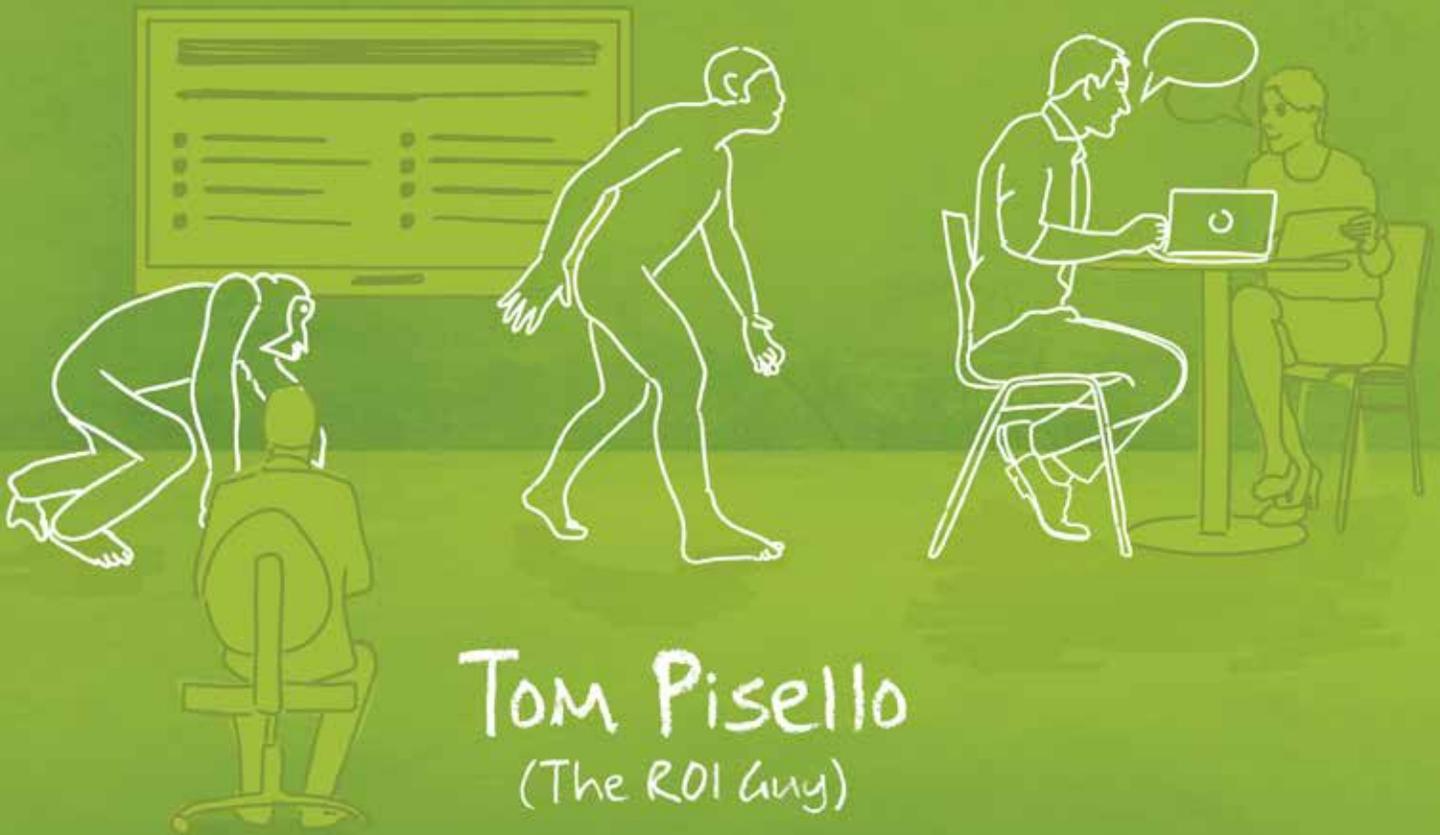




EVOLVED SELLING™

Optimizing Sales Enablement in the Age of Frugalnomics



Tom Pisello
(The ROI Guy)

Introduction

From Zero to \$1 Billion in Record Time

Let me tell you a story.

My friend, Steve Alexander, runs the Florida operations for a U.S. financial services firm and invited me to observe how his sellers presented a new solution to prospects. Each opportunity to pitch the solution could result in a multi-million-dollar, multi-year contract. However, the firm wasn't winning enough business.

I arrived at the prospect's office and took a seat in the boardroom. The lights went down, and the PowerPoint went up on the big screen.

The sales rep was personable and knowledgeable. Alexander brought in his best.

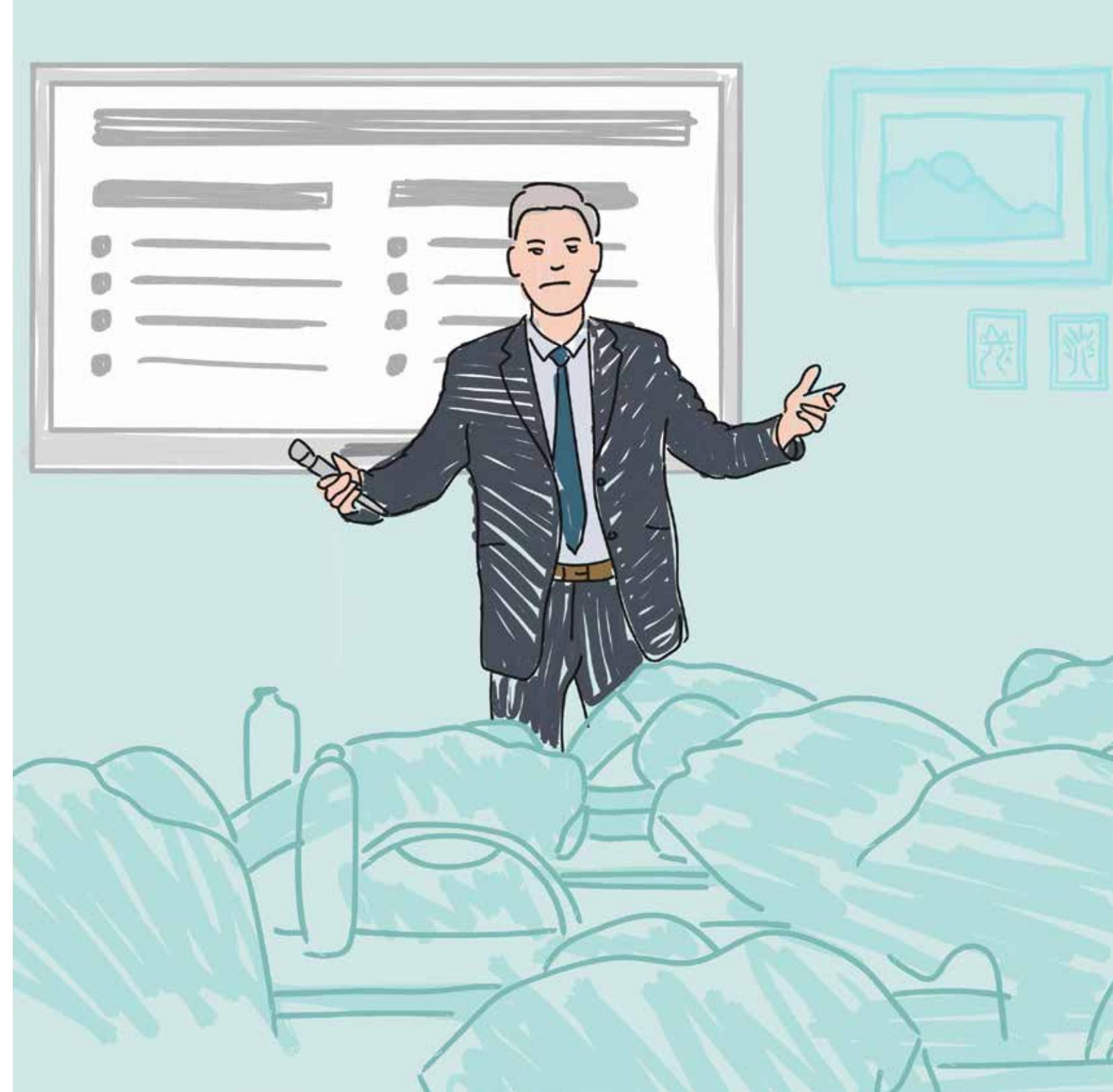
The deck was professionally prepared and well branded. It highlighted the following:

1. The firm has a great mission.
2. It has been around a long time and is growing.
3. Its people are good looking, experienced, and successful.
4. Its customers are plentiful and include household names.
5. Its services are many, and they have tons of great features.

But just two minutes in, the problems were obvious. The firm sounded like every other firm. The presentation included nothing to drive change, nothing to differentiate the firm from its competitors, and nothing to remember.

I imagined the prospect's buying team evaluating provider after provider, receiving the same pitch from everyone. All of the firms were proud of their accomplishments, experienced, and capable. But each pitch was all about the solution provider and said nothing about the prospect.

Steve Alexander



Since every one of Alexander's deals was highly competitive, we had to do something to make his firm stand out. So, we got to work on evolving their old-school approach. We held a collaborative workshop with Alexander's team to reshape their presentation so that it provoked conversation and showed the firm's value.

The new presentation included the following points:

1. We've engaged with hundreds of organizations similar to yours over the past year, and here are the top three challenges we see these folks experiencing.
2. Not addressing these issues is costing these folks dearly, and here's how much it might be costing you.
3. But, there is hope. Here are a few key strategies you can implement to overcome these challenges.
4. We can deliver on this for you with the following services that can substantially cut your costs, improve your productivity, reduce your risks, and promote growth.
5. In fact, here are three of our customers who are just like you and have achieved similar business outcomes.

Alexander and his team began to use this new value messaging. They also recast their presentations from their customers' point of view. For example, they presented from iPads to make their pitches more dynamic. They also used an interactive assessment tool to discover opportunities and benchmark prospects. The tool not only helped buyers recognize their challenges but also allowed them to prioritize which areas to address first. After each presentation, Alexander could run analytics to see which tools his team leveraged, what content prospects consumed, and what sales techniques worked the best.

Alexander and his team immediately noticed the difference. First, they booked meetings well ahead of their competitors and the request for proposal (RFP) deadline. Prospects had a compelling reason to invite them in.

Second, buyers' body language changed dramatically during presentations. Instead of sitting back, bored, because they knew exactly what was coming next, prospects now leaned in and asked questions. They were interactive, engaged, and best of all, compelled.

The first time that Alexander's team used this approach, they were excited but skeptical. Would it really make a difference? After they won the first deal, they wondered if it was beginners luck.

Then, they won their second and third deals. During the next twelve months, they won every opportunity where they used the new approach – despite facing the same stiff competition. In each deal, they made the conversation about the buyer, not about them as a provider. Focusing on each prospect's challenges differentiated them from everyone else. They didn't lose a single RFP.

And to boost their advantage further, Alexander's team used this approach to engage with customers long before they issued RFPs. This allowed the team to provocatively shape the requirements and consideration process.

It's no wonder that the firm batted 100 percent and why its new product went from almost zero in sales to more than \$1 billion under management in record time.

But the best part is that Alexander's team got to share their innovative approach with the entire firm at their annual sales meeting. In fact, they were recognized nationally for their strong performance and accomplishments.

How did Alexander and his team accomplish this success?

Exactly what was this evolved approach that provided the firm with a strong competitive and growth advantage?

What could a more evolved approach do for you and your team?

This guidebook reveals the significant shifts in B2B purchasing that necessitated this approach. It also delivers a roadmap so that you can modernize your sales content, tools, and techniques to not only survive – but thrive – in today's buyer-driven environment.

Let's dive in and see what Evolved Selling is all about ...



Tom Pisello

CHAPTER 1

Is the B2B Sales Rep Dead?



Is the B2B Sales Rep Dead?

I was amongst an audience of 300 sales leaders and listened in shock as Andy Hoar, Forrester's Vice President and Principal Analyst, pronounced the "death of the B2B sales rep." At a summit dedicated to sales enablement, this prediction was heresy.

But there it was: Forrester boldly predicted that one million B2B salespeople would be displaced by 2020¹, as more customers bypass reps. Today's digital natives favor self-service or meaningful interactions with a select group of capable, consultative partners. Sellers who just pitch their products and services – those who "show up and throw up" or merely take orders – would go the way of the dodo.

In fact, Forrester indicates that these changes are occurring faster than anticipated, as most sellers have remained firmly entrenched in their old ways. Forrester² states that:

- 80% of sales conversations pitch products and services, while just 20% are focused on the executive buyer's challenges and initiatives.
- A mere 36% of B2B executives believe that reps understand their business problems and offer them clear solutions.
- As a result, 68% of B2B buyers prefer to conduct their own online research – up from 53% in 2015.

Solution providers must scramble to meet new buyer expectations. As investments shift to digital, old-school reps are becoming commoditized, and more buyers are choosing to work with channel partners or just order online.



80% of sales conversations pitch products and services, while just 20% are focused on the executive buyer's challenges and initiatives.

1 in 5 sellers, or 1 million sales reps have been displaced²

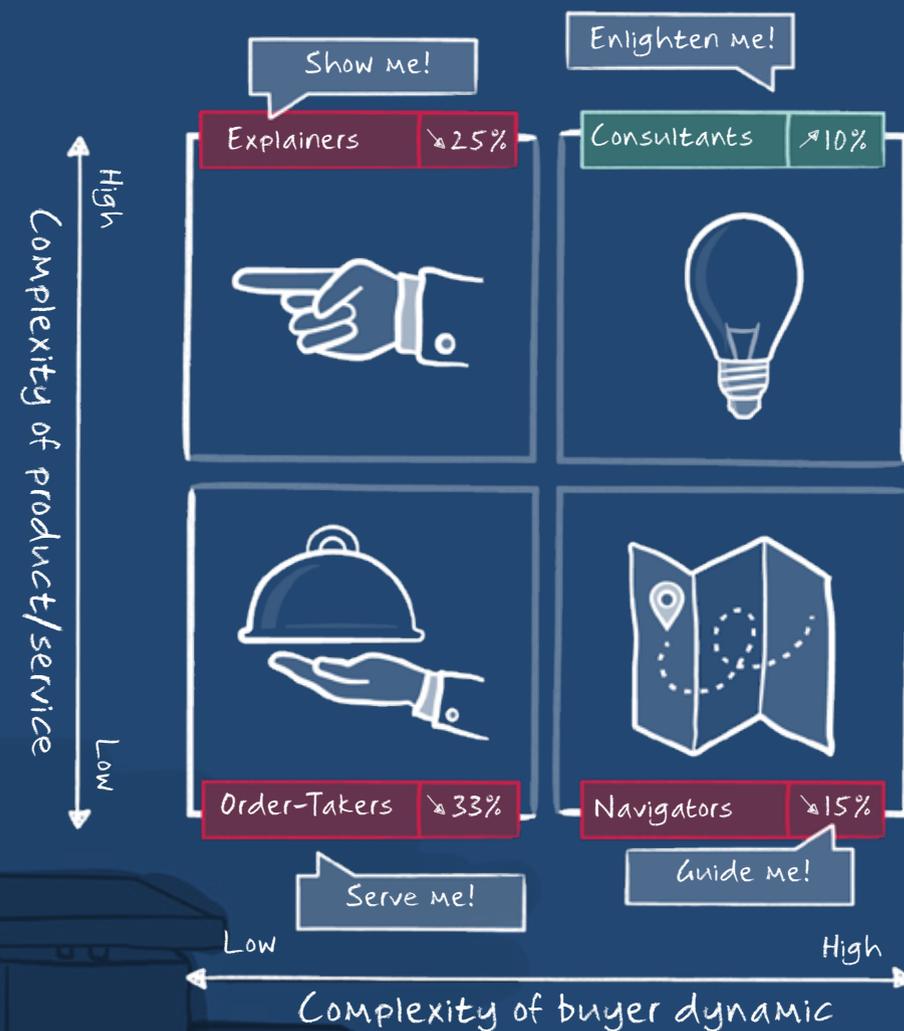
¹ Hoar, Andy: Death of a (B2B) Salesman, Forbes.com, April 15, 2015

² Forrester: Death of A (B2B) Salesman: Two Years Later, March 29, 2017

B2B SELLER ARCHETYPES

Order takers and explainers are on the chopping block, according to Forrester³. But research also shows that certain sellers remain valued, especially for high-consideration purchases that require buy-in from multiple stakeholders. Consultative reps – those who diagnose and prescribe, focus on business value outcomes, and drive consensus – will thrive in this new environment. Forrester predicts that the number of consultative sellers will grow 10 percent by 2020.

B2B buyers now choose digital, self-service for low- and medium-consideration purchases. They also demand high-quality interactions with salespeople when making complex decisions. These channel shifts will displace one million US-based, B2B sellers by 2020³.



Selling in the Age of Frugalnomics

Follow a modern purchase process and it is crystal clear – B2B buyers have changed, and so has their relationship with solution providers.

Today's decision maker doesn't rely on your sales reps to learn about your products or services. Instead, they conduct their own research through Google, industry forums, vendor web sites, and social media. In fact, Sirius Decisions reports that 67 percent of buyers have a clear picture of the solution they want before they engage with a rep⁴. By the time B2B buyers speak with your sellers, their minds are almost made up.

Today's buyers are also cautious and risk averse. They make decisions by committees that consist of more than 6.8 stakeholders per B2B purchase, up from 5.4 stakeholders a few years ago⁵. If you sell enterprise technology, you can face more than 13 decision makers⁶.

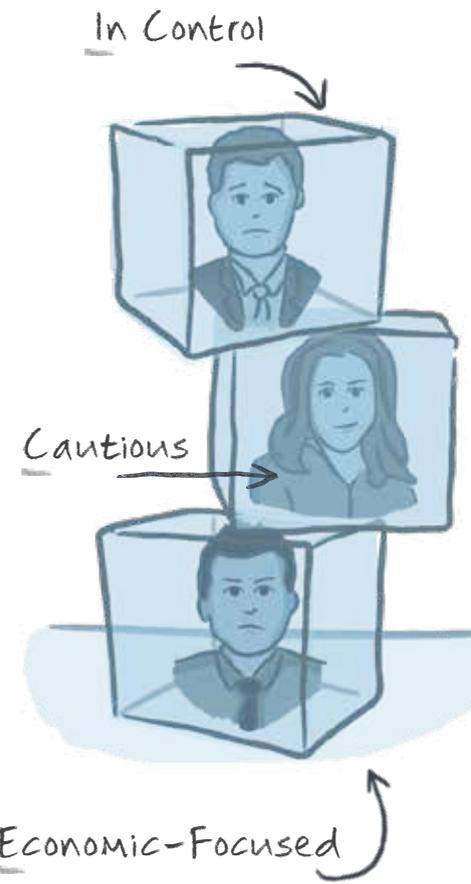
With more stakeholders, research indicates that you have a 60% lower likelihood of closing a high quality sale, one in which the customer buys a premium offering. And consensus is more difficult, driving decision making to take 84% longer than buyer's expect (1.98x longer than expectations) – despite a substantial increase in digital channels and ease of purchase⁵.

In addition, B2B buyers must deal with increased accountability and budgetary constraints, which makes every dollar that they spend matter. Your prospects now demand quantifiable proof that your solution will benefit their bottom line and provide them with maximum business value.

This new generation of B2B buyer is as Cold as ICE:

- In control
- Cautious
- Economic-focused

Sellers who try to break through to these buyers are discovering that their time-honored techniques no longer work. They can't just open a PowerPoint and talk about their company, products, and services and expect to win the deal.



Frugalnomics

noun \ 'frü-gəl 'hä-miks \

An environment where buyers have become more empowered, skeptical and economic-focused, demanding better communication and quantification of a proposed solution's business value, ROI, payback and competitive advantage.

⁴ SiriusDecisions: Three Myths of the "67 Percent" Statistic, July 3, 2013

⁵ Corporate Executive Board (CEB) research cited in a Harvard Business Review article - <https://hbr.org/2017/03/the-new-sales-imperative>, March 2017

⁶ Tech Go-to-Market: Complex Technology Buying Dynamics Mandate Account-Based Strategies for TSPs, Hank Barnes, Todd Berkowitz - An analysis from a recent Gartner survey of 508 technology buyers in enterprises with 100 or more employees in North America, Europe, Australia, 2016

Did you know...

71% of buyers

are turned off by sales content⁸
(The Economist Group)

80% of providers

are primarily focused on themselves, with information on products and features but little content in regards to the issues their customers might be facing⁹ (Forrester)

48% of solution providers

don't do a good job articulating their business value to prospects who are more focused on outcomes than ever before¹⁰ (Gartner)

Research indicates that there is a distinct value gap between what buyers need and this traditional, solution provider-centric sales approach. With this gap, it's not surprising that 45.7 percent of sellers did not meet their quota goals last year, marking the fifth straight year of decline despite the economic growth during this period⁷.

The New Normal: Delays and No Decisions

More stakeholders are now involved in each purchase, and there has been a sharp shift in the decision making dynamic.

In the past, technical buyers often drove the B2B purchase decision. Features and functions ruled. Now, the decision power is more strategically focused and is often driven by higher-level business executives. The final decision is made not by an individual, but by a committee. Business value rules.

The multitude of stakeholders means that deals take longer to close. Teams spend between three and six months in each major area of the buying cycle trying to gain consensus, and different stakeholders get involved during different parts of the process. According to Gartner, enterprise buying now takes 12 months or more¹¹.

Your reps often need to start over multiple times during their sales process, educating new stakeholders and getting them up to speed. They also must help the core team navigate the next step in the decision process and gather consensus.

Meanwhile, more deals are lost, not to the competition, but to “no decision.” Gartner stated that in the past 12 months, 94 percent of enterprises have participated in a buying cycle where they canceled their effort before they completed their purchase¹².

⁷ Selling in the Age of Ceaseless Change: Sales Performance Report 2018-2019- CSO Insights - <https://www.csoinsights.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/12/2018-2019-Sales-Performance-Report.pdf>

⁸ The Economist Group survey of 500 global business executives - <https://www.slideshare.net/LeanBack1/contentmarketingstudy>, Oct 2014

⁹ Laura Ramos of Forrester interview by AdAge - <https://adage.com/article/btob/marketers-struggling-content-marketing-results/294138/>, July 2014

¹⁰ Gartner study of 359 buyers - Buyers Want to Hear About More than Features - <https://insightdemand.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Buyers-want-to-hear-about-more-than-features-Gartner.png>

¹¹ Gartner: Tech Go-to-Market: Complex Technology Buying Dynamics Mandate Account-Based Strategies for TSPs, June 19, 2017

¹² Gartner: 94% = Enterprise Buying Teams That Have Abandoned a Buying Effort With No Decision (in the past 2 years), September 20, 2016

With business executives driving more of the decision making process, it's not enough to have an innovative solution with great features. Instead, you must assure the strategic alignment and bottom-line impacts of your product or service. In today's budget constrained and risk-averse environment, not every project gets the funding or the resources that it needs to succeed.

Do Your Sales Reps Matter Anymore?

The first time I saw Tamara Schenk present was at a Forrester sales enablement conference. At the time, she was still a practitioner who discussed the sales enablement best practices that she and her team implemented at T-Systems.

Since then, I've had the opportunity to see Schenk present at other sales enablement conferences. She is more than generous to share her first-hand wisdom on the best ways to boost sales effectiveness. Recently, she shared her best practices as a Research Director for CSO Insights.

Each year, Schenk and her team at CSO Insights publish a Buyer Preferences Study. The results show how buyers are evolving and how well Sales is able to connect, engage, and win deals in a changing environment.

The good news: Customers still engage sellers to help them make purchase decisions, and sellers are meeting buyer expectations in the majority of their relationships. This suggests that the “death of the B2B sales rep” may be greatly exaggerated.

The bad news: Sixty-two percent of buyers say that salespeople meet, but don't exceed, their expectations¹³. Although this appears positive, Schenk states, “Because this somewhat neutral and indifferent position doesn't drive loyalty, this means that these buyers wouldn't even miss salespeople if they would go away.” Neutral sentiment doesn't mean business.

¹³ CSO Insights: Are Salespeople Relevant to the Modern Buyer? June 14, 2018

According to Gartner, the top four causes of “no decision” included:

Lack of satisfaction
with potential solutions or providers
(35%)

Project or solution costs
exceeding
the budget (34%)

Business and/or technical risks
deemed too high (31%)

Return on investment
concerns (30%)

Tamara Schenk



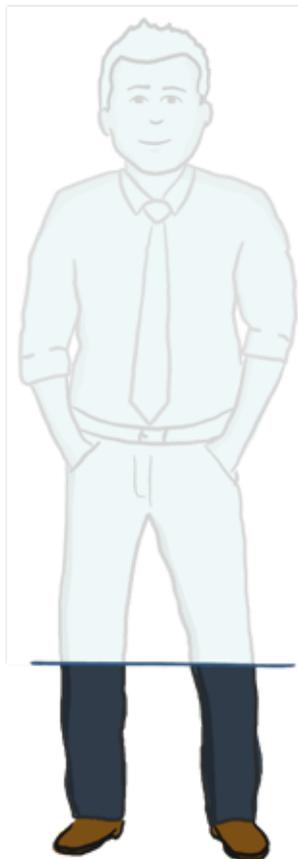
The 2018 Buyer Preferences Study emphasized several other troubling buyer perceptions:

- Less than a quarter (23 percent) of buyers selected vendor salespeople as a top three resource to solve their business problems. Sellers ranked below industry experts, third-party subject matter experts, past experience with vendors, and even vendor websites as a go-to source.
- Just 30 percent of buyers engage with salespeople to clarify their needs at the critical early phases of their journey.
- More than 70 percent of buyers wait until they define their needs before they take a sales meeting. Almost half of respondents won't meet with a rep until they identify a solution.
- Most buyers (58 percent) saw little difference among sellers, and 10.4 percent found no difference at all. As solutions are commoditized and differentiating your buying experience becomes vital to winning customers, this result is perhaps the most troubling of all.

Based on this data, it should come as no surprise that the majority of sellers are underperforming. In fact, CSO insight research identified that 45.7 percent of sellers fail to meet their quota goals¹⁴. Imagine what other areas of the business would look like if almost half of a team missed their goals. Worse, this figure represents the fifth straight year of decline despite economic growth over the same period.

You must ask some serious questions in light of this growing challenge:

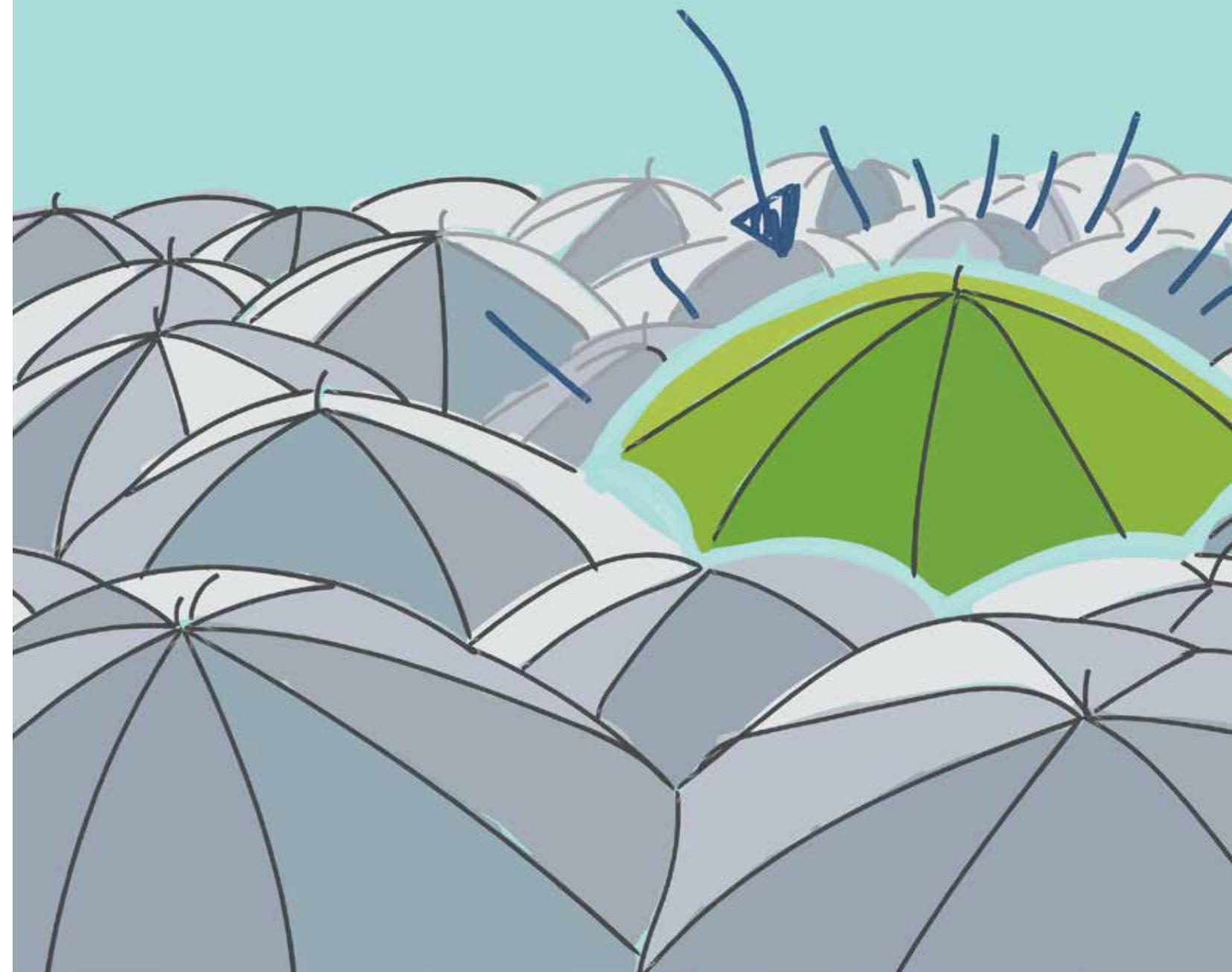
- Why are sellers struggling to make quota?
- Are sellers adding enough value to their conversations and engagements?
- Are current sales enablement and readiness strategies, methods, and investments keeping pace with evolving buyer preferences?



23% of buyers

selected vendor salespeople as a top three resource to solve their business problems

Most buyers (58 percent) saw little difference among sellers, and 10.4 percent found no difference at all. As solutions are commoditized and differentiating your buying experience becomes vital to winning customers, this result is perhaps the most troubling of all.



¹⁴ Selling in the Age of Ceaseless Change: Sales Performance Report 2018-2019- CSO Insights - <https://www.csoinsights.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/12/2018-2019-Sales-Performance-Report.pdf>

The CSO Insights research suggests ways to meet these challenges head-on. In particular, you must communicate and quantify your business value. The study suggests that you take the following steps:

1. Develop Value Messaging

Schenk says, “We see it in our study, and also in other studies that are out in the market: Being relevant, valuable in differentiating in every buyer interaction is THE challenge. And the key to success is NOT to push products (ideally never!) in the early stages of the customer’s path, but to inspire with ideas about how to solve the issue at hand.”

Based on recent CSO Insight studies, Schenk stresses the importance of value messaging. However, many sales enablement groups overlook or de-prioritize this – placing it well behind investments in customer relationship management (CRM) software, or latching on to the next best methodology and training trend.

Value messaging provides vital fuel for conversations. It gives you a framework for communicating and quantifying the unique value that you can deliver to prospects who are more focused on economics and outcomes than ever before.

If you get your value messaging right, you can reshape the buying experience. The CSO Insights research revealed that value messaging improves win rates by 7.5 percent¹⁵. But if you get it wrong, you can see a 22 percent decline in your win rate.

Without the right value-focused content and tools, your sales reps and partners will have trouble moving from “pitching products and services” to “solving challenges and delivering business outcomes.” You will also lose more deals as customers “do nothing”, or go to your competitors.

To succeed, CSO Insights recommends that you refine your value messaging and give sellers the storytelling scripts they need to convey your unique value to today’s skeptical and frugal prospects. Schenk indicates that your value messaging should address the following:

- a. **Different phases of the buying journey.** Early in the decision cycle, your content should help buyers identify and prioritize their challenges. In the middle stages, your messaging should focus on business value and return on investment (ROI).

In the final stages, you must show your advantages, compared with your competitors’ offerings. You also must address total cost of ownership (TCO). Finally, after the sale, you must prove your ROI and leverage it for renewals, upsells, and cross-selling opportunities.

- b. **The business challenges your products and service solve**, along with the results prospects can achieve.
- c. **Buyer roles**, as the importance of different challenges and results are in the “eye of the beholder.”

Schenk states that, “Sales enablement should orchestrate all value messaging efforts along the customer’s path to ensure that all enablement services are consistent, valuable, and effective.”

You must also go beyond communicating your value. This involves quantifying the cost of doing nothing and showing the business value of your proposed solution. For example, will it help your prospects save money, boost their productivity, avoid risk, or drive revenue?

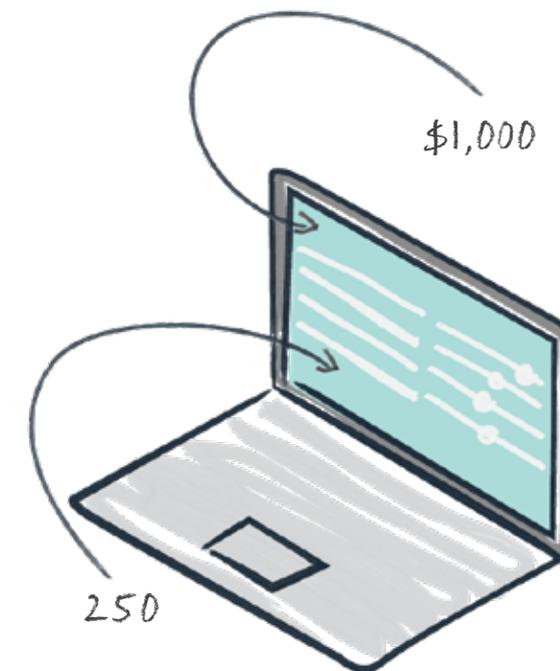
What if your sellers had the differentiating value messaging to clearly communicate and quantify your unique business value to prospects?

2. Better Understand Your Prospects’ Businesses

The CSO Insight study reports that 90 percent of buyers would meet with reps earlier but delay these engagements, as sellers don’t take the time to understand their business and add value to engagements.

According to the study, buyers are, “expecting more understanding, but finding that sellers are providing much less. Sellers need consistency, a focused approach, and new technology tools to truly exceed this expectation.”

Proper research, discovery, and assessments are crucial to sales success. However, many sellers fail to ask questions that uncover buyer needs, communicate insights, and educate prospects on their challenges. Sellers also struggle to tie their solutions to the customer’s key issues.



What if you could better understand your prospect's business by turning your discovery, assessments, insights, and solution documents into interactive guides and tools that your reps can use to reshape prospect engagements?

¹⁵ Schenk, Tamara: Value Messaging And Why It's Key To Sales Enablement Success, May 11, 2018

What if you could quantify your business value up front and post-sale over time to increase renewals, upsells and cross-selling opportunities?

3. Assure Their Business Outcomes and Success

Justifying your business case pre-sale is no longer enough, especially now that many of us sell recurring services and subscriptions. You also must show customers how they have achieved the value that you had promised post-implementation. Showing your ongoing value is vital today, as more solutions are subscription-based and require renewals.

CSO Insights says that, “sellers aren’t perceived as focusing enough on, or demonstrating enough commitment to, what happens after the sale.”

The all too common method of “won and done” is not enough. With today’s buyer, you must prove and quantify your value both pre-and post-sale.

The Bottom-Line

Sellers who want to overcome their quota performance challenges and engage buyers can’t throw the same, old sales collateral and presentations at the issue. You need the right value messaging and tools to reshape customer conversations, from pitch to purpose. This means enabling your sales reps and partners to better communicate and quantify your unique business value.

Based on their extensive research, Schenk and CSO Insights recommend three key improvements:

1. Articulating your value with better messaging and personalized, interactive engagements.
2. Using discovery and diagnostic assessments to get clear on buyers’ business needs and prescribe solutions to match.
3. Assuring outcomes and success post-delivery with realized business value.



DID YOU KNOW?

70% of buyers

selected vendor salespeople as a top three resource to solve their business problems

44% of these buyers

identify solutions on their own before they engage salespeople.

20% of buyers

want to lock down the details with salespeople just before making a buying decision, but not before.

However, there is a silver lining: 90 percent of buyers said that they would be open to engaging with salespeople earlier in their journey.

For example, 34 percent of buyers who have new challenges to solve are interested in earlier engagements – provided the seller can give them prescriptive advice that they can’t easily get without a personal interaction.

Meanwhile, 21 percent of buyers who make risky decisions prefer earlier engagements with sales reps in an effort to mitigate their risks. And 16 percent of customers who are involved in complex buying decisions would meet with reps sooner, as they want guidance to the right solution and help gaining consensus¹⁶.

If buyers are generally willing to engage sellers earlier, why don’t they do it more often?

¹⁶ Schenk, Tamara: Customer Engagement: Bridging the Gap between Buyer Preferences and Seller Behaviors, October 15, 2018

Value Gap

A mismatch of expectations between buyers, who want solution providers to focus on value they provide, and traditional marketing and selling, which continues to pitch products / services.



Typical Sales and Marketing

Your Prospects

The All Important Last Mile

Your Amazon Prime packages travel from the warehouse shelf to your home in a very efficient and almost magical way. In fact, many will arrive the same day you place your order.

This efficiency was not always the case, as early e-commerce companies struggled to get their products to customers, particularly during the final steps of the delivery process. The larger and more complex the item, the harder it was to get timely delivery.

This “last mile”—the point at which the package goes from last depot to arrive at the buyer’s door—is crucial to the customer experience and the most expensive portion of the delivery process. But companies that get this right could achieve Amazon-like success.

The last mile also applies to sales enablement and readiness, as it is the moment of truth when sellers engage in that all-important, online or in-person meeting with the prospect. So much work goes into developing the right content and prepping your reps. But, unfortunately, few of these sales meetings go as intended.

Research from sales training company, Richardson, indicates that 83 percent of initial engagements with prospects don’t lead to a second meeting¹⁷. New opportunities, so hard and expensive to gain, are being squandered.

Meanwhile, engagements with current customers don’t go much better, as sellers still pitch add-on products first, instead of demonstrating realized value from existing solutions and using this as the foundation for an expanded relationship and additional sales.

The last mile of sales enablement doesn’t work unless sellers can meet customer expectations and deliver a productive experience. However, sellers are pitching products when buyers expect value. This creates a value gap.

According to Forrester, 60 percent of B2B buyers preferred not to interact with a sales rep as their primary source of information. Meanwhile, 62 percent finalize a vendor list or selection criteria based solely on digital content¹⁸.

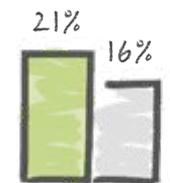
¹⁷ Richardson: Five Quick Sales Tips to Sell More Effectively, November 3, 2015

¹⁸ Forrester: B2B Consultant Sellers Reign In The 21st Century Empower Your Sellers With Strategic Tooling, August 27, 2018

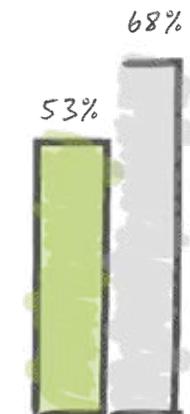
Forrester asked,

“To what extent do you agree with the following statements about involving a sales representative in the process of researching and buying products for work?”

Below are the results:



I find interacting with a sales rep superior to gathering information on my own



I prefer gathering information online on my own

2015 2017

The 4 Biggest Sales Enablement Mistakes

Overcoming the last mile will help you bridge the value gap and improve engagements. This requires sales enablement to take a more evolved approach to meeting buyer needs.

Unfortunately, four legacy sales enablement practices are holding many organizations back:



#1: Death by PowerPoint

A prospect decides to meet with one of your reps: Will this be time well spent or a time of regret?

To fuel customer engagements, you likely arm your reps with PowerPoint presentations. However, your decks may do more harm than good.

Today's buyers dislike PowerPoint sales pitches, but this is what they get most of the time. As a result, just 17 percent of sellers make it beyond the initial presentation¹⁹.

¹⁹ Richardson: Five Quick Sales Tips to Sell More Effectively, November 3, 2015

Most PowerPoint decks that reps use in their presentations are:

- **Way too long.** Sales decks often contain more than 50 slides, which makes it difficult for sellers to know what to share with each prospect (not to mention all the time it takes to weed through and customize each presentation pre-meeting). In addition, the linear nature of the medium makes it hard for reps to personalize the presentation on the fly and jump to the content that sellers need and buyers care about the most.
- **Centered on products and services.** PowerPoint decks often focus on a company's mission, history, logos, products, and services. They usually lack the content that sellers need to engage prospects – challenging, consultative insights that will help reps convey their knowledge and build emotional connections with prospects.
- **Lacking business value.** Presentations often lack the value messaging and quantifications to help frugal buyers understand the high cost of “doing nothing” and the unique business value your solutions can deliver, so they can motivate and financially justify a purchase.
- **Difficult to assess.** With PowerPoint, you can't track what your sellers present and other important insights about each sales meeting. For example, you can't learn what happened to the content that reps emailed prospects after their meetings, and moreover, what the prospect consumed and how they shared the content internally to other members of the buying committee. Without this intelligence, you will have a hard time refining future presentations to make them more engaging, or have the ability to guide sellers to the right content for each unique selling situation.

If your customers are like those responding to a recent survey, one-third of them fell asleep during your PowerPoint presentations and one in five would rather go to the dentist than sit through another PowerPoint fueled engagement²⁰.

It's clear: Customers are sick of “Death by PowerPoint.” They want a conversation, not a canned sales pitch. They want you to deliver personalized, interactive and relevant content. They seek provocative insights that will help them identify issues, achieve their goals, and drive a competitive advantage. They want assessment advice and a focus on business value, not another typical sales pitch.

²⁰ SlideRocket cited by MarketingProfs: One-Third of Adults Have Snoozed During PowerPoint Presentations, June 24, 2011

PowerPoint decks are:



Not intelligent enough to recommend the right content for the right selling situation. They provide one-size-fits-all slides that don't speak to your prospects' unique needs



Boring. They lack provocative, interactive insights, diagnostic assessments, benchmarks, and metrics that will help buyers understand what issues they should address.



Short on business value and the quantified financial justification that today's frugal buyers need.



Lacking in the intelligence you need to gain an understanding of your customers, drive performance, and optimize future engagements.



SIRIUSDECISIONS: THE NUMBER ONE SALES CHALLENGE

Sales teams are constantly under pressure to deliver growth, but issues often prevent them from achieving their full potential. These roadblocks are my favorite topic to discuss with Jim Ninivaggi, ex-Service Director, Sales Enablement Strategies, SiriusDecisions. Ninivaggi is now the Chief Readiness Officer for Sales Readiness firm Brainshark.

I met Ninivaggi more than a decade ago, at the first SiriusDecisions Summit, the Woodstock for leading marketers and sales enablement pros. Ninivaggi and I hit it off right away. We both are Italian-American and grew up in the metro New York area. We also both had an affinity for pocket squares, which we believe are the universal sign of a good analyst. Ninivaggi could always fold his perfectly. Even after he showed me the proper way to fold a pocket square, I still haven't mastered it.

Each year, Ninivaggi and the SiriusDecisions sales enablement researchers asked sales executives about their biggest obstacle to achieving their growth goals. For the past seven years, respondents said that their top growth issue is, "The inability for our sellers to articulate our differentiating business value to buyers." An overwhelming 71 percent of respondents cited this as their top issue²¹.

Ninivaggi and I found two things about this surprising:

First, we saw how much the value gap exceeds all other growth challenges. Sales executives have no shortage of complaints; not enough leads, insufficient training, a lack of the right products, etc. However, all of these complaints pale in comparison to the value gap. Year after year, sellers struggle to make quota due to a lack of business value articulation ability.

Second, we both lamented how catastrophic it is to see the value gap remain in the top spot for so many years. To illustrate how long organizations have faced the value gap, Ninivaggi recalled his time with Michelin three decades ago. Michelin had developed a spreadsheet-based calculator to help sales reps tally the economic benefits of upgrading truck tires for fleet managers (e.g. fuel savings, downtime avoidance, safety improvements and lower TCO). The Tire TCO Calculator made Michelin's reps more proactive and persuasive. It helped Ninivaggi increase his sales and show customers the value of upgrading their entire fleet. Ninivaggi used the TCO results to engage prospects earlier in the sales cycle and higher in the food chain. The tool played a major role in Ninivaggi's early sales success.

If the solution can be this easy, why don't more organizations implement this approach and tooling? Why does "lack of value articulation capabilities" keep coming up as the top growth challenge?

Ninivaggi points out that the lack of improvement may relate to the number two issue - that sellers spend too much time on non-sales activities. For example, they may be spending too much time on overhead and non-selling related tasks. Too often, sellers waste precious time searching for and recreating content to use in their customer engagements. Then, they don't have enough time to learn about the prospect's needs and connect them to the solution's business value. Reps also don't spend enough time face-to-face with customers to identify their challenges and potential solutions.

When reps finally get a meeting with a prospect, they often spend too much time on one-way sales pitches instead of showcasing outcomes and business value.

Ninivaggi often rails about how solution providers want to change, but Marketing and Sales Enablement still serve up tons of solution-focused training, pitch decks, and other collateral. Perhaps your existing sales training, PowerPoint presentations, and sales collateral are to blame.

Instead of arming reps to be value-centric and consultative, we leave it up to prospects to figure out their own challenges and which solutions can address them. Sellers must move beyond product and service knowledge to focus on what's important to the buyer - business value outcomes.

According to Ninivaggi, sellers still focus on product differentiation despite the fact that many solutions are so similar, even after these efforts, buyers don't see a difference. Instead, research indicates that your differentiator is no longer your solution's features and price: It is your sales experience, or your "last mile". Your differentiator is how you help each customer better understand their issues, overcome key business challenges, and gain a competitive edge. It's much more about the individual buying experience and how you engage and sell, and much less about the advantages of your particular solution.

This means that you can't put a generic value proposition in place and say, "done." As Ninivaggi states, "Value is in the eye of the beholder." Your communications must be specific and personalized to the individual prospect.

Sales reps must understand the specific customer, their challenges, and how your proposed solution can help them save money, reduce risks, improve productivity, and drive revenue. Reps must not only address the business value to the prospect's organization but also discuss how stakeholders will gain personal value from your solution. For example, how will your solution help them get recognized for their accomplishments or achieve their career goals?

Ninivaggi says, "The key is going beyond the generic to the specific issues that each buyer is experiencing, along with the tangible and unique business value that you deliver."

²² What Have you Done for me Lately - SiriusDecisions- <https://www.siriusdecisions.com/blog/its-2015-what-have-you-done-for-me-lately>

TOP ISSUES ACCORDING TO SALES EXECUTIVES:

Rep's ability to connect our offerings to client business issues



Our reps spend too much time on non-selling activities



Inability to manage today's more educated buyer



Lack of useful/relevant content from marketing



Our reps lack the necessary selling skills



Our reps lack the required knowledge



Our offerings do not have competitive differentiation



Lack of quality leads from marketing



SiriusDecisions indicates the top sales barriers to achieving quota goals for sellers²²

²¹ SiriusDecisions: It's 2015: What Have You Done for Me Lately? January 15, 2015



TOP SALES BARRIERS = BUSINESS VALUE CHALLENGES

According to a study by CSO Insights, sales teams lack the ability to differentiate their solutions and articulate business value. In fact, these are two of the top three challenges that impact a sales team's ability to hit their revenue targets. Almost 32 percent of the study's respondents cited "difficulty differentiating against the competition" as a top challenge. Meanwhile, 26.9 percent said that they had trouble showing their product's full ROI²³.

Although these business value deficiencies exceeded many other sales challenges, they don't receive nearly as much attention as other sales issues. For example, sales enablement teams often devote more time to money to their CRM.

But to stand out from your competition, you must invest in tools and training that help you showcase your value. What are you doing to overcome these top sales barriers and differentiate your solutions?

WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE BARRIERS THAT YOU SEE IMPACTING YOUR SALES?

Sub-optimal sales manager coaching



Difficulty differentiating against the competition



Difficulty establishing our products' full ROI



Poor sales and marketing alignment



Difficulty identifying / meeting needs of all decision makers



Ineffective sales process / low adoption of sales process



Ineffective use of CRM solutions



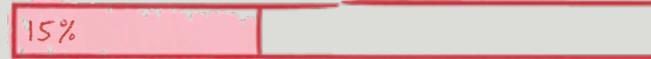
Too little selling time



Problems hiring / retaining top sales talent



Lack of common sales process



A LACK OF BUSINESS VALUE TRAINING?

Although "value" is often cited as the biggest barrier to achieving sales growth goals, recent studies highlight the fact that ROI is not getting the emphasis that it should.

According to a report from CSO Insights, almost 60 percent of respondents said that their ROI/business value justification training and enablement are in need of a major redesign or improvement²⁴. In fact, "ROI/business value" joined "social selling" and facilitating the "customer journey" as the top three areas where sales teams require better readiness.

SALESPERSON TRAINING ASSESSMENT

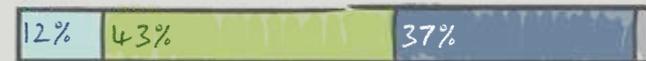
ROI / Business Value Justification Training



Social Selling Training



Customer's Journey / Customer Knowledge Training



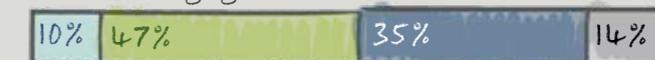
Customer's Marketplace Training



New Salesperson On-boarding Training



Value Messaging



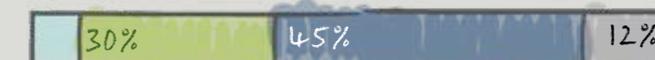
Sales Methodology / Process Training



Product Training (functions & features)



CRM and other Systems Training



Needs Major Redesign Needs Improvement Meets Expectations Exceeds Expectations

²³ CSO Insights: Source: 2017 Sales Enablement Optimization www.csoinsights.com interview of several hundred sales execs.

²⁴ CSO Insights: 2017 Sales Enablement Optimization Report, May 2017

#2: Finders Keepers

Content fuels the customer engagement, providing messaging and visuals that guide sales conversations.

The right sales content can help your sellers differentiate your solutions and convey information that streamlines a buyer's decision-making process. This content may include customer-ready materials, such as presentations, white papers, case studies, infographics, videos, and data sheets. It can also include internal sales readiness materials for your sales reps, such as discovery guides, demo scripts, training videos, white board outlines, and competitive battle cards.

Unfortunately, this content often goes unused by sellers. Or worse, it is used incorrectly. This means that much of your content investments are wasted.

For example, reps often can't find the content that they need when they need it. This is particularly true during the "last mile". If sellers can't find what they're looking for, they will fall back to their old PowerPoint presentations and scripts.

Some consumer product goods (CPG) reps have just minutes to engage prospects – with only a smartphone or tablet at their disposal. Think about a Pepsi rep visiting a store owner and trying to convince them to dedicate more shelf space to a new offering, or switch from a rival's products. The seller doesn't have time to search for a document that will help drive a provocative conversation or make their case. They need the insights, analytics and support right at that "moment of truth".

Due to a lack of mobile sales enablement, a whopping 88 percent of sales professionals are unable to bring up critical sales material on their smartphones. This is causing issues, with 60 percent of organizations reporting longer sales cycles as a result²⁵.

Reps often can't find the content that they need when they need it. This is particularly true during the "last mile"



Sellers of enterprise IT solutions often have more time with prospects, engaging in-person or in on-line meetings, and can use laptops during engagements. However, if they are speaking with multiple stakeholders, they may not be able to predict where the conversation will go. Without the right tools, reps can't pivot quickly to answer questions, deliver insights and minimize objections.

Difficulty finding the right content at the right time has a significant tangible cost:

- 47 percent of B2B companies say their reps spend over 20 hours per month searching, editing, creating or managing content²⁶. (SiriusDecisions)
- 65 percent of all marketing-produced content is not used by sales teams with 28 percent of the usage problems attributable to "findability" issues²⁷. (SiriusDecisions)
- Two-thirds of sellers spend up to 10 hours a week modifying marketing content before using it in front of customers²⁸.
- More than 50 percent of the time, Marketing is slow in responding to Sales' requests for content, so reps resort to improvising their own content²⁹.
- 43 percent of B2B sellers have lost sales as a consequence of not having the right content at the right time, while 77 percent have experienced costly delays³⁰.

Although you may own a wealth of content, your sales reps may have a hard time finding it. For example, teams will distribute updates via email, or spread content across multiple repositories and portals and fail to index it properly or provide mobile access. Then, reps have trouble accessing the files that they need when they are face-to-face with prospects.

In addition, traditional sales enablement has been mainly focused on preparing sellers back-office, before they meet with prospects. This readiness is important, but it doesn't give sellers a dynamic tool that could potentially reshape their "last mile" engagement. Reps need to guess where the conversation will go and prepare materials ahead of time to match. Or they try to drive the conversation rigidly, rather than pivoting naturally and taking a more consultative approach.



47% of B2B companies say their reps spend over 20 hours per month searching, editing, creating or managing content



43% of B2B sellers have lost sales as a consequence of not having the right content at the right time

²⁵ CSO Insights: 7 Sales Leader Insights to Improve Performance in 2016, 2016

²⁶ SiriusDecisions - <https://www.siriusdecisions.com/blog/four-sales-enablement-facts-that-will-make-you-nervous-about-taking-too-much-summer-vacation-part-ii>

²⁷ SiriusDecisions - <https://www.siriusdecisions.com/newsletters/august-2017-newsletter>

²⁸ Modern B2B Buying Experience Requires A Singular Content Strategy - Forrester Report by Laura Ramos

²⁹ Demand Metric: The State and Impact of Content Consistency, February 2017

³⁰ Forrester cited by Forbes: Align Or Die: 4 Reasons To Align Sales And Marketing Now, July 9, 2018



TRADITIONAL SALES TRAINING DOES NOT SHORTEN YOUR LAST MILE

Typical sales organizations spend millions each year educating reps on the latest sales methodologies.

However, this training is often ineffective at helping reps achieve sales readiness.

Did you know?

- \$10,000 is the cost per rep to implement a new sales methodology training³¹. (Forbes)
- 79% of sales rep forget what they learn in as little as 30 days³².
- 85%-90% of sales training has no lasting impact after 120 days³³.

Frustrated sales training practitioners often lament, "So much spent, with so little results."

Traditional sales training has failed. Sellers pay attention in the classroom and pass their tests. They receive certifications with great fan fare.

But when it comes to reshaping prospect engagements, sellers leverage the same old presentations and rush into demos. Falling back to old habits produces the same results – proving that traditional training doesn't move the needle.

According to Aberdeen, a lack of post-training reinforcement is the issue. When you implement reinforcement and modernize your training, you can boost the adoption of new sales methodologies and improve your team's skills. Aberdeen's research states that sellers are 64 percent more likely to adopt a new sales methodology or skill when they have access to lessons learned on the fly, by the entire team, and can continuously incorporate them into their ever-evolving methodology.

Just-in-time micro training at the point of engagement is essential to improving reps' skills, so they can get through the last mile. A move from traditional training to modern sales enablement and readiness is key³⁴.

#3: Traditional Sales Collateral is Obsolete

Your sellers love to use collateral, such as white papers, to give buyers additional insights and influence their purchasing decisions. In fact, 79 percent of B2B buyers report that the content they receive from sales reps is very- to extremely influential in their vendor selection.

According to SiriusDecisions³⁵, sellers are leveraging more content than one might expect. They also use this content throughout each stage of the buyer's journey.

But just leveraging more content did not guarantee accelerated decisions, greater deal sizes, or more wins. The SiriusDecisions research quantified that all content is not created equal, with a decided difference in the assets used by high-performing sellers compared with lower-performing reps.

Most importantly, the research uncovered and ranked content as to perceived value to buyers.



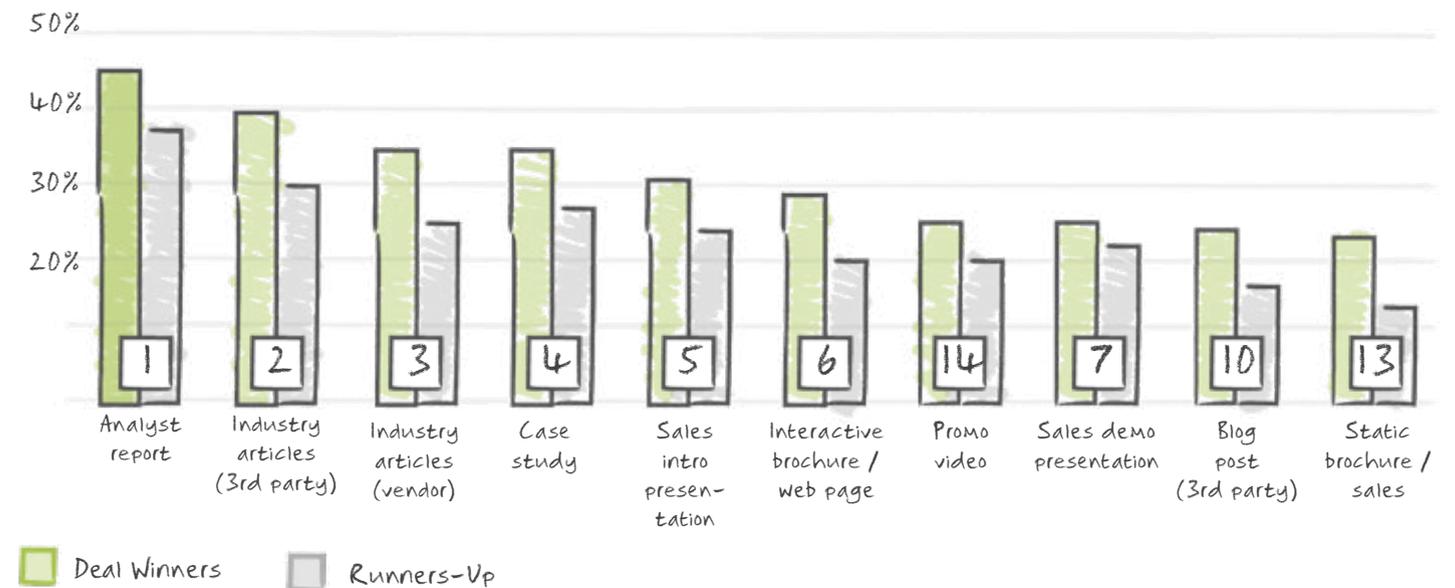
Research from SiriusDecisions shows that buyers use:

6.3 pieces of content in the education phase

6.1 pieces of content in the solution phase

4.9 pieces of content in the selection phase

THE MOST EFFECTIVE CONTENT



³⁵ SiriusDecisions: SiriusDecisions Sales Content Secrets - Aligning to Customer Needs and Challenges, July 18, 2016

³¹ How Much Does Sales Training Cost - <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ianaltman/2014/12/01/how-much-does-sales-training-cost/#192c5f4453ee>

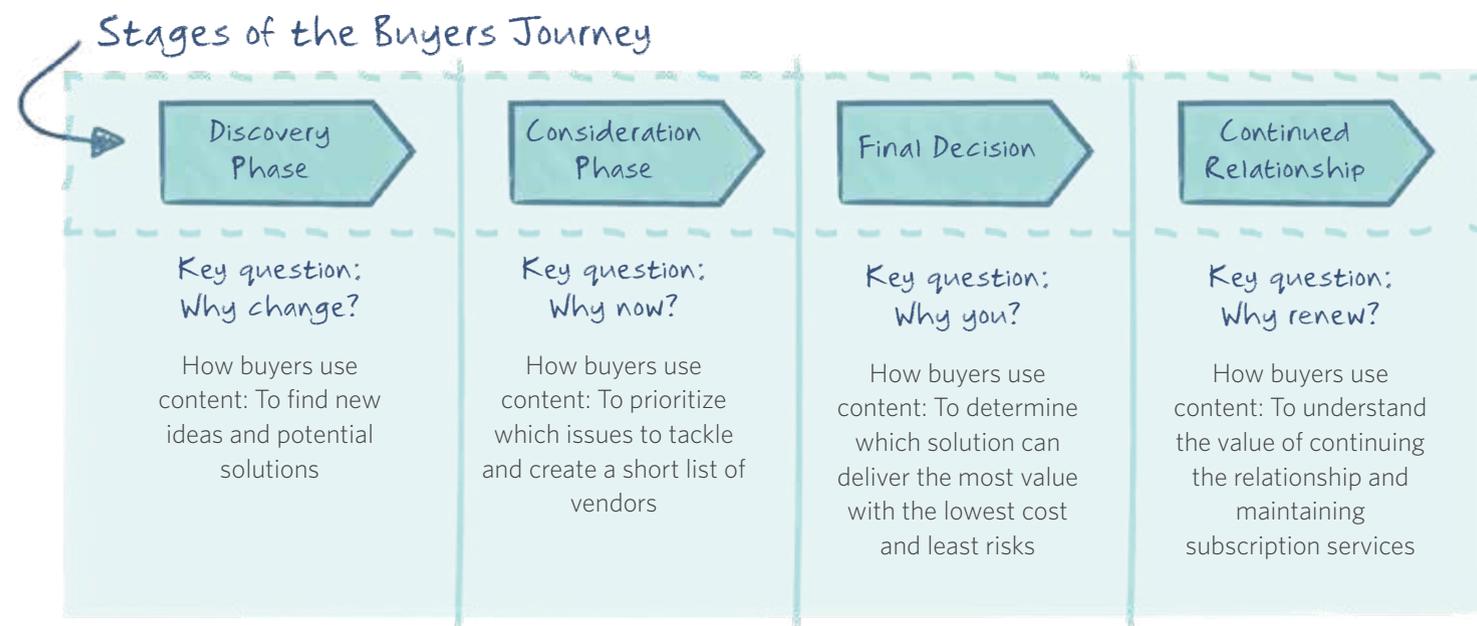
³² Richardson: Help Your Sales Reps Move from "The Forgetting Curve" to "Total Recall", February 18, 2013

³³ EcSell Institute: Sales Management Training: Is It Failing You? December 18, 2014

³⁴ Aberdeen - <https://www.aberdeen.com/hcm-essentials/once-is-not-enough-why-sales-training-reinforcement-is-a-must-have/>

Interpreting the results, SiriusDecisions found that B2B buyers don't value product videos and glossy brochures as high as one might think, even though organizations spend a lot of time and budget on these assets. Rather, decision makers want relevant insights and transformative advice. They value third-party research, as well as vendor proposals that are based on their needs.

Here is how customers use content across their buying journey:



So, how do you make your sales content more effective? It's not about creating more content, as quantity doesn't guarantee quality. In this research, SiriusDecisions identified three sales content challenges that you must overcome to improve your results:

1. **Better identifying your customers' challenges and needs** - 80 percent of respondents said that uncovering buyer needs is critical to sales success³⁶. However, two-thirds of solution providers struggle to understand these needs. Many lack the right content to help guide discovery and uncover customer challenges.
2. **Overcoming one-size fits all content** - Today's buyers get 32 percent more vendor content than they did just two years ago. It's not surprising that content fatigue is setting in, as buyers grow tired of look-alike white papers and canned product pitches. Buyers want content that is more personalized and speaks to their unique

issues. They also want one-to-one engagements, with personalized insights and prescriptive advice. This means that static content doesn't meet buyers' new needs.

3. **Closing the value gap** - The number one reason sellers didn't achieve quota was their "inability to articulate the unique business value of proposed solutions". A lack of business value messaging and tools fuels this problem. The content that you give reps must help sellers better communicate and quantify differentiating business outcomes, personalized for the business value goals of each buyer.

Traditional sales content, such as static PowerPoints and white papers, are dead. Buyers expect more, and to connect and engage properly, you must do more. A study by Demand Metric indicates that interactive content is essential to your success³⁷. According to the study:

- 90% of respondents said that interactive content is more likely to be effective at educating buyers.
- 84% of sellers believe that interactive content differentiates them from their competitors.
- 63% of respondents believe that interactive content is more likely to be shared frequently.

The more visual and interactive your content is, the more you will:

1. Connect with buyers about their specific challenges.
2. Show prospects how much they are falling behind their peers.
3. Help prospects tally the high cost of "do nothing."
4. Provide specific and intelligent advice and recommendations.
5. Quantify prospects' potential savings and business value potential.
6. Illuminate the most relevant success stories that will resonate and prove that the projected outcomes are not just possible, but probable.

When was the last time a traditional, passive piece of sales collateral did all of that?

³⁶ SiriusDecisions: SiriusDecisions Sales Content Secrets - Aligning to Customer Needs and Challenges, July 18, 2016

³⁷ Demand Metric: Content Experience Impact and the Buyer's Journey, February 2018

³⁸ SiriusDecisions - <https://www.responsemagazine.com/tech/at-siriusdecisions-2014-more-than-60-b2b-content-ends-up-content-wasteland>

³⁹ Demand Metric - <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2017/03/prweb14154132.htm>



Did You Know:

60 to 70%

of the content provided for Sales is unused and wasted, because reps can't find what they need or think the content is not relevant³⁸

Two-thirds

of organizations report that they lose deals because they don't have the content they need³⁹

Only 44 percent of sales organizations reported that they are "highly confident" in their sales force's ability to communicate value messages to customers, versus 88 percent of world-class organizations⁴⁰.

According to Demand Metric, winning B2B solution providers are beginning to take advantage of the following interactive content:

- 23% use assessments.
- 22% create interactive white papers.
- 13% use calculators.

Do you have any opportunities to make your content more effective, show your value, and differentiate yourself from your competitors?

#4: Blind Faith

Is your new presentation helping reps close more deals?

What about your new white paper or infographic? Do they accelerate deals and differentiate you from the competition?

Do you know how reps and prospects are using your content?

When it comes to knowing which content works, most organizations don't have a clue.

Some reps use a checkbox in Salesforce to mark which content they used. But how many reps check the right boxes? And which content can you attribute to revenue performance? Without real-time tracking and analytics, it's hard to know.

It is vital to be able to track the sales content that works. You can do this in the following progressive manner:

1. **Tracking usage** – measuring and analyzing which content is being used by which sellers, with which prospects, and when in the sales cycle
2. **Tracking consumption** – measuring and analyzing which content is being shared with and read / reviewed by prospects and with whom are the champion / mobilizer prospects (those who are spearheading the decision and driving the internal buying team) sharing the content with.
3. **Tracking outcomes** – determining which content is being used to make a difference by correlating and determining how the sales content is driving improved win rates, accelerated decisions, less discounting and more up/cross-selling.



BUYERS EXPECT YOU TO PROVIDE A BUSINESS CASE

I remember the first time I visited West Point like it was yesterday. I was still in high school, and a dear friend invited me to see her brother graduate. To make this even more special, I was lucky enough to hear the great communicator, President Ronald Reagan, deliver the commencement speech.

Two things immediately strike you on a visit to the institution: first the idyllic location and beautiful grounds along the Hudson; and second, the discipline of the student soldiers who marched in unison into the stands before each game.

Randy Perry, head of IDC's business value practice, came of age in such a disciplined environment as a West Point graduate. He brings his foundation of discipline into his research.

I've had the pleasure of collaborating with Randy on business value for the past 20 years. His latest research on the need for business value illuminate the value gap like never before.

According to Perry, "Over 95 percent of B2B buyers now require financial justification on any significant purchase, now set at \$50,000 or more." Research shows that accountability is extreme, budgets are tight, and risk avoidance reigns.

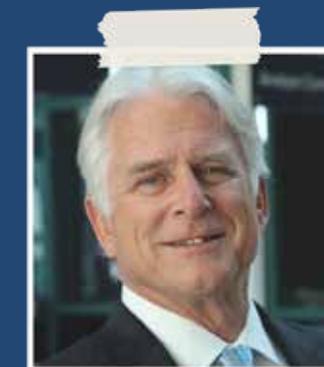
This gives solution providers a new opportunity. According to Perry, two-thirds of buyers don't

have the time, knowledge, or tools needed to make business value assessments and calculations. If you leave financial justification to the buyer, you will face delays when getting proposals approved.

But if you address these gaps, you will stand out from your competition and accelerate sales. In fact, according to IDC, 81 percent of buyers expect vendors to quantify the value of proposed solutions and provide a formal business case proposal⁴¹. According to Perry, "Your prospects clearly need the help, and the solution provider who delivers a business value analysis first can gain a significant advantage."

Unfortunately, only one in five buyers will ask for a business case. Since most sellers only provide what is asked, the majority of prospects will struggle to produce financial justification on their own, adding weeks, if not months of delay to the purchase process. They may also fail to provide executives with the required justification proof points, meaning the project may delay behind other priority proposals, and approval may never happen at all.

But Perry has good news: "Those vendors that step up and provide business cases proactively on all significant proposals will win more deals, more quickly."



Randy Perry

⁴⁰ MHI Global - <http://blog.tamaraschenk.com/the-inability-to-communicate-value-messages-biggest-inhibitor-to-sales-success-2014/>

⁴¹ IDC, Business Value Summit Keynote - IDC + Alinean - Why Financial Justification / ROI is so Important to Marketing & Selling Success, March 6, 2017



GARTNER: BUYER ENABLEMENT TOOLS NEEDED TO WIN MORE CUSTOMERS

Buying B2B solutions isn't just difficult: New research from Gartner indicates that, "it's become nearly unnavigable"⁴².

Your prospects struggle as much as you. Factors such as growing buying committees, the inability to differentiate look-alike options, risk aversion, and frugality all conspire to make a purchase decision difficult.

Gartner says that buyers spend about two-thirds of their journey gathering, processing, and de-conflicting information. These steps consume an inordinate amount of resources and time – contributing to longer sales cycles, stalled deals, and the need for steep discounting.

But Gartner says that if you deliver the right information through the right channels, you will make customers' purchase processes easier. As complexity grows, you must help buyers find the signal through the noise. According to Gartner, "Sales teams need to harness empathy, and their deep industry and customer knowledge, to develop and deploy information to help buyers buy."

Marketing also needs to evolve. Instead of throwing more content at buyers who are already overwhelmed, you must provide personalized content and experiences, for example: interactive assessments, benchmarking,

sizing, pricing, comparisons, and business case tools that discover needs and help guide buyers to make the right decision. This personalized and interactive content should replicate the consultative advice that your top sellers provide during face-to-face engagements.

Gartner calls the ability to help your prospects navigate a complex journey 'buyer enablement,' where Marketing and Sales should:

- Identify customer pain points. Uncover the challenges customers should prioritize.
- Create buyer enablement tools. Develop resources that guide customers throughout their buying journey, such as tools that help them uncover areas for improvement, compare and contrast options, and financially justify their selection.
- Be consistent across channels. Make buyer enablement available to all customers across both digital (self-service) and seller (direct and partner) channels.

According to Gartner, intelligently guiding and advising the prospect is the key to simplifying the buying experience and accelerating their journey. Solution providers that get this right will gain a competitive and revenue growth advantage.

How to Drive Revenue from Channel Partnerships in the Age of Frugalnomics

As an effort to scale more effectively, many solution providers are looking to channel partners to drive revenue growth. In fact, a survey by channel experts at the 2112 Group revealed that the majority of large B2B firms now generate 60 percent of their revenue through indirect channels, and this is anticipated to grow further over the next three years⁴³.

For technology companies, the percentage of revenue that comes from channel programs is even more significant. Accenture reports that 70 percent of tech revenue comes from the typical channel program, and this number is expected to increase to 80 percent within the next year⁴⁴.

To attract and enable partners, more firms are investing in channel incentives. In fact, this is one of the largest marketing expenditures, with the typical technology provider allocating three-to-five percent of their revenue to indirect channel incentives.

With so much revenue coming from channel partners, the pressure is on to make sure these investments pay off. However, it's challenging to attract, retain, and drive revenue from your partners.

One challenge is that your partners aren't dedicated solely to your company. If you want to boost your partner revenue, you may need to compete with others or offer steep discounts. You also must invest in content, tools, and training to bring your partners up to speed. But budgets aren't endless, and more isn't always more, so you must find creative ways to stand out.

49% of revenue

is generated from indirect channels, with the average company working with 176 partners⁴⁵. (Forrester)

35% of channel partners

fall short of their revenue targets⁴⁶. (CSO Insights)

9-10 months,

how long it takes to make a new partner productive⁴⁷. (CSO Insights)

⁴³ 2112 Group - <http://www.enterpriseappstoday.com/erp/erps-channel-management-blind-spot.html>

⁴⁴ Accenture: Improving the ROI of Indirect Channel Incentives, 2015

⁴⁵ It's Time to Enable Your Channel Partners For Evolved Selling - Increase Growth, Competitive Advantage, And Buyer Satisfaction With A Digital Sales Enablement Approach - Forrester Consulting - <https://www.mediafly.com/b2b-channel-sales/>

⁴⁶ CSO Insights 2016 Channel Sales Optimization Study - <https://www.csoinsights.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/02/2016-Channel-Sales-Optimization-Study-v2.pdf>

⁴⁷ CSO Insights 2016 Channel Sales Optimization Study - <https://www.csoinsights.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/02/2016-Channel-Sales-Optimization-Study-v2.pdf>

Another challenge is that many channel partners haven't kept pace with changes in buying behaviors. For example:

- **Engaging earlier is a requirement**, with 74% of deals going to the provider who sets the buying agenda. But most partners are notorious at engaging late in the sales cycle, and merely responding to RFPs⁴⁸.
- **Engaging higher is essential**, as executives ultimately control the purse strings, and are more involved than ever in transformation strategy and direction. However, partner reps are more comfortable pitching to technical staff and line managers instead of business leaders.
- **Value is a requirement**, as 95% of purchase decisions require ROI justification⁴⁹. But the majority of channel reps still sell on features and price, instead of value.

Your channel partners must do more than just pitch your products. They need to challenge buyers to change and articulate how your solutions will help drive outcomes and achieve their unique goals.

You must make it easy for channel partner reps to communicate the value of your solutions. This requires a new channel enablement approach that helps your partners:

1. Lead provocative conversations that engage prospects around their challenges.
2. Find, leverage, and share the right content at the right time.
3. Use assessments to uncover prospects' challenges and unmet needs.
4. Prescribe and align the right solutions to specific prospect challenges.
5. Communicate and quantify the differentiating value of these solutions.
6. Build trust with prospects via relevant success stories and validated proof points that show your solution's value.

Channel partner sales contribute to nearly half of all B2B revenue. However, 55 percent of sales and marketing leaders are not confident in - or not aware of - their partners' ability to deliver consistent and compelling sales experiences⁵⁰.



⁴⁸ Forrester - To Win Against Increasing Competition, Equip Your Salespeople with a Deeper Understanding of your Buyers - https://go.forrester.com/blogs/14-01-27-to_win_against_increasing_competition_equip_your_salespeople_with_a_deeper_understanding_of_your_buy/

⁴⁹ IDC - Business Value Summit Keynote - <https://www.slideshare.net/Alinean/business-value-summit-keynote-idc-alinean-why-financial-justification-roi-is-so-important-to-marketing-selling-success>

⁵⁰ Forrester: It's Time to Enable Your Channel Partners For Evolved Selling, July 2018



ARE YOUR SALES REPS PREPARED? THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

I've had the pleasure of collaborating with Scott Santucci on many occasions. We first worked together when he was the head of sales enablement research at Forrester and helped to define the practice. Now, he is the founder of the Sales Enablement Society, an independent organization that promotes and empowers the profession.

I had the pleasure of interviewing Santucci on a few occasions, and often our discussions would turn to how sellers were doing.

To learn more about this, each year Scott would conduct a survey, asking executives "Are the sellers who visit you prepared?" The results of his surveys reflect the good, the bad, and the ugly of sales rep capabilities.

The Good

A majority of buyers (62%) indicate that sellers are knowledgeable about their company, products, and services. This reflects the time and effort they put into product-focused presentations, collateral, and training.

The Bad

Most reps receive very low grades (30%-40%) on their knowledge of the buyer's industry and preparation for questions they would ask.

The Ugly

Three out of four sellers are perceived as having little-to-no knowledge about the buyer's business. They also don't properly understand the buyer's issues or provide relevant success stories.

ARE VENDOR SALES PEOPLE FREQUENTLY PREPARED FOR YOUR MEETINGS IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS?

Knowledgeable about their company and products



Can relate to my role and responsibilities



Knowledgeable about my industry



Understands my issues and where they can help



Prepared for the questions I ask



Has relevant examples or case studies to share



Knowledgeable about my specific business



What Winners Do Differently

New research highlights that winning sellers do things differently, especially when it comes to the conversations they have with prospects. The Rain Group surveyed more than 700 B2B purchases to analyze what distinguished the winning sellers from the runner-ups⁵¹. The analysis found that the best sellers won deals by connecting, convincing, and collaborating with prospects.

Connect

Winners connect with prospects by performing more effective discovery and assessments. They better uncover buyer needs, as well as connect the dots between these needs and their solutions.

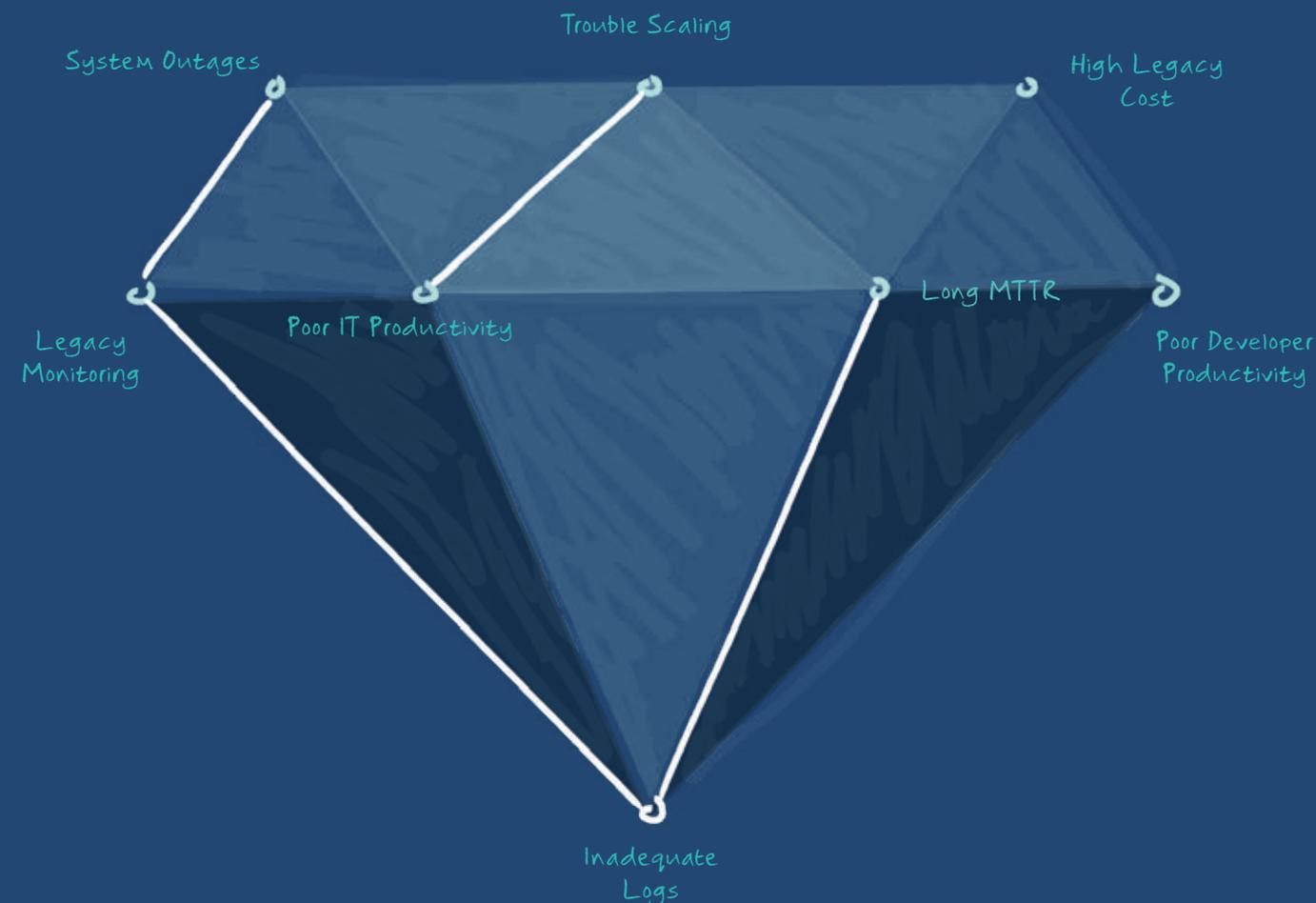
In fact, the winners demonstrated that they understood buyers' needs 2.5 times more often than the runners up.

Convince

Winners convince buyers that they can achieve maximum returns with minimal risks. To become winners, your sellers must:

1. Communicate and quantify the business value benefits the buyer can achieve with your solutions, including cost savings, productivity improvements, risk mitigation, and revenue improvements.
2. Compare the investment in your solution with the business value benefits prospects will gain over time. They must calculate the ROI, payback period, and net present value (NPV) savings.
3. Communicate the potential risks of implementing your solution and risk-adjust the financial justification for bankable results.
4. Prove that you are the best choice by comparing your TCO and incremental business value against your competition.

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⁵¹ Rain Group: What Sales Winners Do Differently

Collaborate

Winners spent more time collaborating with buyers. For example, they offered decision makers new ideas and educated them about their challenges and solutions. Winners also didn't sit back and wait for requests: they communicated and quantified their value proactively.

The losing reps would often "show up and throw up." They pitched canned solutions without regard to the prospect's stage in their decision-making process, what challenges they faced, and what they really needed to solve their problems.

To produce winners, Sales Enablement must help improve collaboration. This involves personalizing each engagement, aiding in discovery, assuring mutual understanding, facilitating education, and proving that you offer the best solution with the highest value.



EVOLVE YOUR SELLING FROM:



Pitch to Purpose:

Ending "Death by PowerPoint" linear sales pitches that focus on your company, products, and services, advancing to conversations that discover and illuminate your prospect's challenges and the business value outcome you can uniquely deliver.



Static to Interactive:

Progressing from static one-size-fits-all white papers, and presentations to more visually compelling, interactive applications that engage prospects, deliver intelligent assessments, insights and analyses, and allow you to capture customer intelligence.



Lost to Found:

Advancing from content distributed via email or stored in multiple silos to a searchable repository. This helps reps find exactly what they need when they need it - from any device. It also empowers reps to quickly pivot to the right content to help answer prospects' questions.



Dark To Visible:

Transitioning from a lack of content usage insights to visibility into what content is actually being used, what buyers are consuming and using to make decisions, what is driving the best outcomes and works best in each scenario.

