly aligned to the vision and will drive their day-to-day leadership behaviours. These should be in the form of process goals around ‘how to be’ as opposed to ‘what to do’ as a leader
- Seeking developmental feedback on a regular basis, rather than once a year during performance reviews
- Accepting accountability when things go wrong
- Having the confidence to let go
- Being willing to make mistakes
- Having the courage to make and own tough decisions
- Having the conviction to do the ‘right thing’
- Being comfortable with the visibility that comes with presenting themselves as a good role model.

Accidental leaders can pose a major potential danger to organisations. But if they are, or can grow to become, real leaders — who innovate, challenge unproductive behaviours, make the right decisions even if unpopular, and confront the hard issues head on — these are the leaders who will make a real difference.

Contributor *Graham Jones* is managing director of Top Performance Consulting. He is author of *Top Performance Leadership*, recently published by How To Books. Visit www.tpc.uk.net

Conversion conundrum

FRANCISCO MARCO-SERRANO asks how social selling can be measured

When considering your social media sales and marketing strategy, you may well be interested in three small letters: ROI, or return on investment. The end goal of any sales and marketing strategy is ROI, and in no way should your social media efforts be exempt.

Many communications, PR, sales and marketing professionals have started to utilise new social media channels, lured by the hope of a marketing Holy Grail, only to realise that they are lacking a vital piece of information: return. There continues to be a great deal of uncertainty regarding the tangible financial outcomes of investment in social media marketing.

There is limited benchmarking data available, and it often feels too aggregated and circumstantial. Although it is not my intention to discourage the use of such information, I always take the stance of following a structured approach to measurement, with readjustment of activities towards those with better performance. The key to success when using social media marketing is always testing, testing, testing.

The purpose of any company is sales, whichever way you choose to phrase it. Yet does social selling even exist to begin with? The short answer is yes, it has always existed. Although social networks have essentially changed the sales process, from both a business and marketing perspective, every action is still geared towards closing the sale. The sales process may no longer look like a funnel, but many other models have arisen, such as those representing marketing and sales as a continuous loop, thereby representing the consumer journey as a non-stop process.

People used social networks to interact before the advance of technology changed what we consider to be a social network. The actual concept remains the same, but there is now an increased dynamism of actions (buying and selling interactions, comments, complaints), more data is available to be analysed, and there are more channels to which one can attribute conversion. This last factor is the one that is currently creating the greatest hurdle in the measurement of social selling: how to attribute conversion to social media channels.

Although I may be somewhat simplifying the sales flow, as a business you need to understand how your target market becomes aware of your brand or product. Awareness translates to interest, which translates to



'The sales process may no longer look like a funnel, but many other models have arisen, such as those representing marketing and sales as a continuous loop'

'desirability', which in turn translates to action (in this situation the action would be closing the sale). In social selling, ie. the process of selling by means of social media platforms, interest can be measured by the number of page views, fans and/or followers, and the majority of social media metrics of which you may already be aware. The trick is then in adapting your measurement strategy to your target market. As per the action side, number of transactions, revenue, average price, unique customers and profit margin all relate to hard cash metrics.

This leads us to the crux of the issue: linking the upper side of the funnel with the lower end. In other words, have our social media efforts paid off in terms of increasing our financial results? Has our presence online (ie. Facebooking our ethos, Instagramming the catalogue, Tweeting our customer base etc.) had the desired outcome of stronger sales?

It is the intricate nature of both social networks and social platforms, and the interface with sales flows, which makes the search for an answer a complicated task. To begin with, not every exposure of your business or product to the potential customer will be purely online. For example, has Joe bought from us because he watched our YouTube video or because Laura watched it and recommended him to do so? This ambiguity continues when we consider that not every sale will take place online. In many industries a large share of the sales will be bricks-and-mortar transactions, thus making us further challenged to track the source of the conversion.

The positive aspect is the fact that we will soon have many tools at our disposal to help in bypassing these problems, from very elaborate statistical techniques (eg. marketing mix modelling, which FMCG companies are using to assess their ROI), to simple ones such as correlation analysis, the use of affiliate marketing strategies which allow tracing back the source of the conversion, or even, God forbid, asking the customer.

Despite the evolution of such tools, I would always recommend looking for at least one or two cases that may help you to assess the relationship between the social campaign and activity before you start applying more resources to the quest of social media ROI.

Contributor Francisco Marco-Serrano is lecturer in economics, and module leader for social media marketing in the DMI professional diploma in digital marketing, at GSM London.



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American Dream Selling

PAUL BLACK discusses the key differences between selling in the US and the UK

If Hollywood is anything to go by, selling is a passion deeply rooted in the American psyche. Whether it's Jerry Maguire, Jordan Belfort or *Glengarry Glen Ross*'s Blake, American movies leave us in no doubt that selling is a religion with devout followers aplenty across the pond. But should we believe the hype? Are they, as Blake's mantra goes, always closing? And if they went head-to-head with their British counterparts selling pens to punters, would they really be shown the money first, every time?

The truth is that there are indeed differences between the sales techniques favoured in the UK and the US, but there are also fundamental similarities. And if Americans' long-running love affair with sales has helped them get ahead of the Brits in the deal-making stakes, the gap is closing fast.

To learn anything about sales in the US we have to look first at the buyers. If a British company (or any other foreign company for that matter) wants to sell in America, it must first grasp that Americans prefer to buy from Americans. It's nothing personal; it's just a fact that the US has a special love for homegrown produce, whether that is soda or software. We discovered this at sales-i when we first entered the US market. We started by building our US customer base and learning as much from that process as we could before opening a sister office in Chicago. We now have a 30-strong sales team in America. One of the biggest lessons we learned during this transition was that if you want to come in and sell to Americans, you have to look and act the part. Luckily, there are plenty of ways you can do this.

While British buyers are open to unorthodox or unscripted sales experiences, Americans prefer a defined process so they know exactly what to expect next. Furthermore, sales cycles tend to be a lot longer over here in the UK, with lots of chasing, whereas in the US buyers and sellers alike are slightly (and refreshingly) more blunt. If a deal isn't up to scratch or they don't want the product, they'll say 'no' from the get go. In similar situations in Britain, as many of you know only too well, getting clients to make a decision can be one of the most difficult aspects of sales.

The sales environment itself has fundamental differences on opposite sides of the Atlantic, and this has a lot to do with the physical landscape. Buyers in the US are more receptive to distance selling, largely because in a country as large as America, face-to-face meetings just aren't always feasible. This style can be uncharted territory for visiting British salespeople who are used to using personal interaction to their benefit when sealing a deal. In the US, you have to know how to use a phone (or Skype), and many top billers will smash their targets without physically shaking hands with their customers from one month to the next.

Another difference, which has also been attributed to the feeling of ease with which Americans do business over thousands of miles, is the successful adoption of sales technology. Indeed, one begets the other in a cycle that has seen Americans first pioneer and then fully embrace online meetings and sales management tools to make distance almost an irrelevance. Back in the UK, we're coming round to these online systems and intelligent solutions, but when faced with the choice between a Google Hangout and a morning coffee-shop meeting, I'd put money on the latter being chosen.

These quirks have created two distinct cultures: on the one hand an American model in which management systems are better because they have to be; and on the other a British model that cultivates the growth of individual sales stars who are strong but personable. In the US there are more territories and salespeople to manage across state boundaries, so individual development can take a back seat when greater effort is required to keep the wheels running smoothly. In Britain, there has been no such tradition of finely-tuned logistics because it simply hasn't been an issue, but now the strain is showing. A recent Aaron Wallis survey found that 73% of UK sales professionals do not think that they are well managed or directed.

But it's easy to get too carried away with the differences when in fact there are many features shared across the Atlantic sales divide, and many tactics that work well in both countries. After all, the basic sales process is the same everywhere, from sourcing leads to



closing the deal. Likewise, the collateral that supports selling in America and the UK is in many instances interchangeable. Companies can quite easily syndicate products and their associated marketing materials across countries with only slight changes in wording or style.

So if you're a Brit starting to sell in the US, what do you need to know? First up, you must realise that you're not dealing with one country. Federal America is more like 50 countries, each with its own customs, idiosyncrasies and, of course, its own laws. Every state is different and must be approached as such. That means you have to modify your pitch and sales approach with every state line crossing. Then there are the little things, like using Zs instead of Ss in words such as 'organization' in your website copy, which can make all the difference. It bothers Americans to see Ss but most Brits will take it or leave it. Likewise, a misused idiom or alien catchphrase will mark you out as someone who either doesn't know the local lingo or simply hasn't bothered to get it right. Either way that's someone Americans won't want to buy from. Think about the bigger picture and consider every last detail to ensure you adapt to your sales surroundings.

Having started with the buyers, we should turn finally to the sellers and the different ways they approach their trade. In the UK, selling is often seen as a means to an end — as thankless work that relies on generous commissions to make it worthwhile. In America, the title 'salesperson' comes with a certain cachet and its owner enjoys the reputation of an entrepreneurial professional. It's aspirational and, as a survey by sales-i recently

*'If a British company
wants to sell in America
it must first grasp that
Americans prefer to buy
from Americans'*

revealed, it runs in the family. In America, 55% of salespeople who had a parent working in sales decided to follow in their footsteps as a first choice career. The figure was a mere 30% for British salespeople.

Sales is held up as a respectable career from early on in an education system that values enterprise and offers plenty of sales qualifications to its students,

with no stigma attached. That's in part because, in the end, Americans like to be sold to. When you look at it in this light you see that the 'pushy' salesperson is a myth that just doesn't translate in America — what Brits call pushy or overzealous, Americans see as characteristics befitting a dedicated, confident professional.

At the heart of American selling, as with so many areas of life across the pond, is a feeling of national pride that is much more profound and all-embracing than that found in Britain. Consumer preference for American goods is a sign of that pride, and a symptom of an incurable homesickness Americans feel even on their native soil. Selling in America is like a local custom with its own rules and etiquette that must be adhered to. In Britain, most buyers want an easy life and a good product without too much cold calling and hot air. In America, you're not just selling soda and sales software — you're selling a little piece of the American dream. And while your efforts to crack the market will flatter the locals, you'll only earn their respect — and their business — if you sell by their rules.

Contributor Paul Black is CEO of sales-i, which specialises in business and customer intelligence software. Visit www.sales-i.com



WHAT THE

CHRIS MURRAY asks purchasing professionals where salespeople slip up

Recently I posted a question on the four most popular LinkedIn purchasing and procurement groups as they gave me the opportunity to ask almost half a million professional buyers: “How do most salespeople let themselves down?”

After working my way through the answers, it turns out there are seven recurring issues that cause salespeople to lose sales that they really didn’t need to. I’m choosing my words carefully here. We’re not talking about situations where the salesperson never had a chance. No, these are the moments when salespeople actually get in their own way, hindered rather than helped to move the process forward positively.

So, in no particular order, here are the seven ways in which buyers say salespeople let themselves down.

1. YOU NEVER EARNED THEIR TRUST

The acronym EASE breaks down into the four parts of any sales call: earn the right, ask the appropriate questions, solve the problem, and execute the solution.

It comes from one of my books and we built foundation-level workshops around it. During the first part of those workshops, when we discuss with delegates what they’d most like to achieve, a large percentage regularly remark that, “I just want to improve my closing, that’s all I need really. If I could close more sales everything else would fall into place.”

Which is partly true. But the ability to close effectively doesn’t have its origins in the fourth quarter of the sales process. It starts much earlier.

Anthony Robbins tells a great story about a meeting with a client, who was a plastic surgeon. He arrives early



BUYER SAW

and while he's in the waiting room, he picks up a book that his client has written. As he turns the pages, he sees pictures of the most beautiful people on Earth, all surrounded by mathematical equations. This surgeon had actually worked out what it took to possess, and then to create, the perfect face. It turns out that, if the philtrum (the groove between your nose and top lip) is exactly the same size as your eye, your face is in perfect balance — you have the perfect face. One millimetre out and you have an average face, two millimetres out (according to Anthony Robbins) and you're butt-ugly. One millimetre out! Isn't it amazing that something so small can make so much difference?

Let's change the analogy. Imagine you're sailing from

'Why do some salespeople think they're being so clever?'

Portsmouth to New York and your course starts out just one degree off. That one degree error doesn't land you just outside New York — your little boat finds itself hundreds of miles astray, all the way up in Canada.

And it's the same with every sales situation you'll ever walk into. You must earn the right to sell to customers, to be allowed to progress through each and every stage with them, right from the beginning. Misjudging this by even the tiniest degree will see you end up miles away from a 'yes' when you get to your well-practised close, without even realising where it all went wrong.

Which is when most prospects say, "Do you know what, I'm going to have to think about it."



◀ **What the buyers said:** *"Why do some salespeople think they're being so clever? I see salespeople every day — how do they think some sleazy, worn out way of phrasing a close is suddenly going to make me change my mind?"*

"Salespeople should be honest. If they don't know the answer to a question they should hold their hands up and say, 'Sorry I don't know the answer to that but I will find out and get back to you,' rather than guess and invariably be wrong."

Solution: Walk in understanding that if you don't earn buyers' trust at the beginning and throughout your conversation and presentation, they sure as hell won't trust you with their money at the end.

2. YOU HAD THE CHANCE TO MOVE THE PROCESS FORWARD, BUT MISSED IT

Let's say you knew exactly what you wanted to get out of the call. It seems fair: who would call on a prospect without setting themselves that simple target, right? So if you knew exactly what you were hoping to achieve, let me ask you another question: if you didn't achieve that goal, what would you be happy to instead? I call this 'TIO' and 'BIO' — tolerable intended outcome and best intended outcome. If you set yourself both — and a genuine opportunity exists — you can continuously move your prospect closer to a successful outcome.

There's a great Og Mandino quote that sums it up perfectly: "Is it not better to aim your spear at the Moon and strike only an eagle, than to aim your spear at the eagle and strike only a rock?"

What the buyers said: *"Just because I don't need you now, doesn't mean I don't need you forever. But find out when and schedule a call, so you don't have to bother me again until then."*

"Being in a buyer's face constantly is the quickest way to turn us off, so give us some breathing room."

Solution: With your best intended outcome, you should always work out what the very best, realistic result of every call could possibly be — and then put your focus into achieving it. If it becomes obvious that, on this occasion, your goal requires a little more time, be ready with a tolerable intended outcome — the thing you can achieve that keeps the opportunity alive and that you're happy to walk away with.

Here's the only rule in setting a tolerable intended outcome — it has to be something that involves you, and that something has to make a difference and move the process forward.

If you don't hit a home run on your first attempt, by creating a TIO and BIO you take control of when you're going to get a chance to bat again. On top of that, your prospects will be expecting the call and you'll always make genuine progress, together with a diary teeming with opportunity.

3. YOU THOUGHT THE MARKETING DEPARTMENT HAD ALREADY DONE YOUR JOB

Can you imagine a life without PowerPoint? What would you do if you couldn't take a 'deck' into your next sales appointment? In the 1990s I was with a team who

launched a groundbreaking product, and we each received one of those triangular presenters that open up into a little stand for you to flip your plastic covered photocopies over in front of the customer. I'd never had anything like it before and, amusing though it seems today, back then it was cutting edge — and it meant for the first time in my career I could just speak at the customer rather than having a conversation about what they actually wanted. You know, cut out all that unnecessary selling stuff, and go straight in with the opportunity and price.

Trouble is, telling ain't selling...

Recently, I mentioned to an extremely capable sales team that they were probably over-reliant on their 120-slide brand presentations — which nearly got me carried out and burnt at the stake. But I reckon you probably know better. So ask yourself this: do you simply go in and tell customers what you've got — or do you find out what they want and then help them achieve it with what you've got?

Subtle difference, but enormously different results.

What the buyers said: *"Oh please, send in another salesperson with a slide show, heaven forbid we might ever actually have a conversation regarding anything to do with me."*

"Do salespeople ever look through their own presentations and work out which are the few slides that might interest me?"

Solution: Think of three great big open questions you could ask before you give your presentation. Three huge open questions that will lead to a conversation about their needs, gaps in the market, unexplored opportunities — questions that lead to answers which actually require a presentation about your product or service — and then give that presentation instead.

4. YOU DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO JUSTIFY THE COST OF YOUR PRODUCT OR SERVICE

I recently spent some time with an extremely senior group of salespeople from one of the world's biggest companies, who told me that sales success was essentially down to price.

No it isn't.

Take their business, for example. Ten senior salespeople, big cars, expense accounts, support staff — that's a cost per person of at least £100,000 a year. So that team of ten costs at least £1m to keep on the road — and they were a tiny percentage of the entire salesforce. When I suggested to them that if all their problems were indeed down to price — and that the sales team could make no difference whatsoever — then surely getting rid of just those ten salespeople and changing the business model to a click down menu on a website, would save the business at least £1m. If we did that, we could knock £1 off a million units immediately — if it was all down to price, then that's the problem solved.

They didn't like that idea at all. But that is the undeniable truth. If the sales team don't know or can't explain the difference between their business and a lesser-priced competitor then they simply become an expensive folly.

I hate it when a salesperson tries to be my best friend on the first call'

What the buyers said: *"What's the point of salespeople who are unable to justify their mark-up percentage and profit margins?"*

"Of course I'm going to hammer everyone down on price, that's my job. That doesn't mean to say I want tat! Receiving great value is what I'm paid for too."

Solution: Work out the five reasons you are better value than the competition and then learn how to explain that to your customers. Remember, evangelists don't try and tell you about Heaven to secure their place — they're already going. They tell you because they don't want you to miss out on paradise. That is how you should be with your product or service. Get in there and help prospects make great buying decisions before some con artist tries to rip them off, overcharge them or sell them something they didn't need or want.

5. YOU THINK IT'S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

Relationship selling is a strange beast and countless authors have made many, many dollars explaining to salespeople how to use it to their advantage.

Here's a quick question for you: Why do you think those buyers are entering into a relationship with you?

Is it because she doesn't have enough friends? Maybe he has empty seats at his wedding, or do you think they're trying to build a trade-only pub quiz team and they need you as captain?

Or maybe, just maybe, it's because they make their living by meeting people just like you and getting the best deal for the most suitable product or service?

What the buyers said: *"While I understand they have a budget for these things, I don't need constant offers to be taken to lunch, golf or ballgames, particularly if I'm not currently doing business with them. I'm a fellow professional, not a date to be wooed."*

"I hate it when a salesperson tries to be my best friend on the first call."

Solution: You need to understand that being a fairly affable human being is actually a prerequisite for the job. You have to be a likeable individual; you have to be someone that others wish to spend time with — that's a given. However, you're never going to blackmail a professional buyer into something that isn't right for them with friendship. They have a job to do; if you want them to retain your services, then give them exceptional reasons for doing so. Regularly give your time and expertise freely and continuously strive to be viewed as valuable — rather than simply likeable — by engaging in activities that they believe have value.

6. YOU'VE LEFT IT TOO LONG TO FOLLOW UP

It would have been easy to leave this one out and file it away into the 'that's far too obvious' folder. But it was mentioned by so many of those who responded that I thought it should be included on the list.

It brought to mind a sales dilemma I posed a couple of years back on one of the big LinkedIn sales groups, which read: "The prospect asked for your proposal to be with them nearly a month ago — it could have been the biggest thing ever for your team — but due to unacceptable levels of procrastination across the business, you feel too embarrassed to submit the paperwork and every day is another one further away. What do you do?"

To which one very honest young man replied: "We usually pretend we've sent it. When they say they haven't received the proposal, we apologise profusely and send it immediately, making it look like we've had it all prepared for ages...ha!" And clearly there are one or two buyers who suspect that he might not be the only culprit.

What the buyers said: *"There's nothing more annoying than when they don't keep their promises. If they say they will do something by an agreed time that should happen. Or if they have a problem meeting that deadline they should advise in advance."*

"Why do so many salespeople say they will get back to you and then not bother communicating in any way afterwards?"

Solution: Develop a time management system that allows you to differentiate between tasks that are urgent, important and neither — and the small number of jobs that can be classed as both.

In my experience, the majority of salespeople don't actually have too much to do — they're just doing things in the wrong order.

7. YOU'RE SELLING AT, NOT HELPING TO

When a customer walks into a DIY store to purchase a drill, what they really want is a hole. Yes, they need the drill to make the hole — but their main objective was always to create the hole, never to own a drill.

Most salespeople in that situation would start telling the customer about the range of drills available, regale them with features and benefits, point out why each drill is better than the previous one — and why their choice of drills is the best in town.

However, great salespeople would ask about the hole that the customer was trying to create. Why is the hole required? What material needs to be drilled into? How much weight is it going to have to hold afterwards?

Those simple questions would ensure the opportunity was turned into an actual need and then that need would be matched with a recommendation to provide the perfect solution.

What the buyers said: *"There are still too many salespeople who don't listen to what I'm telling them and just waffle on about their products and services without taking a breath."*

"I don't want to hear why the competition's product is wrong for me — I want them to explain why their product/service is right for me."

Solution: When you're presented with an opportunity, don't pounce on it and wrestle it to the ground like a wounded zebra in the long grass. Use those fabulous questioning skills of yours and listen to the answers professionally. Uncover the real needs that weren't visible at first glance, and then when you truly understand, deliver something that solves all the obvious problems, while helping to avoid some others that your customers didn't even know existed.



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CRM MEANS BUSINESS

The CRM market is still growing rapidly and a system should help you boost sales

The annual ISMM CRM survey continues to accurately track the main trends in adoption and use of this key system, at least if comparisons with other surveys are anything to go by. The baseline adoption figure of 77% using a computer-based CRM system compares with 83% in the latest data from CSO Insights, and our slightly lower figure probably reflects more smaller companies in our sample, which are more likely to use manual or no formal contact management approaches.

Of course, the fact that a company has a CRM system doesn't mean that all of its people are using it, and indeed CSO reports that although the overall installation number has gone up, user adoption has actually gone down, the first time this has happened in its surveys. More positively, about 55% of our respondents who don't currently use a system say it is in their plans.

As before in our surveys, the most popular system in use is not a commercial offering but a bespoke system, likely to be a tailored database, spreadsheet (Excel, of course) or email system such as Outlook. Of the major systems, by far the most used are Microsoft Dynamics and Salesforce.com, as would be expected (with Microsoft actually pipping Salesforce.com this year, which may be a result of its aggressive pricing strategy — although prices seem to have now gone up — and also strong functionality).

The box on page 25 gives a selection of CRM systems and briefly any recent announcements. In our survey, two offerings make a strong showing as 'others' that are mentioned — Zoho and Workbooks, with the latter we see getting very positive reviews at present, which is good news for the UK-based firm. Given the size of the CRM software market, it isn't surprising that there is also a steady flow of new names, and also some older companies that have not been especially well known but are now breaking through. An example in this category is a small US firm, Tour de Force CRM, which targets manufacturing companies, and appears in Gartner's magic quadrant for salesforce automation software this year for the first time.

In fact, Gartner says worldwide CRM software totalled \$20.4bn in 2013, up a very healthy 13.7% from 2012 (and it was up even more, 15%, in Western Europe) with "high levels of end-user investment in digital marketing and customer experience initiatives" as the primary growth drivers. Cloud, or software as a service (SaaS), accounted

for more than 40% of total CRM software revenue in 2013, and the top five CRM vendors accounted for half of all revenue.

Of the main suppliers, Salesforce.com is still out on top at 16%, SAP is second at 13%, and the rest are Oracle (10%), Microsoft (7%), IBM (4%), with a host of 'others' making up the other half. IBM looks to be tailoring Microsoft's Dynamics CRM, but IBM has also given a huge boost to the open source player, SugarCRM, by adopting it for internal use, booting out a massive Siebel system and sending shockwaves through the industry.

"The communications, media and IT services vertical industries are the largest spenders on CRM because they focus on large groups using call centre technologies," notes Gartner. "They also invest more to improve analytics-related areas and provide more consistent customer experiences. Manufacturing (including consumer packaged goods) is in second place, with these companies using CRM for product and channel management. Third-ranked is banking and securities, in which customer service and upselling to other financial products are core to growth."

There are now a lot of UK-based CRM developers, mainly aiming at SME markets, which indicates that local providers are valued as they can tune in better to local ways of carrying out business, particularly in certain vertical sectors, while of course support can be crucial, and there is also a wide range of UK CRM consultancies to choose from.

For SMEs, the most compelling reasons to implement CRM are quite straightforward: to focus on customer needs rather than product pushing; to improve customer targeting and segmentation; and to improve data quality. This is from a report from the US by Gleanster, which also lists the top three value drivers as demonstrating ROI through increased sales, data quality and cleansing, and managing sales and marketing campaigns.

In our survey, as previously, contact management is the biggest use by some way. The top five functions used are:

- Contact data management
- Opportunity management
- Campaigns (eg. email, telemarketing, events)
- Analytics/forecasting
- Lead generation.

Territory management, mobile working and customer service also figure significantly.

Note that there are also quite a few CRM offerings ➤



- ◀ that are free, at least at an introductory level for small firms and not-for-profit organisations. Two of the most popular examples are Really Simple Systems and Zoho.

Probably the best review site for software at present is g2crowd.com — it certainly has many insightful and critical reviews of mainstream CRM packages, but other sub-categories in 'CRM and related', such as sales effectiveness and proposals, only have a few reviews on a few products. Workbooks gets the best CRM satisfaction rating as of August 2014, ahead of Nimble and Salesforce.com, and it is notable that other high satisfaction ratings are given to products that are designed for the salesforce rather than other parts of the customer-facing team — these include Pipeliner, PipelineDeals and Salesnet.

Satisfaction with systems such as SugarCRM, SAP, Zoho, Oracle (including its Siebel system) and Netsuite all come lower, although it does depend on who's doing the ratings — analysts tend to place systems from the big players higher. But user ratings, now more widely available on the internet, are valuable and may indicate that use and acceptance by the salesforce has become one of the main factors in CRM success, although it may also be that many reviews are done by

disgruntled sales managers and not marketing and service people. But it does show that there is a lot to choose between packages — this is very far from being a commodity software market, although satisfaction is also measured by service and value for money as well as product features and implementation ease.

In the last edition of *Winning Edge* (July/August 2014)

we presented our extensive annual round-up of add-on sales software in categories such as opportunity management, proposals, business intelligence, and so on. It's a burgeoning list and testimony to the need for additional functionality to integrate with or replace a core CRM system, although there are certainly strong sales-facing modules in many of the mainstream CRM packages now as companies start to realise that they have

neglected the sales automation side.

In our survey, the most used 'extra' for CRM is actually buying in customer record lists and data cleansing — the latter being vital. Also figuring significantly are add-ons for contract management, customer satisfaction, business/sales intelligence, customer referencing and reporting and analytics.

CSO Insights looks at some broad 'CRM 2.0' solutions

In our survey, the most used 'extra' for CRM is actually buying in customer record lists and data cleansing – the latter being vital'

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in its analysis of what companies are doing to win more business. Top of the list is web-based meetings, using systems such as WebEx and GoToMeeting, with ClearSlide and Microsoft's Lync gaining users, although this survey is weighted more to the US with its much larger territories. Integrating web meetings with CRM though, to organise prospects, looks to be an excellent idea. Less used is salesforce collaboration, essentially social networks within companies using portals, with a growing use of tools such as sales playbooks to share best practice. Again, see the July/August edition of *Winning Edge* for lists of these products.

And coming in behind these are sales content

management, and configure, price, quote (CPQ) systems. CSO also notes that about 66% of its sample is using mobile CRM applications. And not least, there is the issue of user adoption, and here the quality of training on the CRM system can have a big impact.

If you have a great product and a great salesforce, do you need CRM? No, says one of our survey respondents: "We do not use a CRM system because we are flat out manufacturing bespoke engineering products. We all earn an immense amount of money from it and we have an order book that is running a year ahead — why would we want a CRM system when we already have to turn customers away?" Nice work if you can get it. ➤

CRM SELECTION

Act! – this long-established low-end system is owned by a company called Swiftpage, based in Denver. It is now up to version 16, which has new e-marketing features, and a cloud version is being tested.

Base CRM – a small-company cloud system said to have a good user interface.

BPMonline – a UK-based player that has won a plethora of awards, and is strong on the sales automation side.

Capsule – a small-business online system that is free at basic level. It is a UK operation, and the pro level is only £8 per user a month.

ClickHQ – a cloud CRM database system suite from a UK company.

CRMNext – this is a strong product in Asia and appears in Gartner's magic salesforce automation quadrant. It has a European office.

ForceManager – an application aimed at salesforce management, and the firm is a current ISMM partner.

Front Row Solutions – offers a strong salesforce system that integrates with or replaces CRM systems, and a good comparator for deciding on whether core CRM is necessary.

GoldMine – a division of FrontRange Solutions, this is one of the first major SME systems and a clutch of new features were announced this year in the premium edition. There's also a mobile edition.

Gold-Vision – a UK firm that offers a choice of on-premise and cloud. The company has

been running B2B workshops with the ISMM. The software is developed by a UK firm called Esteiro Business Solutions.

Infusionsoft – a US-based small business provider that says it is experiencing record growth.

InTouch – a small-business provider based in the holiday town of Weston-super-Mare.

Maximizer – like Act!, a longstanding CRM package, now up to version 12. There's a big choice of editions and it gets mostly good reviews.

Microsoft Business Contact

Manager – a number of survey respondents use this low-end system that is free with Office licences.

Microsoft Dynamics CRM – gets mixed reviews as the learning curve can be steep and it was not initially designed for the cloud. Like Salesforce, it probably pays to enlist a consultant to implement it.

Netsuite CRM – the company's pedigree is more B2C and ecommerce, so it may not be so good for B2B sales outfits. But said to be very powerful.

Nimble – a highly-rated social CRM system. It recently added a 'smart summary' feature that gives dossier-style information on contacts.

Nutshell – another well-liked option for smaller firms, but said to lack some functionality.

OpenCRM – a UK cloud provider, currently offering 2TB cloud storage for life with a subscription.

Oracle – has Sales Cloud, CRM on Demand and also Siebel, the one that started it all. There's a lot of power here and the Sales

Cloud in particular has many sales automation features.

Pegasystems – a well-rated player in the enterprise market.

Pipelinier CRM – this falls more into the sales tool/opportunity management category and gets great reviews from sales managers. We include it in this list to show that maybe if you are looking at general CRM packages you may be looking in the wrong place.

Pivotal – an offering with a very long history, now offered by Aptean, which also has another two CRM systems with good pedigrees – Onyx and Saratoga. The Pivotal suite may be the flagship, but the other two have recent updates.

Really Simple Systems – a UK company with a low-end cloud system that's well-liked, not least because it has a free edition.

Sage – Britain's only really large software firm has done well with its main CRM offering (it offloaded Act! and Salelogix a while ago). It added social, mobile and collaboration features last year.

Salesforce.com – the world leader and the 'big beast' in the field, it is quite expensive and users report that a lot of adaption work can be required, but its power is undeniable. The company has recently launched Salesforce1 Sales Reach which "empowers sales reps to connect with customers in entirely new ways" – such as with micro-campaigns, real-time activity notification when a prospect is exploring a vendor and a lead-tracking dashboard.

Sales-i – a successful UK player

that leads on sales intelligence rather than CRM per se.

Saleslogix – this has been passed around the industry, and has now just arrived at software giant, Infor, which has acquired it from Swiftpage for its cloud capability. Infor also has the Epiphany CRM offering, and majors on industry-specific CRM implementations. The Saleslogix name looks like it will disappear now, becoming Infor CRM.

SAP CRM – a big system, of course, and one that's made to integrate with the software giant's ERP suite. It requires expert set-up.

SugarCRM – has become a big name in a short time as it is an open source product. Users praise its low cost and flexibility, but not so much its functionality and robustness.

SuperOffice CRM – has tight Microsoft Office integration. It is developed in Norway and there is a UK office.

Vtiger – another open source player, with mobile apps, which has been going for ten years.

Workbooks – gets almost all four or five-star reviews and is noted for its flexibility and ease of use. It won the second CRM Wars, a crowd-sourced feedback initiative on 32 participating CRM players. It's also a UK-based company.

Zenlike – came second in the CRM Wars, and is designed as a sales-oriented system. There are no details on the company though at zenlikecrm.com.

Zoho – a solid performer for smaller firms. The company also offers a contact manager as well as its CRM system.

A CATALYST FOR POSITIVE CHANGE

CRM expert **FRAZER LEWIS** charts the recipe for success in a CRM project

THIS ARTICLE will be helpful to anyone responsible for implementing or improving a CRM system in organisations with 20 users and above. It's aimed at Salesforce.com users — that's the system we specialise in — but is widely applicable.

We flag some fundamental questions that could prompt you to take a deeper look into the way your organisation works and the realities of running a CRM system. Having implemented Salesforce numerous times during the past four years, I have noticed an interesting phenomenon. Very often, the mere act of embarking on an implementation project becomes a catalyst for much wider and positive change within an organisation.

WHAT IS THE SCOPE OF THE PROJECT?

Being clear about the boundaries of the project — what the system will and won't do — is essential. The scope should list project objectives along with the means to confirm they have been successfully delivered. Highlighting items that fall outside the scope is equally important since this helps to avoid 'scope creep' and generally manage expectations. Scope should also set the project timescale and budget. **POSITIVE OUTCOME:** If you don't have a crystal-clear project scope, you should focus on this activity before going any further.

WHAT ARE OUR BUSINESS PROCESSES?

CRM projects have a tendency to flush out any inconsistencies in your end-to-end business process. Sometimes, the process is not documented at all. Posing questions such as: "How does information flow around the organisation?" or "What are the trigger points for passing leads from marketing to sales?" can prompt fierce debates among colleagues. Clearly-defined processes are vital if the project is going to be successful.

Process means understanding how data flows around your organisation and the tasks people carry out in the correct sequence. It's common for business processes to be a mixture of formal procedures, undocumented working practices, trial and error and

gaps... You may find that people have invented workarounds to bridge gaps in the current system/process as the business has evolved.

POSITIVE OUTCOME: As an organisation, you will be clearer about the way you do business. Having described your process, you can begin to streamline and automate it.

HOW DO WE MEASURE KPIS?

The saying, "If you can measure it, you can change it" sums it up. Used correctly, CRM can be a powerful business tool that pinpoints the important business indicators that tell you how your organisation is performing. To set it up correctly though, you need to know what to measure. Every organisation has its own set of key performance indicators (KPIs) and you need to be clear what yours are.

POSITIVE OUTCOME: Access to business performance data at the click of a button.

WHO DOES WHAT IN OUR ORGANISATION?

Sometimes, introducing CRM into an organisation can uncover some fundamental issues that need to be resolved before the project can be fully implemented. A strength of CRM systems such as Salesforce is keeping data organised, interconnected and structured. People don't function in quite the same way. It's important to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clear so that the system can be implemented correctly.

POSITIVE OUTCOME: Making sure team roles are crystal clear will help reduce conflict.

WHAT SHAPE IS OUR DATA IN?

Data is a perpetual thorn in every organisation's side. Everyone knows this but until you begin to plan an implementation, taking a fresh look at the state of the data, you may not know just how poor the quality is. A CRM implementation will involve significant data work, so don't underestimate this element of the project.

POSITIVE OUTCOME: Getting your data in shape, and putting measures in place to keep it that way, will ensure that users will trust the system, since it gives them the information they need to do their jobs, including accurate reports and dashboards.

WHAT IS LIKELY TO CHANGE?

It is important to think ahead before embarking on a CRM implementation. Are you opening new offices, launching new products or services, acquiring another company or altering your business in a fundamental way? If so, this could have a big effect on the way the solution is designed and built.

POSITIVE OUTCOME: Thinking ahead will avoid heading down a dead end and having to redo work, costing both time and money.

WHO WILL MANAGE THE SYSTEM?

It's easy to think of the project go-live date as the time to celebrate the conclusion of a successful project, and perhaps review what could have been done better and draw up valuable lessons learned.

In fact, this is just the beginning of operational use and you should be clear who will keep the system running once it has gone live. This will include handling user queries, loading and cleansing data, creating and deactivating users, building reports and dashboards, and generally adapting the system as the business continues to evolve. Don't fall into the trap of having an 'accidental administrator' who has the responsibility of managing the CRM system as well as their regular day job. This is unsustainable and will result in the system becoming less useful as it drifts away from optimum performance.

POSITIVE OUTCOME: Ensuring there is dedicated resource for managing and maintaining your system will maximise the value your organisation derives from it.

ARE YOU READY?

Before proceeding with implementation, make sure you have covered the above points thoroughly. If necessary, take a step back and take the time to dig down into these questions. By assessing the answers, you will be able to judge if you are ready to embark on the project's implementation phase immediately, or whether there is a fundamental piece of work that needs to happen first.

Contributor **Frazer Lewis** is Salesforce implementation director for Rephrase, a CRM consultancy. Call **020 3397 4870** or visit rephrase.co.uk

B2B Sales and Marketing Alignment

Sales and marketing alignment has been a key focus for B2B organisations over the years. Despite this, their unification remains one of the largest opportunities for improving business performance today. Collaborative strategies must be created to improve marketing ROI, sales productivity and bottom-line. Here's some useful advice to get you started:

1. Build Trust and Communication

You won't get very far in your quest for alignment if mistrust exists between the Sales and Marketing teams. Hold joint meetings on a weekly basis to discuss recent results and upcoming activities. Emphasise the benefits of a unified team and create shared goals and objectives.

3. Agree exact Lead Definition

What does a lead look like? Sit your teams down and hammer this out from both perspectives. Create a document which outlines the criteria for a Marketing Qualified Lead (MQL) and a Sales Qualified Lead (SQL). Define a Lead Scoring programme and implement the necessary software to automate this process.

5. Close the Loop

Data is a vital ingredient for maintaining alignment. Establish a closed-loop reporting process to track your marketing and sales metrics. Share jointly owned dashboards on customer engagement, conversion and revenue. Using separate platforms to monitor customer journeys can become problematic. Empower your teams by implementing a fully integrated solution.

2. Define your Target Market

Create buyer personas which include information such as business demographics, decision-making power, pain points and media consumption. Sales can provide insights on existing customers to help with this. Once these are agreed decide on content needed to nurture them.

4. Create a Unified View

Give both teams visibility of activity throughout the whole funnel, from website visits through to existing customer activity. Marketing platforms collate top of the funnel activity but this information is most valuable when it is fully integrated with your CRM.

6. Conclusion

Despite the rise of new tools and technologies, sales and marketing alignment is still a key improvement area for many businesses. A culture of communication and collaboration is achievable through fully integrated strategies, systems and processes.



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TIME FOR A RETHINK?

STEVE HOYLE welcomes a revival in sales demonstrations, but warns of common mistakes

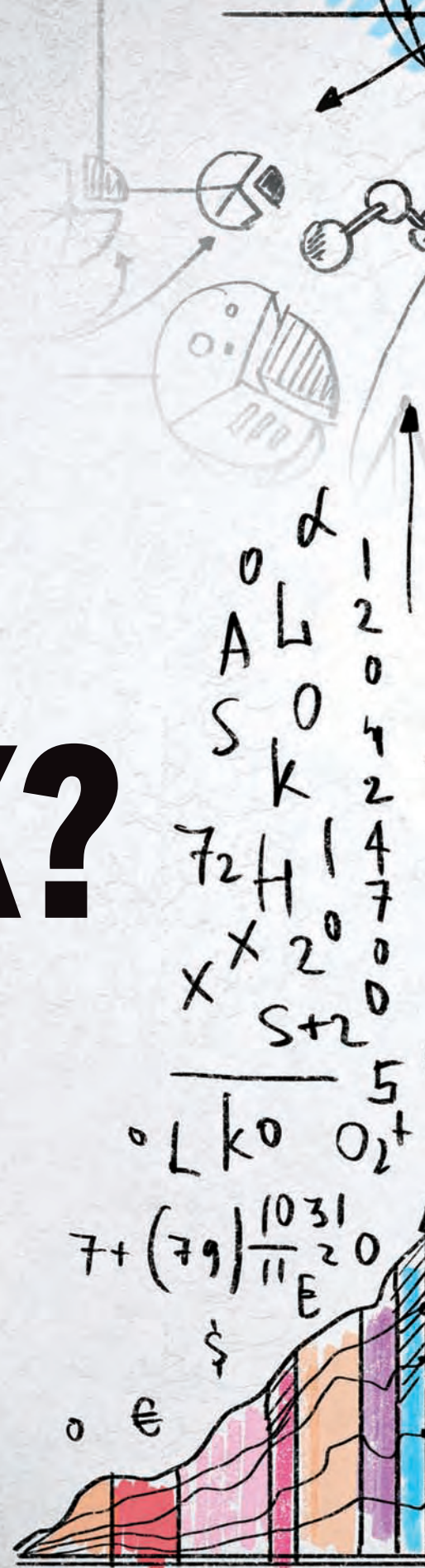
Demonstrating a product or solution used to be a standard part of any sales campaign but until recently — with the exception of a few sectors — it appeared to have fallen out of fashion. Over the past few years, however, demos seem to have had a renaissance. In particular, as apps become more prevalent, customers are becoming more discerning and, especially in B2B purchasing decision-making, they are looking more closely at business impact. In these circumstances the demonstration can be a crucial part of the sales campaign.

Having witnessed the rise of the demonstration with many clients, I recently polled a number of them to come up with the most common mistakes made by salespeople. In no particular order, they are as follows.

WRONG TIMING

Holding a demonstration in the middle of the process will often mean that it is wasted. Demonstrations are typically effective either at the start of the buying process, when they are used to plant seeds and shape the eventual requirement to your advantage, or at the end of the process, in order to prove capability, provide additional justification and give reassurances to users as well as decision-makers.

A good demonstration can be a key point in the sales cycle, where prospect perceptions are changed. By holding it in the middle, it is often too late to alter requirements that have already been formed, and too





- ◀ early to have a dramatic effect on the end game when decisions are finally made.

NOT KNOWING THE AUDIENCE

In particular, not understanding their issues, preconceptions, biases and position in the buying process. If you are going to the trouble of preparing a good demonstration, then getting a good briefing from the prospect is the minimum that you can expect. Not only will this enable you to tailor the demonstration to the needs of the audience (and your own sales strategy), it will also let you do a good job of preparing to handle particular questions or concerns/objections that will probably get asked. One key question is to put yourself in the position of each member of the audience and ask yourself, 'What will I personally gain from the demonstration?'

UNCLEAR OBJECTIVES (OURS AND THEIRS)

Probably the most common failure, which becomes apparent early in the discussion about an upcoming demo, is the lack of a clear objective. The demo is one stage in the selling process (and the prospect's buying process) and both sides should have very clear objectives for the exercise — often closely allied to the 'next steps' proposed at the end.

DEMO FOR THE SAKE OF IT

We often see cases where a good demo is given, but the sales team has done it because... well, for no particular reason except that is what they normally do. The demonstration may be a really significant event, but on occasions, by understanding what you and the prospect are really trying to achieve, there may be a better alternative — a reference visit, a loan system, a try-before-you-buy proposal etc.

USING A STANDARD DEMO PACK

In practice, many demonstrations might end up being quite similar, and there is a temptation to stick with what you know and are good at. But this approach focuses on the demonstration rather than the buying/selling process that you are actually engaged in. Whatever the similarities, all prospects believe that they are totally unique, and the demonstration should recognise this. Even cosmetic customisation such as using the prospect's name and logo can make a big difference in perception. Wherever possible the demo should be customised and tailored to meet the precise issues that are being faced by the prospect, and in a way that emphasises your unique or leading capabilities against the main competitors.

NO 'WIN THEME'

The demonstration is not an exercise in showing how clever you are at demonstrating (actually, it should look easy to conduct) but a key part of an overall sales strategy. Your prospect will not remember the vast majority of the demo — research suggests probably less than 10% — so you should decide what it is that you

want them to remember, both in terms of any key capabilities or outcomes, and certainly in terms of the overall 'win theme'. Imagine it is a few days after the demo and your prospect's key decision-maker is discussing the project with their boss, who asks what they thought of the demo. Your win theme is what you would want your prospect to say, in line with your overall sales campaign. Examples of good win themes might be:

- It does everything we want at the right price
- It is far the best in terms of long-term business benefits and return on investment
- The easiest system to use, with the least disruption to our business
- It is the system that should maximise the overall net promoter score with our customers, helping us achieve the highest levels of customer retention.

A strong win theme obviously applies to the whole sales process, and should be woven inextricably into the demonstration. Key elements of the win theme should be reinforced by being repeated throughout, and features of the demo used to illustrate it.

'We often see cases where a good demo is given, but the sales team has done it because... well, for no particular reason except that is what they normally do'

NO STRUCTURE

The demonstration should be an unfolding experience for the audience, with a good beginning, middle and end, with highs and lows and sections that appeal to different people in the audience. A good demonstrator will have storyboarded the experience as part of the preparation, and know exactly what journey they want to take the individuals through. Poor demonstrators allow the experience to be haphazard and random, with a

jumbled collection of points. Less effective demos have:

- No clear introduction, setting the scene or recapping the situation
- No clear process for answering questions
- No summary emphasising the key win themes
- No clear call to action and next steps.

TOO RIGID

While good demonstrations have a clear structure that leads and guides the prospect experience, some demonstrators then make the mistake of sticking too closely to their prepared plan. Remember that a good consultative/solution sales approach is much more about getting the customer to buy from you, and the demo should enable this. If unexpected requests are made, or if a particular avenue appears to be more fruitful, then the demonstrator needs to be prepared to make changes during the actual demo. This should only be made in thinking through the sales campaign. Is this a key influencer asking, or just a technician who may have a personal interest but is actually likely to derail the experience from the point of view of the individuals who you need to influence?

When making significant changes to the plan, one technique that many good demonstrators use is to ask the audience, in particular the sponsor/chief decision-maker/influencer if this is best use of available time.

POOR TIMEKEEPING

One area that needs careful judgement is timekeeping. A good demonstrator will make sure that the whole experience ends at the allotted time, but then the prospect may want to explore areas in more depth. A poor demonstrator will just let this happen — which may not be the right thing to do. The more accomplished demonstrator will keep checking with the whole group about who needs to be involved in different parts.

TRYING TO DO TOO MUCH

Many demonstrators become very enthusiastic about their particular solution and end up trying to tell the customer far too much about all the possible ways that it could benefit anyone. This is a common mistake for product or transaction-based salespeople who have not been trained in good solution selling.

NOT INVOLVING THE AUDIENCE

Many people will have read the old Chinese proverb: 'Tell me and I'll forget, show me and I may remember, involve me and I'll understand.'

The power of a demo is that it at least shows something to the prospect, but many demonstrators then make the mistake of failing to maximise the power of the event by not involving the audience. As a minimum, ask the audience to suggest inputs when required, or better still get someone from the group to actually drive the system being demonstrated, albeit with a good co-driver by their side who can take over the controls if necessary.

Some presenters have the mistaken belief that the demo is their opportunity to show off, rather than an opportunity for the prospect to understand how invaluable the system would be.

NO REHEARSAL OR PRACTICE

It is normally easy to spot good demonstrators — they are the ones staying behind late in the office preparing and practising, and then preparing and practising again. This always improves their demo capability, whereas lack of practice is equally easy to spot from a customer perspective, as the demonstrator stumbles through with little professionalism or flow to the event.

NO SPICE

While the demonstration should normally be relaxed and interactive in style, it will be compared by the prospect with other demonstrations, so normally you will want to add some 'spice'. The spice is the little anecdote, or the killer feature you can include that is memorable and serves as a turning point in the demo. Just as your win theme should summarise the overall messages that you want the prospect to take away, the spice elements are those high impact moments that illustrate the key win themes and will be remembered by the prospect. For example, in a demonstration of a particular piece of machinery where the win theme might be resilience to any physical attack, the demonstrator might take out a hammer and shower the machine with blows (or even better invite a member of the audience to do so).

POOR INITIAL IMPACT

An area that is often overlooked is the initial impact made on a prospect from the moment they agree to the

demonstration, as a recent prospect story illustrates:

"The whole thing was a disaster from the start. I had a postcode but when arriving at their facility it took an age to find their office and then for the receptionist to figure out where to send us. We were kept waiting in a cramped coffee area (no coffee!) while it was obvious that there was a panic going on about some aspect of preparing for the demo. Eventually we were taken into the demonstration suite, where a pre-salesperson looked very harassed and was trying to get something working. We started nearly 25 minutes late, and while the people were very pleasant and the features on show were actually close to what we required, we never really recovered from the feeling of panic about the demo itself, and the lack of interest in us as a customer that was evident from how we were initially treated."

Good demonstrators are meticulous about preparing every element of the customer experience. In spite of your best efforts, there will often be things that stray outside your control during the demonstration itself — such as technical glitches or unexpected questions from the customer — making it even more important to make sure you get the basics right whenever possible, including briefing your receptionist.

LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN USING THE PRODUCT

However good your demonstration technique is, unless you thoroughly understand the product, how to use it and how the features can help the prospect, you are running enormous risks. In practice, this means the salesperson, and not just a pre-sales specialist, knowing the product inside out. If you have to rely on a technical expert to explain key features, what messages are you giving to your prospect about your solution?

ARROGANCE

The flip side of being too confident in using the product is that the demonstrator can appear arrogant, a 'know-it-all' and be too prescriptive. The customer knows their business best, and the good demonstrator will show empathy as well as sometimes educating the customer as to best practices used by others, but has to leave the customer to make their own mind up as to how useful certain approaches and features are to them and their business. Making the demonstration overly complex is sometimes a sign of simple lack of empathy, but often of the arrogance of the demonstrator, who should be simplifying the product or solution as much as possible, to the benefit of the customer.

LACK OF BELIEF

While the demonstrator may know the product inside out, have prepared thoroughly and not be arrogant, any lack of belief in the product or its suitability to meet the needs of the customer will transmit itself loud and clear. If you don't believe that your solution is a good one, which adds real value to the potential customer, then either you need to educate yourself about it a bit more, or you should not be selling it in the first place.

Contributor **Steve Hoyle** is a sales consultant, coach, trainer, interim manager and author, specialising in helping clients to grow the capability of their sales teams in complex B2B environments. He can be contacted at steve.hoyle@linksdev.net or on **07785 381563**

A hand in a dark suit jacket points upwards towards the center of the page. The background is a blue-toned image featuring a world map and vertical columns of binary code (0s and 1s). Overlaid on this background is a large, white, sans-serif text that reads: RESOLVE, INFORMATION, PROBLEM, SOLUTION, QUESTION, CONSULTING, STRATEGY, ANSWER.

RESOLVE INFORMATION PROBLEM SOLUTION QUESTION CONSULTING STRATEGY ANSWER

CAN YOU CREATE

Some say solution selling has moved on to ‘insight’ selling but many are yet to make the key change pioneered by IT firms. **MERLIN STONE** explains how and why it works

In the dim and distant past, IT companies like IBM, Hewlett-Packard, SAP and Oracle were known for selling boxes — whether hardware or standard software. Today, their main focus is on selling solutions rather than products — and they make a pretty good job of it. But the same cannot be said for most companies or most other industry sectors.

WHAT IS SOLUTION SELLING?

Lou Gerstner best defined solution selling shortly before he retired as chairman and CEO of IBM in 2002. He said, “Our bet was this: over the next decade, customers would increasingly value companies that could provide solutions — solutions that integrated technology from

various suppliers and, more important, integrated technology into the processes of an enterprise... services-led, not technology-led.”

Solution providers help customers understand the issues and opportunities they face. Some of these are unique to individual customers, some are common to many companies in a particular industry, and some are required by every large company. Solution providers help customers assess how to solve their problems or exploit their opportunities.

Solution creation and delivery is performed in teams, usually by people from many functions, including sales, marketing and consulting. Salespeople play a central role in solution creation and delivery, but outside the IT and



VALUE?

professional services sectors many salesforces remain poorly equipped to create and deliver solutions. The role of the salesperson in many companies today is just to communicate product value. Many salespeople know little about the processes in which their products are used and do not understand the issues and opportunities they are being used to resolve or exploit.

To succeed in solution selling, you need the processes, tools, knowledge, infrastructure and, above all, people for solution creation and delivery. But barriers remain.

Traditional sales incentives may discourage salespeople from investing time and resources in developing enduring customer relationships — a prerequisite for solution creation and delivery. Rather, these incentives encourage salespeople to push products at customers instead of working with customers to generate value. Many salesforce measurement systems are based on product-selling business models,

encouraging sales of single pieces of business rather than continuing, growing revenue streams.

While solution creation and delivery differs from traditional selling, many customers have great expertise in products and continue to buy them, rather than solutions, often through low cost channels. Some products and services (in areas such as biotechnology, for example) are complex and customers may need consultation to understand a product and how it compares with competitive offerings.

NEW PURCHASING PROCESSES

Big changes have taken place in purchasing departments, which now attract talented employees looking to innovate. Purchasing managers and other business buyers have become more demanding, powerful and knowledgeable. They are identifying new opportunities for value creation and are willing to invest resources in working with selected suppliers. New techniques, tools and approaches such as supplier segmentation, supplier reduction and total cost of ownership, have been introduced. Purchasing departments have also been transformed by e-business, which allows better collaboration between buyers and sellers.

In B2B sales, traditional product buyers are often more concerned with features, functions, price and availability. For solution customers, product or service specifications are less important than their economics. Value is defined in terms of how the product is used, so responsibility for buying decisions moves from technical specialists to senior administrators, line of business managers and executives who are responsible for solving business problems and exploiting opportunities for business innovation and growth. Industry, market or organisational knowledge are more valuable to solution customers than product knowledge.

WHERE CUSTOMERS NEED HELP

A solution solves a problem or exploits an opportunity. Solution providers must have expert knowledge and know the customer's business well in order to identify and address such opportunities and problems.

Core competence thinking has led many companies to focus on what they do well. Many have outsourced functions such as IT and retain a skeleton staff in non-core areas. Transformation management expertise from external suppliers may be invaluable to companies with a history of failed internal change programmes. However, most change programmes require a team of internal and external people, each bringing different skills and knowledge. For example, a procurement manager wanting to cut the cost of purchasing office equipment might look to external suppliers with knowledge of online buying processes and technology integration skills. A team might be put together including some of the customer's employees who have knowledge of existing corporate procurement processes, technology infrastructure or company culture.

THE SUPPLIER-CUSTOMER TEAM

Solutions are often created and delivered by teams made up of people from the solution provider, its business partners and customer's organisation. The customer might select a supplier that demonstrates:

- Knowledge of the customer's industry
- Knowledge of the customer's organisation



- ◀ ● A willingness to be flexible and collaborate to create the best solution
- Knowledge of online purchasing processes and re-engineering skills
- Knowledge of internet technologies and integration skills
- Ability to make things happen
- Ability to manage and improve the solution over time.

CUSTOMISATION AND FLEXIBILITY

Solution customers want more than standard products and services. They demand customisation. Further, customers are under pressure to innovate, grow and reduce costs. Inflexible service delivery contracts restrict the customer's ability to change and innovate. As a result many service contracts are terminated early and replaced with new ones (often with an alternative service provider). The challenge for service providers is to continue to provide good value over the long term. Some customers want continuous innovation during the delivery phase (after the solution has been created and the service is up and running).

Solution creation and delivery requires more than complementary product and service 'bundling'. Bundling allows core products and services to be differentiated but starts with the needs of the supplier. Solutions start with the needs of the customer — one customer at a time. Solutions are differentiated, uniquely configured and customised during creation. This makes it hard for competitors to imitate or make price comparisons (often allowing higher prices to be charged). Prices can be based on value to customers rather than supplier cost-plus. Suppliers that continue to innovate during service delivery can differentiate their solutions even after they are created. By responding to the customer's needs over the long term, the solution provider becomes a partner as much as a supplier.

MOVING TO SOLUTION SELLING

Companies that want to move from products to solutions must transform their sales, marketing and distribution activities to focus more on value creation and less on value communication. They must become less focused on pushing products and more focused on helping customers buy and use them. Solution creation and delivery is a core process for a company providing

SOLUTION BUYERS WILL:

- Assess the business environment – identifying problems and opportunities
- Create a business strategy (decide what to do)
- Develop a plan of execution based on their needs to solve problems or exploit opportunities
- Explore the options for solving a problem or exploiting an opportunity
- Select a solution option based on an understanding of value to be created
- Make a purchase – after they have addressed their concerns
- Create the solution with the supplier
- Evaluate success continuously during solution delivery with the supplier
- Look for further value creation opportunities during consumption with the supplier

solutions. Existing processes may require re-engineering and new sub-processes may need to be created.

Processes usually cut across organisational boundaries. They are rarely confined to single functions. Solution creation and delivery is usually performed by people from many functional areas (from many internal business units, external business partners and the customer's organisation). A solution creation and delivery process is needed to allow people to focus on the work they are performing, not the way it is organised. It can allow solution creation and delivery to become 'institutionalised' (passing from the individuals that perform it to the organisation). Processes and sub-processes provide discipline and structure to complex activities — enabling consistency.

Without an opportunity management process, for example, opportunities are often managed ad hoc, with individuals deciding what constitutes a good opportunity (everyone has their own definition). Bidding a solution often requires the involvement of many skilled professionals, such as technical consultants, who are scarce and whose time is expensive. Without an opportunity management process, teams can spend too much time providing unnecessary detail on bids that are poorly qualified, increasing the overall cost of bidding and reducing win rates. A solution opportunity management process improves solution sales forecasting and human resource management. Other important processes are solution design and delivery, offerings development and customer satisfaction management.

Challenges to the solution creation and delivery process relate less to the hand-offs between activities and sub-processes and more to the need to create order, discipline and consistency within them. The management of solution creation and delivery can be improved by defining steps and creating milestones, which are used to improve solution sales forecasting as they enable sales executives to view all prospects via a consistent grading system. Milestones help inexperienced solution salespeople as they are often based on what worked in the past. The process approach and the use of tools such as milestones help to shift information and knowledge from the individual to the organisation.

Customers work with suppliers they know and whom they trust to reduce uncertainty and risk. Personal

SOLUTION SELLERS SHOULD:

- Understand the customer's business environment – identifying their problems and opportunities
- Create a solution strategy (decide where to try to create value for the customer)
- Develop a plan of execution with the customer – helping to shape the customer's vision
- Describe their capabilities – deciding at this stage whether to go any further
- Define the solution in collaboration with the customer
- Sign contracts – after resolving the customer's concerns
- Create the solution with the customer
- Evaluate success continuously during solution delivery with the customer
- Look for further value creation opportunities during delivery with the customer

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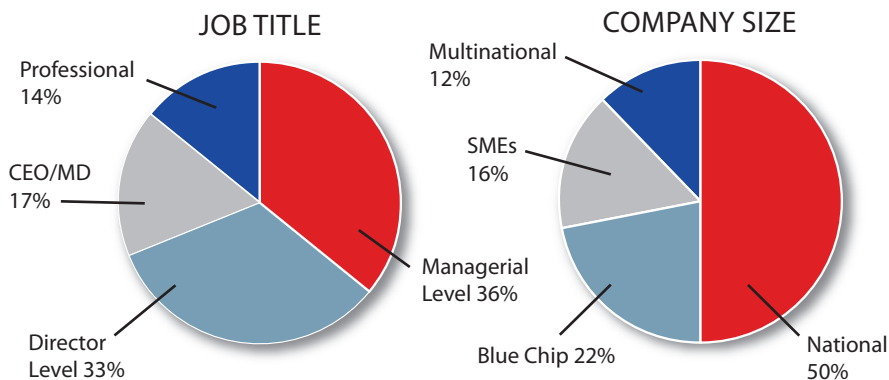
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relationships are important in solution creation and delivery. Trust moves from the product to the individuals who create and deliver the solution. Many suppliers underestimate the time needed to develop mutual understanding and trust. In solution companies, less time is spent pushing general information at customers and more listening to their needs. A deep understanding of the customer's business and industry is a prerequisite. Solution customers expect suppliers to invest time and resources in getting to know them. Knowledge of a customer's industry, market and business (how they operate, their threats and their opportunities) is essential.

SOLUTIONS PEOPLE

Every solution provider is different but most have at least the following four roles:

- Solution salespeople (client managers, principals, partners etc.)
- Specialist consultants (technical architects, process experts etc.)
- Project managers (programme managers etc.)
- Service delivery managers (outsourcing managers etc.)

The solution salesperson is primarily responsible for developing and managing customer relationships and leading teams of people in the creation and delivery of solutions. They are often called a partner, principal or client manager depending on the type of organisation.

What type of person makes a good solution salesperson? The solution salesperson must demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of the customer's business and industry. They must be able to build strong personal relationships through their ability to continuously create and deliver value for the customer over time. Solution companies tend to avoid moving their salespeople too often, to allow this to happen. They must become a trusted adviser. This may demand specialist knowledge (about an industry, for example). With product sales, the customer must have trust in the product. By contrast, with solutions the customer must trust the people involved in creating and delivering the solution.

Customers look to solution salespeople to facilitate innovation. Processes should be designed to allow the solution salesperson enough freedom for creativity and customisation while providing appropriate governance (to ensure quality, consistency and profitability). Solution salespeople must be able to lead teams of people because solutions are created and delivered in teams. These skills can be found in many professional services firms and solutions companies but are less evident in product sales organisations where salespeople may have more independence, but they have little control over the creation of what they are selling (the product is invariably predefined).

Building value-based relationships, selling consultatively and team orchestration are unfamiliar territory to many salespeople, who are often more comfortable working alone in hierarchical organisations. Some are unwilling to change, some unable to. However,

'Personal relationships are important in solution creation and delivery. Trust moves from the product to the individuals who create and deliver the solution'

few companies starting on the road to selling solutions can (or indeed want to) replace their entire salesforce. Less disruptively, they acquire the capabilities they need over the long term. Salesforce transformation programmes often involve the salesforce being trained in solution selling techniques and provided with industry knowledge, new solution selling processes, methods and tools. The cultural change required to introduce solution selling successfully should

not be underestimated.

While some companies transform their existing salesforce, others hire externally, targeting business executives with strong network relationships and deep industry knowledge. Some companies look for solution salespeople from within their own management teams. Business managers often have considerable expertise and knowledge of business processes and how to manage people and change. Solution sales professions and new career paths offering opportunities for career progression can be used to encourage senior managers to take on new roles in solution creation and delivery.

In successful solution organisations, senior managers spend much of their time with customers, working with solution salespeople to develop opportunities. They continue to nurture key customer relationships.

Solution sales managers can improve the performance of their teams through coaching, which provides the reinforcement needed to maintain and enhance solution creation and delivery skills. However, sales managers who became successful in product-led sales businesses often have little experience in solution creation and delivery. Transformation programmes should therefore be targeted towards the needs of sales managers as much as salespeople.

Specialist consultants are needed to create and deliver solutions. Some companies hire from the outside, others retrain those employees with expertise and knowledge of a particular process or industry. Consultants are often organised into teams by industry, sector, customer or competence area. This allows resources to be managed and knowledge to be shared better. Knowledge management systems allow consultants (and others) to collaborate in communities. Some aspects of solution creation and delivery, such as solution design, are often managed as projects and delivered by teams that may only come together for short periods of time.

COMMITMENT IS KEY

Solution selling by large IT and services firms has transformed their sales processes, to their and their customers' benefit. It works. But it's an expensive process, and may only be cost-effective for large customers and projects. Above all, solution selling requires a clear strategy and long-term commitment.

Contributor Professor Merlin Stone is an author, thought-leader and director of management consultancy Customer Attuned. With thanks to SAP's Mark Cerasale, who helped Stone develop the ideas for this article when both worked at IBM. Visit www.customerattuned.com

STATE POWER

There's money to be made from selling to the UK's many public sector bodies, says **SUSAN MAROT**

Many companies have considered selling to the public sector, only to conclude that the economy has made it too tough. In fact, selling to government organisations, including local authorities and many other publicly-funded bodies and quangos, can still be profitable if you follow the right sales process.

Admittedly, the feeling can be like hitting a brick wall. Anyone who makes the move to public sector selling from business-to-business (B2B) will tell you that. They are so different. But a structured approach to selling will unlock the potential of this interesting and rewarding sales arena and ensure success.

After nearly 20 years selling B2B I knew I needed a fresh challenge. On my first day with one of the big business process outsource (BPO) companies I strode up to the front door, chomping at the bit to sell, sell, sell. After meeting a few new colleagues I was a little surprised that they were all trying to tell me the same thing. "Don't be too 'salesy', the public sector doesn't like salespeople." Hello brick wall.

OVERCOME THE CULTURE CLASH

The biggest hurdle to get over when selling to the public sector is one of culture. They are used to consulting with everyone from members of the public to elected officials. They can't make snap decisions.

After going for the close of my first deal, the local government official said, "We like your offer Susan, but we now need to take it to committee, then wait for the members' comments, then back to committee, which in total should be around four months, before we start the procurement process, which will be another three months." This was to procure a piece of work to the value of £30,000. Buying a £100,000 sports car only took me an afternoon, so why seven months for a mere £30k...

At the time, it certainly appeared to me to be just red tape, but there was more to it than that. Essentially, public sector procurement officials have to ensure that they have demonstrated value for money by using a fair procurement process. If they are unable to show that a product or service was purchased using a fair process then they could easily end up in court. Understandably, the thought of getting it wrong makes public sector buyers very twitchy, so it is important for salespeople to get their heads around this concept.

Why and how procurement officials buy is at the core of public sector culture. They have a responsibility to

provide a service to the public using public money, which in turn creates a culture that is very different to the private sector. It is not just red tape for the sake of it. A pushy salesperson could really rub them up the wrong way, so a subtler, more structured approach is required. A specific sales style and strategy is essential to ensure you really connect with public sector buyers.

EFFECTIVELY QUALIFY THE OPPORTUNITY

Great salespeople manage their time well, with those selling to the public sector needing to be among the best at this. Qualifying a public sector opportunity effectively is vitally important in ensuring you don't waste your or their time.

Having already identified that it can take months, if not years, to win a deal, then quick and effective qualification has to be high on a salesperson's list. Some of the questions to focus on include:

- Have you the time to put a winning proposal together?
- What resources do you need to bid for the work?
- What is your relationship with the client?
- Can you ensure a profitable outcome that will make the deal worthwhile?

Sometimes salespeople can get a little overconfident in their abilities, so honesty during the qualification process is also a top priority.

JUST DO WHAT THEY ASK

One of the really great things about selling to the public sector is that once the procurement officials have decided what they want to buy, they will tell you exactly what you need to do to win the business — apart from the price you need to quote, of course.

Unlike selling to private sector clients, where purchasing professionals appear to keep an ace up their sleeve, public sector procurement teams have to be open and fair with any organisation that wants to submit a tender. From the date you need to submit the proposal all the way through to how many points they will award the bidder with the best price, there are clues available to help you win. Points really do mean prizes when selling to the public sector.

It just comes down to reading all the rules and following the guidelines strictly. If, for example, they say that the bid must be submitted by 12pm then you must meet the deadline. If you are one minute late then you might as well have dropped your proposal in the bin. Remember, they cannot bend the rules for anyone.



CONSTANTLY COMMUNICATE ALL THE BENEFITS

Unless your solution is the only one that can do the job, which is highly improbable, then communicating the benefits effectively is paramount to your success. Contrary to popular opinion, the lowest-priced bid is not guaranteed a win. The solution has to truly deliver what the public sector needs. In fact, they often have to prove that it has delivered the benefits promised in order to receive further funding from central government.

Presenting the benefits, both in writing and face-to-face, is often an odd experience because of the way the procurement process is run. When I sold operational software to the police service I got a real buzz watching the eyes of the senior officer light up as he suddenly realised this bit of IT was going to help him catch criminals and save him money. However, all team members were expected by the procurement officer to keep poker faces as the whole process had to be run in a fair and consistent way with all bidders.

SO WHY START SELLING TO THE PUBLIC SECTOR?

Yes, there is a lot to learn and a few challenges to overcome in selling to the public sector if you have only ever sold B2B. But the rewards can be substantial, both for a company and its salespeople:

- The public sector recognises that great solutions come at a price and buyers are often willing to pay for them, providing the benefits are realised
- Some of these deals are big. This often means huge commissions for all those involved
- Payment is quick, as long as the company has

'The biggest hurdle to get over when selling to the public sector is one of culture'

delivered what it agreed to. Having a client that pays within 21 days is good for cashflow and can also mean early commission payments to the salesperson

- Wins are high profile, which can be great for a company's PR and an individual's CV. Not everyone had heard of my biggest accounts at DHL, but everyone knows their

police service, health authority or local council

- By awarding long-term and binding contracts, public sector organisations can provide certainty and financial security to a business, including the salesforce.

TIMES ARE CHANGING

Interestingly, modern public sector leaders do not fear salespeople as much as they did when I first started working in this field. In fact, they now embrace and welcome the private sector's approach to commercialism, which hasn't always come naturally to them. This means that salespeople (if they ask the right questions and carefully interpret the answers to present a solution that delivers the required benefits) will be very successful in delivering big wins for their company.

The formal procurement process may still prove to be a frustration, but the brick wall is getting easier for B2B salespeople to climb over. All it takes to make it big in this highly rewarding sector is to follow a slightly different sales process, tweak your sales strategy and, most importantly, be patient.

Contributor Susan Marot is still selling successfully after 30 years. She now runs Marot Associates, helping businesses to sell more profitably by improving their sales process. Connect with her on LinkedIn or visit www.marotassociates.com

ALWAYS BE LEARNING

Agile Selling is a snappy book by Jill Konrath that puts learning agility at the heart of modern sales. By [MARC BEISHON](#)

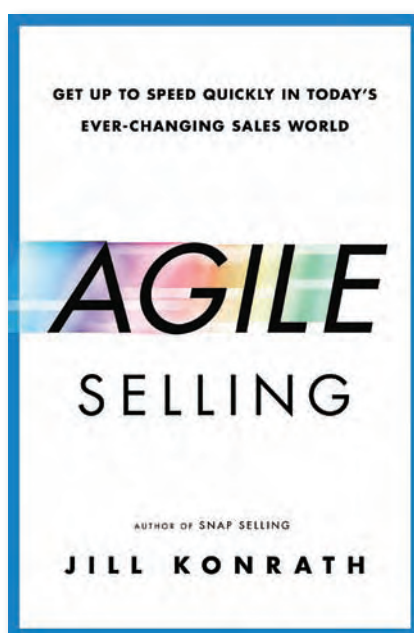
An American writer and consultant who has had considerable success is Jill Konrath. Her first book, *Selling to Big Companies*, homes in on the sweet spot of setting up meetings with corporate decision makers, and so wasn't a 'me too' selling book. A second book, *SNAP Selling*, focuses on 'frazzled' time-poor buyers of today — SNAP is an acronym for 'Simple', 'INvaluable', 'Aligned' and 'Priority', which is a pretty snappy overview of what's in that book.

Now comes a third, *Agile Selling*, which has received copious plaudits and which cleverly brings in a buzzword from business that is about adapting quickly to change and trying things out — although in this case it's about getting your sales approach right first time. Konrath says the idea for the book came from realising that so far she'd missed a big part of what makes her and others successful as salespeople. "Above all, I realised that my abilities to get up to speed quickly and rapidly adapt to changing conditions were what mattered most. Success was contingent on my sales agility — the mindset and skills I developed that allowed me to rapidly acquire knowledge and develop new skills, combined with the flexibility and strength needed to withstand challenges and leap on opportunities."

She reckons sales agility is not something that's mentioned in sales training programmes, but 'agile learning' is a key attribute of top salespeople and needs its own book. We certainly agree — and in fact we have had many articles in *Winning Edge* about rapid change in selling and about learning techniques and theory, so this is not new territory. What *Agile Selling* does is bring together much of this material in one place, but does it add anything more?

Well, the first thing to note is that it's written in Konrath's chatty, conversational style, and is full of anecdotes, many of them from her days of selling at Xerox and other firms. This makes for an easy read — not something you can say about a lot of such books.

The scene is well set by Konrath, who references the changes in buying and selling in a journalistic way. She



says that buyers have changed fundamentally in that they are much more self-educated, and she trots out the figure that they are 60-70% through the buying process before they engage a salesperson. Well, we can take issue with this, as such a figure can only be an average and by no means all buyers are that far along, particularly at executive and complex level (and this is a topic we'll look at in another article).

But she continues with another figure: that only 15% of executives say their meetings with salespeople met their expectations. She discusses how salespeople who use online business information gain major revenue increases and also mentions insight selling, as in *The Challenger Sale* and other recent books (see our reviews in the July/August 2014 edition of *Winning Edge*). As she says

"You know what buyers pick as the differentiator in their decisions? The sales experience itself — what it's like working with you during the course of all your interactions." This comes from research by the Sales Executive Council, but it's also been reported by McKinsey, which we've covered here too.

In turn, this puts the salesperson as the primary differentiator, and sales has now "officially become a thinking-intensive profession". This is about fast learning and fast response to change and breaking out of selling routines that people do on autopilot. This isn't just true of selling, of course, and Konrath quotes more research that says: "Learning agility is a leading predictor of leadership success today — more reliable than IQ, EQ [emotional intelligence] or even leadership competencies." And she makes the case that "learning agility is your only sustainable competitive advantage". Overcoming the fear of embarking on a steep learning curve is the first battle — the resistance to making improvements. Then you must see obstacles and failures as opportunities — the stuff of many a personal motivation speaker.

There's solid neuroscience behind the benefits of transforming problems into challenges to 're-energise' your brain, but Konrath reckons this is what agile sellers

do on a regular basis, as well as reframing failures as valuable learning experiences. She moves on to goal setting, noting that “big goals can actually be a hindrance, especially before you’ve achieved a level of proficiency” and mentioning research by psychologist Don VandeWalle that we need “getting better” goals “focused on acquiring new skills, mastering new situations and improving one’s confidence”. In his study, salespeople with “getting better” goal orientations actually set higher sales targets, worked harder, planned better, and achieved significantly more.

So much, so familiar. *Agile Selling* moves up a gear when Konrath discusses how to learn things when there’s so little time in selling to do so. Again, this is about theory, in this case approaches to rapid learning, and she neatly demystifies these with a simple summary: “To learn faster, chunk, sequence, connect, dump, practice, and prioritise.” She looks at these in turn, and there’s a nice example of a salesperson who found that once he broke his new job into ‘chunks’, he felt immediate relief. Konrath suggests chunking into four main categories — company, products/services, customers and sales, which then have further ‘subchunks’. This helps to cut mental chaos and increase recall. For those new to jobs, she advises a 30-day ‘deep dive’ to get familiarity fast in a sales position, focusing on what you really need to know, and learning the language of the firm and sector (even by creating your own dictionary).

Konrath steers back to familiar territory by homing in on knowing buyers — “Given the chance, I’d step on the highest sales podium in the world and shout out, ‘Understanding who you’re selling to is far more important than what you’re selling.’ People, not organisations, make decisions.” The problem is that many companies won’t have good information about decision makers in the customer base, and she has a tool, the buyer’s matrix, that can help, although there are a lot of these in sales books. Hers has the virtue of asking strong but tough questions, such as, “Change drivers: what would cause them to change from what they’re currently doing?” Indeed, Konrath deftly then looks at ‘embracing the status quo’, and why most sales are lost to ‘no decision’, which is in fact your biggest competitor, and one you need to become an expert in.

Amusingly, she has a chapter on ‘reverse engineering’ the business case, noting that most marketing material in your company is likely to be pap that customers won’t trust, so you have to do a lot of work on developing the true value proposition. Then it’s on to story telling and interviewing customers to find out why they bought your offerings, mapping out a buyer’s journey, whether you’re able to articulate the information you’ve ingested, and when to know you’ve done enough learning.

This is all to the good, but Konrath then addresses skills, as this is different from acquiring knowledge and, as we all recognise, “Selling is actually a complex set of skills.” We’re into the meat of the book now and there are no fewer than 17 short chapters, which sounds daunting but is just a ‘chunking’ process of breaking down skills, and she recommends starting with one

priority skills area that will make a quantifiable difference, such as prospecting or opportunity creation. The key is to focus on ‘personal bests’, such as the percentage of calls that turn into initial conversations, or the time it takes to close a deal, and these can also be sequenced so you can put first things first (such as that call success ratio).

Meat and drink chapters are on preparation, questioning, and practising (‘practise safe selling’) — all solid subjects detailed in many other places, but Konrath has a knack of debunking much received wisdom and saying what’s right in just a few words.

In a further chapter she looks at the value of talking to ‘upstarts’ — salespeople in your firm who became successful quickly, as well as seasoned campaigners.

There’s a chapter on body language and cues, which sits a bit oddly here, and one on recovery strategies for when things go wrong, such as when you lose a prospect’s interest during a call. There’s a neat part on psychological thinking that combines both positivity with negativity — again, thinking of things that can go wrong can head off mistakes. Konrath is a big fan of ‘cheat sheets’ and checklists to minimise the chances of forgetting things.

Most other sales staples are covered off — getting to the root cause of a failed sale (was it a problem closing or did the prospect really feel change was necessary?). Usefully, Konrath brings in new technology such as

learning your company’s CRM — this can need a lot of work.

But there’s more — the last main section of the book has chapters on success habits for staying agile, as much of the earlier material is about getting there in the first place. So there’s a 90-day plan, ways to maintain productivity and use time wisely, purging your pipeline, digging

even deeper for information, and why multitasking is a no-no (particularly for men) and developing resilience. She even advocates turning things into games — such as the objection game, where she replays objections and figures out how to get a positive response next time.

Konrath says there’s never been a better time to be in sales, which is a contentious point, and “we’re on the cusp of an era when our success is defined by our willingness to invest in ourselves”. This, she says, is “project you” and you need to “get curious again. Remember that sales is an experiment. It always will be. For long-term success, you need to stay in a testing mode. That’s what leads to proficiency and, ultimately, mastery. Are you up for the challenge?”

Unlike a lot of sales books, *Agile Selling* really is written for salespeople, with no chapter more than a few pages long — it’s got the bite-sized approach to learning that is the hallmark of the approach the book promotes. While nearly every chapter has a chatty example or two, there is also much solid theory that’s encapsulated succinctly, although the pace is pretty breathless. This book will inspire quite a few to get up and running (or stay up) as best they can, and as fast as possible.

Agile Selling, by Jill Konrath, is available on Amazon as a Kindle edition or hardback.

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- **Flexible and available on demand** – you can choose from four different assessment routes including assignment or work based evidence which can be used during work experience and you can register at any time that is right for you or your company
- **Designed by sales experts** – to equip individual sales professionals and sales teams with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in sales, marketing, retail or business careers

ISMM qualifications are regulated by the UK Government's regulator Ofqual so you can be sure they meet the highest standards. Qualifications range from Levels 1-6 and are made up of small awards which lead to larger Certificates and Diplomas.

ISMM QCF Level 3 Certificate in Sales & Marketing and ISMM QCF Level 3 Diploma in Sales & Marketing

Preparing and delivering sales presentations, handling objections, negotiating and closing sales, understanding influences on buyer behaviour, understanding customer segmentation and profiling, understanding sales and marketing in organisations, using market information for sales, time and territory management for sales people, planning for professional development, prospecting for new business, sales pipeline management.

These companies have recognised the importance of an ISMM qualified sales team:



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To find out more about ISMM qualifications, contact us at www.ismm.co.uk/education and find an ISMM Accredited Sales Training Centre near you or email us at education@ismm.co.uk



ISMM

The Institute of Sales & Marketing Management

Career lines

Michael Bertaut AdRoll



AdRoll, a digital advertising player which describes itself as the world's most widely adopted 'retargeting' platform, has opened a London office and hired Michael Bertaut as managing director of EMEA strategic sales. Bertaut was Google's country manager for Italy and ran sales in Latin America. AdRoll, which also has

a Dublin office, is looking to grow staff from 100 to 250 here, so a number of sales positions should be on offer. This year the firm secured a \$70 million capital round.

Ronan Lavelle, Sitron



Sitron (previously known as Newsgator) has chosen Ronan Lavelle to run its UK business, tapping his almost two decades' experience in the collaboration and content management software market, with previous roles at OpenText, Hummingbird, Dolphin Software and ARX. Sitron specialises in technology that creates a 'social enterprise' where

people communicate more effectively. Customers are typically FTSE-listed firms and Lavelle says that "particular targets include Microsoft SharePoint and SAP users that want to extract more value from those investments."

Neil Hodson, HPI



HPI, the vehicle information firm, has brought in Neil Hodson as managing director. He brings nearly 20 years of experience in the used car market, and comes from being group sales director at Manheim, said to be the world's largest automotive services company, where he led sales across Manheim's remarketing, retail and other UK

businesses, as well as supporting the international sales strategy. Before that Hodson spent 11 years at Experian Automotive as general manager, where he was responsible for setting up Car Data Check. HPI's heritage spans over 50 years and he'll be 'refocusing' on existing customers.



Rob Elms

JCDecaux

JCDecaux, the outdoor advertising company, has recruited Rob Elms as sales director of its airport division. He was head of trading at Future plc, and is said to bring "a wealth of media experience" working for agencies and media owners, including MediaCom, MediaVest and MEC. Elms will head the sales team responsible for eight UK airport and rail settings, including Heathrow. He says: "The team are in full swing and there are huge creative opportunities around the corner as the digitisation of sites continues apace."



Alan Cohen

Text My Deal

Alan Cohen has joined Text My Deal, a retailer loyalty firm, as sales director. He was a VP at US technology firm GlobalXtend, based in the UK, and also sales director at business process firm, MatsSoft. Text My Deal allows merchants to market directly to their customers offering incentives, loyalty plans and rewards but without involving a voucher company. "Simple in concept and unique in design, Text My Deal takes minutes to deploy and customers love it," comments Cohen.


James Clegg BTI Systems





BTI Systems, a Canadian cloud networking vendor, has appointed James Clegg as EMEA senior vice-president as part of its continued expansion into Europe. Clegg has executive sales and management experience with companies such as Sun Microsystems, Crossbeam


Systems, Arbor Networks and Bay Networks and is "highly regarded for an outstanding track record of consistently driving growth," says BTI.


Appointments extra


 **Chris Howarth** has taken on a sales role in the North at IT firm, Cloud Distribution.

 **Gary Deacon** has joined meter box maker, Talis, as sales director at a new Coleshill HQ.

 **David Schofield** – who's a British black belt kickboxing champ – has a new day job as a northern sales manager at Kramer Electronics.

 **David Howard** is now sales director at Elixirhome, a fragrance and oil maker.

 **Colin Green** has joined Allegion, a security company, as area sales manager for the hospitality sector, Midlands and North.

 **Stephan Kofler** has moved to beer brand Krombacher as UK sales director.

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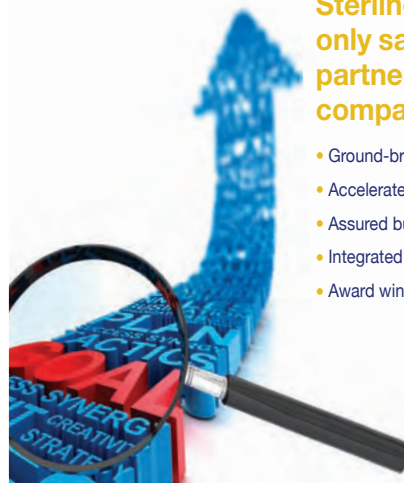
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Business Success Seminars

ISMM seminars provide free sales training plus the opportunity to network with fellow sales professionals and make new business contacts. Featuring thought-provoking and entertaining presentations, the seminars are full of new ideas and practical advice for maximising sales and winning new business.

The seminars are free to members. Guests can attend one seminar free of charge and then there is a £25 charge thereafter.

LEEDS

Thursday 2nd October

Village Urban Resort Leeds South, Capitol Boulevard West, Tingley, Leeds LS27 0TS

The Art of Selling Value... and Not on Price

MARK BLACKMORE www.lammore.com



Are your margins being squeezed? Is your product being turned into a commodity? Are you losing deals because of price?

Selling follows a simple formula. People buy when a compelling need is met by a credible solution that offers perceived value.

This seminar covers the key elements that drive value, and gives you practical ideas to sell premium products and services.

Making the 1% Difference How to build personal resilience and maximise performance under pressure



STEVE HEAD www.stevehead.co.uk

During this session you will feel uplifted and optimistic and will be able to apply one idea immediately that will help you at a personal or team level. This session will demonstrate how the smallest things can make the biggest difference:

- Understand the power of a smile
- Why we always become the way we ACT!
- How to impact more positively on others
- Outperform competitors even under pressure
- Increase resilience

The message: to build on strengths and talents, improve self-esteem and confidence, raise self-awareness and understand the impact you have on others.

LONDON

Thursday 23rd October

De Vere Holborn Bars, 138-142 Holborn, London EC1N 2NQ

Revealing the Secrets for Finding and Keeping 'A-Player Talent' for Your Business!



ADAM BUTLER www.easyonlinerecruitment.co.uk

- Tools to ensure you've always got access to relevant and interested people for your business
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The Ingredients to Making a Perfect Sales Call

TONY MORRIS www.wedosalestraining.com



- How to create a powerful opening benefit statement
- How to engage and build rapport on the phone within a matter of seconds
- Develop powerful questions to create a desire for your product/services

- Methods to gain trust immediately
- Ideas on how to generate leads to prospect
- How to get through to your key decision maker

MANCHESTER

Thursday 13th November

Cottons Hotel and Spa, Manchester Road, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0SU

Extroverts Make Great Salespeople – Introverts are Even Better!

PAUL ASHBURY www.paulashbury.com



Are you an extrovert or an introvert? And why does it matter in the sales world?

Paul will help you identify your sales style and then examine and change the old rules of sales, giving you an approach that works for you – whether you are an extrovert or an introvert.

Real salespeople connect and build relationships. And from relationships comes sales. Learn to adapt your style to a new super-effective method of sales.

Making the 1% Difference How to build personal resilience and maximise performance under pressure



STEVE HEAD www.stevehead.co.uk

During this session you will feel uplifted and optimistic and will be able to apply one idea immediately. This session will demonstrate how the smallest things can make the biggest difference:

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- How to impact more positively on others
- Outperform competitors even under pressure
- Increase resilience

The message: to build on strengths and talents, improve self-esteem and confidence, raise self-awareness and understand the impact you have on others.

READING

Thursday 20th November

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'Love Me, Love You' – Amazing Customer Experience on a Shoestring



BETH HUGHES www.makingchangestick.co.uk

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Disruptive Marketing

ROBERT CRAVEN www.robert-craven.com



Robert Craven asks "Why should people bother to buy from you?" and gets you to think about what you need to do to increase sales and profits.

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- Is all about generating revenue

Using up-to-date research, Robert asks, "What, if anything, really works in sales and marketing in 2015 and beyond?" The session will show you how to focus your sales and marketing effort so you can win more customers and increase profits.

Seminar timetable

6.15pm-7.00pm – Registration, networking session, free refreshments and the chance to make new business contacts. Remember to bring plenty of business cards!

7.00pm – Main presentations, more networking and business card exchange session. A wealth of new ideas for winning business and increasing your personal motivation

8.30pm – Seminar concludes

COVENTRY

Thursday 27th November

Village Urban Resorts, Dolomite Avenue, Coventry Business Park, Coventry CV4 9GZ

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SEAN MCPHEAT www.mtdsalestraining.com



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- Understand what building real value is by understanding the value equation
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GARY FOSTER www.ThriveWithGary.co.uk



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ISMM Executive Forums



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■ LONDON – Thursday 6th November



The Pursuit of World-class Performance

Joe Galvin, Chief Research Officer, and Tamara Schenk, Research Director, MHI Research Institute



The Search for Sales Engagement

Jon Clark, OpenSymmetry

Special Guest: Toby Perkins MP

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Business runner

Winning Edge talks to sales leader and entrepreneur ANNE BAGNALL, who has built a successful business-to-business telemarketing agency

What is your current role?

I wear several hats. I am the managing director and owner of Phonetic, a call centre specialising in business-to-business telemarketing. I also have a consultancy and training company called Phonetic Elite, which does telesales coaching and training. I am a non-executive director and shareholder of Chartwell Healthcare and oversee its teleappointing function here on our Macclesfield site, making sure it hits its targets.



I'm proud of being a member of a recognised professional Institute, and of the fact that my own sales background is being recognised as well'

What do you like most about your work?

I've been in business for around 20 years now and have always enjoyed the freedom of not having a boss and being entrepreneurial. I enjoy being involved in other people's businesses and learning what makes those businesses tick.

I am inquisitive by nature when it comes to business and I'm really interested in how people have built and run their own businesses. Being part of Phonetic, an outsourced telemarketing provider, means I have to get under the skin of our clients' businesses and put together telemarketing campaigns that are effective, so I find the role comes to me quite naturally. I enjoy the variety of each day, of course, and looking after a company with 75-80 employees is always going to keep me on my toes.

What do you like least?

Dealing with all the red tape involved in business, such as keeping up with the constant stream of new HR regulations, or having to meet up with the accountants. Having to read agreements and contracts line-by-line I find excruciating, but I have learnt to my cost not to sign anything I haven't read and totally understood.

What are your biggest challenges?

I find the biggest challenge for Phonetic is achieving the right balance of service vs costs for clients. As MD a key part of my role is to ensure we maintain the high quality, competitively-priced service we have a great reputation for while managing the inevitable increases to our operating costs and salaries. I know clients get approached by agencies who offer to do the same work for less cost, but many know from experience that the results may not be comparable. So for me the challenge is negotiating the level of fees that create the margins we need to plough back into the training of agents, which in turn ensures we

keep delivering an excellent service to our customers.

What skills do you think are important to your role?

Multitasking is certainly a skill that's useful, along with the ability to make the correct decisions quickly. Commercial awareness and a gut feeling about telemarketing campaigns for clients and what will and won't work is crucial — a skill I have built up over the last 20 years. 'People buy people first' is a motto I've always believed in, and an ability to get on with people easily, whether a client, a member of my management team or an agent, is really important. You also have to be genuine, honest and open with everyone you work with as much as possible, and not promise things you can't deliver. A sense of humour can help too, as can having a tough skin — probably qualities rather than skills.

How does being a member of the ISMM benefit you?

I'm proud of being a member of a recognised institute, and of the fact that my own sales background is being recognised as well. I also enjoy reading *Winning Edge* and have found some very informative and useful articles — which I've used in my telemarketing and coaching courses. I'm always on the look out for interesting information and it's a very good source. And, of course, it is very focused on selling, which I enjoy because there aren't many journals out there that focus on sales.

What do you like to do when not working?

I took up running five years ago and try to run every day now, which keeps me fit and I enjoy it. I completed the London Marathon this year, which was amazing for me. I won't tell you the time I ran it in, but I will say that it was still daylight when I finished and I got a medal at the end... I started spin classes with some of my team recently and the jury's still out on that, but I think I enjoy it. My husband Chris and I live in a house with a large garden, so I do like relaxing there when the weather allows, even though I don't do any gardening. I also like to go away on holiday a couple of times during the year too, to keep my stress to a sane level.

Starting in the November/December edition of Winning Edge, Anne Bagnall will be writing a new series of articles advising companies on how to set up and run effective telemarketing and telesales operations, either in-house or using a third-party provider.

Visit www.phoneticgroup.co.uk



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Corporate Membership provides employers with a great opportunity to align their companies with the aims and objectives of the Institute of Sales and Marketing Management. It enables them to acknowledge the key role their salespeople play in their company's overall success and show them they appreciate their work. Established for 100 years, the ISMM is the only UK membership and Awarding Body accredited by the government regulatory authority, to deliver qualifications exclusively focused on selling and sales management.

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To learn about the advantages of ISMM Corporate Membership and why so many companies, of all sizes, have joined its ranks, phone, fax, email or write to:

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