

SALES CHAOS

Using Agility Selling to Think and Sell Differently

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Chaos Reigns

“Chaos results when the world changes faster than people.”

Anonymous

INTRODUCTION

Daniel was driving home from work. It was 8:30 p.m. He was tired, and he knew he would have to get up early tomorrow to get ready for the big sales call with his newest major prospect. As he drove home, his mind slowly recapped the day in an attempt to identify and finalize the growing list of “to-dos” for the coming days. This morning it was up early for a quick workout, then an even quicker breakfast. Within an hour, he had skimmed the daily newspaper as well as four major news websites while simultaneously getting dressed for the day. He had also read two earnings call transcripts from his biggest clients and accomplished a quick scan of his smart phone to determine whether any fires had popped up within his customer base overnight. Luckily for him, things were mostly under control—just an email from his boss asking for an update on three of his opportunities before 2:00 p.m. today (some sort of meeting prep with the Sales VP, he assumed). A quick review of his daily calendar and he was out the door.

The day unfolded around three big sales meetings (sales calls) that he ran today. Two were with prospects, and one

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meeting was with a client he'd had for about a year. The three meetings were with various levels of decision-makers (some higher in their organization with decision-making power and some lower in their organization but who held considerable influence on others in the organization). None of the meetings today were with a single person. As usual, there were as many as seven people and as few as two people in these meetings. Of course, he was able to talk about the benefits and value of all his 100+ products and fifteen services during his meetings. He was able to discuss pricing options while negotiating price in one of those meetings. "I think I did pretty well on that," he thought to himself. In each of his three calls, the competition was brought up, and he was able to explain his organization's unique value proposition in a way that bashed the competition, but still made a strong case for his company's solution.

Still driving home from work, Daniel took a mental tally and reviewed each of the sales meetings, in an attempt to mentally debrief how well he had done and identify any areas for clarification or possible questions from the people he had met with. During the day, he had managed to arrive on time to all his appointments and keep his energy level up. Now, looking at his face in the rearview mirror, he realized that exhaustion was finally taking over. "At least the day is almost over," he thought.

When he pulled into the driveway it was 9:05 p.m. Looking at his briefcase in the car seat next to him, he instinctively knew what he needed to do. He pulled out his notebook and reviewed the day's notes and made a list of follow-up actions that were highly urgent and another list of actions that could come later. He pulled out a couple of brochures that he had carried with him today. "I never hand these things out," he thought, but he put them right back in their usual briefcase pocket.

He opened up his daily calendar to the day's date and reviewed his notes from the phone calls he had made between his three sales meetings. Daniel quickly highlighted the internal communications and coordination he needed to accomplish in the coming hours in order to keep momentum up with his sales opportunities. "A pretty productive day, but again no sales were closed," he sighed. He finally got out of his car and went inside.

A brief glance at the clock showed it was now 9:15 p.m. He quickly flipped forward in his calendar to skim the remaining three days of the week. The next couple of days had three sales calls each, and then there was Friday. Friday was the quarterly planning meeting at the regional office that began with what Daniel called the “dog and pony show”—individual sales pipeline reviews with the entire team as the audience. “At some point, I have to prepare my whole portfolio of customers and update my spreadsheets . . . and finish my account plans,” he thought wearily. “But at least I have a few more days to do it. And besides, as the number one person this quarter, they’ll probably cut me some slack.”

Sounds familiar, doesn’t it? If you are anything like Daniel, the world of professional selling is a constantly moving one. One that requires you to work many long hours for the kind of success that comes far too infrequently. But even when you look at Daniel’s story, he is still experiencing success (at least for this quarter). Can you tell why? More specifically, could you do the same thing?

TAKING INVENTORY

Defining what it takes to be successful in sales is arguably the most difficult part of the job. Considering how visible sales results are, any and all missteps can be immediately obvious. And if you are the one experiencing the missteps, the list of excuses for the poor performance can be as long as your arm.

Pause. Let’s try an exercise. Picture yourself falling behind in your sales performance. What is causing this current situation? Is it just your personality that is getting in the way? Probably not. Is it some knowledge that you are missing? Perhaps. Is it a set of skills that have slowly lost their value over time? Could be. In fact, it could be all of these factors, and more, contributing to your poor performance. But if we switched the exercise around so that you are now experiencing wild success, how quickly would you lock into one or two factors to define your high performance?

No matter how you slice it, chances are you won’t be able to pinpoint the one thing that makes you successful. In other

words, there are no “silver bullets” for success. No matter what your personality type is, or the knowledge and skill you possess, or any other factor you can come up with, one thing is for certain: You must continuously adapt to the world around you. Better yet, you must continuously learn if you want your success to be repeated.



CONSIDER THIS

Becoming successful today requires both knowing AND doing.

So how do you keep learning? To be more specific, how do you find time to learn about new products, stay on top of the competition, keep up with industry trends, update your customer relationship management [CRM] tool, maintain a constant flow of communication internally, show up to meetings on time, understand where each buyer is in the decision-making process, serve as the “face of the company,” and keep up the momentum? From internally focused actions that require an immediate response to externally focused collaboration that must be strategically managed, how do you stay on top of it day after day? After all, it seems a little random and chaotic doesn't it?

Or to simplify the question, how do you manage the chaos of sales?

CHAOS—THE FINAL FRONTIER

That's right, we said it. Chaos—the final frontier. Sounds like science fiction, right? To be fair, there is a bit of science geek to it, but the bigger truth is if you are living in the reality of today's business, you are probably swimming in it. Chaos, that is.

If Daniel's story resonated with you at all, think about all the complexity you wrestle with in your business life (or Daniel does). Think about the complex set of influences found within the massive storm cloud that is called an economy. Identifying

BUILDING ON THE FOUNDATION

Chaos Theory

Chaos theory is a large part of this book, but don't let it scare you. Chaos theory doesn't mean that things are out of control. On the contrary, you'll find that chaos theory lets you harness the seemingly random activity around you.

According to the Merriam Webster dictionary, chaos theory is the study of the consequences of chaos and chaotic systems. In this book, we pull from chaos theory, organization behavior, management science, and an in-depth understanding of the sales profession to help you understand the consequences of chaos as you engage in a conversation with your customers.

One of the first scientists to comment on chaos was Henri Poincaré (1854–1912), a late-19th century French mathematician who extensively studied topology and dynamic systems. He explained, "It may happen that small differences in the initial conditions produce very great ones in the final phenomena. A small error in the former will produce an enormous error in the latter. Prediction becomes impossible." Unfortunately, the study of dynamic systems was largely ignored until long after Poincaré's death.

From where we sit, the science of chaos theory is now a required discipline for the study of the nature of professional selling.

Source: Encyclopedia of Business, 2nd ed.



those components and writing them down would yield a list that everyone is pretty familiar with:

- Globalization
- More cultural diversity in the buying and selling environment

- “Off-shoring” of jobs
- Challenges in corporate ethics and governance
- Rapidly evolving knowledge and information
- More use of technology and the Internet
- Multiple processes within the marketing, selling, and delivery functions
- Broader responsibilities across the organization when it comes to growing revenue
- Multiple organizational strategies leading to a need for fresh tactics

UNDERSTANDING THE CHAOS

Now, take it a step further. Look specifically at the world of selling. If you’re a sales professional reading this book, you are living in a reality that is complex, confusing, and chaotic. Many of the tactics and strategies that have worked so well over the last few decades are no longer obtaining the results you need. But some salespeople are coping with the complexity around them—and winning.

So how do they do it? And how can we leverage their winning ways across the enterprise? Business leaders and executives regularly struggle to apply this understanding to more of the sales team. Sales VPs want to “replicate their best salespeople”—but can’t. Technology vendors promise to help you sell more stuff—but don’t. Consultants say that sales managers need to hire the right people—but there isn’t a clear definition of what that means. Many of the approaches taken by executives, vendors, and suppliers just don’t work in helping salespeople become more successful. Let’s face it, if their approaches were working, there would be more ways for you to thrive in the sales profession, instead of getting burned out or tossed out of the profession.

UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITY

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Complexity

There is an amazing amount of scientific evidence that proves every system has the potential to fall into chaos.

The primary frame for understanding complexity around us is dynamic systems theory, which is used to describe processes that constantly change over time (for example, the ups and downs of the stock market). When systems become dislodged from a stable state, they go through a period of oscillation, swinging back and forth between order and chaos. According to Margaret J. Wheatley (1994) in *Leadership and the New Science*, "Chaos is the final state in a system's movement away from order."

Sounds a lot like professional selling doesn't it?

Source: *Encyclopedia of Business*, 2nd ed.



How did the business world become so difficult to work in? It's the result of all of this increased complexity. Obviously, people are looking for ways to deal with complexity, but none of the methods, strategies, or tools we see so casually tossed about seem to actually help. Frankly, many of them just add to the complexity. The result? Instead of creating solutions, we hear a lot of really sophisticated, highly intellectual excuses. And you know what you can do with excuses in the business world, right?

As sales professionals ourselves, we grew tired of excuses and lame attempts by vendors, suppliers, and (dare we say it) even sales management to help us sell more. So we took matters into our own hands.

It began with the realization that complexity breeds chaos. And the greater the complexity, the greater the chaos. This set us on a whole new trajectory in our thinking about how

we communicate with our buyers. You see, if you are able to understand the concept of chaos, you are then able to deal with the complexity around you so it doesn't have a big impact on your sales conversations. You have to be agile. You cannot deal with such massive waves of complexity with the Rules of Order. That would be like trying to organize the grains of sand on a beach. Have fun counting and stacking sand while the tide is rising. This is why all of those other so-called solutions are so ineffective. This is why many times salespeople have a hard time selling solutions. They presume the complexity goes away. Well, we have news for you. It will never go away. Welcome to the new reality.

We knew that if we could just erase everything that we presupposed about professional selling, if we could rethink everything that is involved in selling today and look through the lens of chaos, we could turn our understanding of the new reality into the ability to sell differently. And if we could sell differently, we could manage business differently. We could become agile—and turn our agility in the chaos to a distinct advantage. A very profitable advantage at that.

After literally years of research, trial, and error, we did it. We cracked the code. It started to become clearer when we identified three overwhelming forces of the new reality that most people have ignored. We then realized that if we could allow these forces to run their course in a way that embraced chaos, a new business philosophy emerged. The complexity stopped being so confusing and actually started making sense.

INTRODUCING THE THREE FORCES OF COMPLEXITY

Are you ready for the three forces? Well, strap yourself in and get ready for a bumpy ride, because the next few pages are going to upset someone somewhere—and that might even include you.



PAY ATTENTION

There are three overwhelming forces of the new selling reality. And most people have ignored them, or worse yet, not even noticed them.

Force 1: The Force of the Non-Linear

Number 1: The Force of the Non-Linear (decision making is not sequential). Or in slightly more inflammatory language, the sales funnel is dead—and it has been dead since 2004 when we first published an article in the *Washington Business Journal* on it. Oh, we can hear some of you now. That's heresy! That's foolish! Yeah . . . whatever. Before you start arguing with us, hear us out.

First, have you noticed how random your workday has become? How your customer makes decisions? The typical sales funnel is woefully inadequate at helping you keep up with the random nature of customer decision making. And if you think the sales funnel contains only one process that you are dealing with, you're forgetting about communication processes, marketing processes, planning processes, measurement processes, and delivery processes (to name a few). Are you willing to lump all these into one generic sales funnel or process? If you are, then you're at least five years behind the buyer who has a process for everything—from making a decision to identifying needs. Let's face it; anyone who is thriving in the sales profession today recognizes that decisions are no longer linear. Shoot, sometimes buyers don't even know why, what, or how they are supposed to be buying, but their job title has "purchasing" or "buyer" somewhere in the middle of it so, by golly, that's what they're going to do. They may bring you in just in time to negotiate your price in one instance, and then ask you to start all over and help them identify a need in the next. There is still a kind of decision-making process, but it just doesn't always follow a nice, neat straight line any more. And sales funnels are all about straight lines. Heck, they're even nicely packaged into a series of steps. How can a sales funnel accurately measure the rate of what goes in and what comes out the bottom when things enter halfway through the process? And what do you do with opportunities that actually grow after the initial point of purchase? And if you analyze what's being measured within the sales process (for example, number of calls, number of appointments, number of proposals) don't you think it seems a little one-sided for the sales team? More and more input is required from other parts of the organization to be successful in identifying and closing new business. For example, you might

need input from the delivery team, solutions from the engineering team, pricing help from marketing, and data from a database in another country to even get a proposal out the door. It all requires alignment, and the sales funnel doesn't cut it anymore, especially when it comes to managing sales opportunities along the entire breadth of the customer's experience with your company (and we're not even talking about how the customer defines value yet!).

Speaking of opportunities, a sales funnel also does a pathetic job of identifying which opportunities are easy and which are hard. How many of you keep the really difficult prospects out of your funnel until you know they are going to be a guaranteed success? Or worse, you only go after the guaranteed successes to keep your closing rate high. We call it the China Syndrome.

A sales team for a large energy company in China was being evaluated for their closing rate. Guess what? They were closing almost 100 percent of their deals. And revenue was still below target. The Western expats in charge were confused. They pulled in some of their local talent and asked, "Why?" "The answer is simple," said the local managers. "Chinese culture puts a premium on managing reputation." The sales reps were not pursuing anyone who might actually say no because they didn't want to lose face. So how useful was the sales funnel in that scenario? Turn the mirror on yourself. How useful is your sales funnel in determining your success in the next business cycle?



CONSIDER THIS

How many sales funnels have you seen that have overly simplified the buyer decision-making process? Are you 100 percent reliant on the sales funnel? Really?

Still not convinced? Let us offer another bit of evidence. Have you ever heard of the 80/20 principle? The original concept was developed by Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto. But it wasn't until 1941 that Joseph M. Juran applied Pareto's idea to business.

Juran used Pareto's principle to identify that 80 percent of results came from 20 percent of the causes. We apply this to sales all the time. Eighty percent of your revenue typically comes from 20 percent of your customers (and sometimes even less). What happens when you put every possible opportunity into your sales funnel? You skew your data. Your sales funnel is full of noise. Chances are, if you are really honest, that 80 percent of what is in your sales funnel is just noise. It's not going to replace that big customer your company just lost. As a single account, they were worth 15 percent of your business locally. And some of you reading this are already freaking out about how you are going to make bonus next quarter without them.

BUILDING ON THE FOUNDATION

Joseph M. Juran was a 20th century management guru who launched the "managing for quality" revolution in manufacturing and whose work in Tokyo helped turn the label "Made in Japan" from a joke into a symbol of quality.

In 1937, he coined the Pareto Principle, also known as the 80/20 rule, which states that 80 percent of effects come from 20 percent of causes. As a theory it achieved a sort of universality that could be applied to almost anything, from 20 percent of customers buying 80 percent of products, to 80 percent of production errors being made by 20 percent of workers, etc.

According to the Juran Institute, "Millions of managers continue to rely on [the rule] to help separate the 'vital few' from the 'useful many' in their activities."

Source: Los Angeles Times



Let us also add some longer-term thinking to this point. Your executive leadership, if they're good, has identified strategic customer segments that they want you to focus on. Frankly, if

you get it right, landing some of those deals will set you up for some really good results that will last quite a while. But if they are harder to acquire, will you put them in your funnel? Not if it messes up your closing rate, you say. Because, for many of you, that would mess up your bonus or your performance rating. Or even more likely, your manager will harass you because the strategic opportunity you put into your funnel is not moving fast enough (whatever that means) and in some cases will even advise you to take them out of your funnel (it looks bad leaving them in). Consequently, your funnel continues to be full of useless noise, and your executive leadership complains that the sales force can't execute the strategy. Well, based on this scenario, executing the strategy is not what you are being paid to do.

Face it. The forces of the economy today are non-linear. We do not believe that salespeople should be forced to operate solely in a sequential sales-funnel-type manner. It's too narrow, too constricting, too myopic, and too one-sided. (We've seen many sales funnels that don't even reference the customer!) Instead, we believe that salespeople should have a non-sequential process that enables folks to apply their skills to everything from the simplest to the most complex (and most profitable) conversations.

As a result, the focus of this book is to clearly give you a new (and yes, even scientific) approach to selling, one that embraces the non-linear and makes it a competitive advantage. But if you still want to use a sales funnel, enjoy the insanity.

Force 2: The Force of Full Value

The second force is the Force of Full Value (that is, evolving buyer expectations). Here's a little secret. The concept of buying has changed. Call it the natural order of the universe, or simply call it the impact of the Internet, but the people who buy have figured out how to access your greatest secrets. They know your prices, your products, your services, your capabilities, and your competitors, often even better than you do. They can read your marketing data before they even contact you, self-diagnose their needs (even if they are wrong), and bring you into the discussion only when they want to negotiate the deal. All because of the Internet and social networks.

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A social network is a community of individuals (or organizations) connected by one or more types of relationship (family, common interests, commerce, friendship, knowledge, status). Social network analysis is focused on uncovering the patterning of people's interactions.



Salespeople used to be the guardians of product and industry knowledge. We used to schedule appointments to share information with potential and current customers so that we could use the conversation to create influence. But now we've put everything onto our websites and given people the information before they even request it. The result? While buyers appreciate the open access and marketing can show some activity, the influence of the sales professional has shrunk, and in some cases disappeared. With the ability (and in some cases the all-out push) to order online, many buyers believe they don't have to interact with a salesperson at all, which only makes the efforts of a sales professional to get some face time seem unnecessary and perhaps even annoying.

CONSIDER THIS

Value isn't about your products and services. Today, value is about a business conversation that occurs at all levels of the organization so that you can drive the right outcomes for the customer—repeatedly.



At the same time, buyer expectations have evolved. Have you noticed how customers can complain about anything? Seriously, they can identify things that have absolutely nothing to do with the product or service you sold them, like complaints from other departments, invoice errors, and even their own poor business

results (as if you were responsible for their business). And here you are, with voicemails and emails all saying the same thing. “Don’t sell me anything else,” they say. “Just protect the value of what you sold me already.”

Did you catch that? “Protect the value” – not “sell me value,” “promise me value,” or “communicate the value.” And by the way, your value is not what the Marketing group packaged up for your message either. In fact, they’ll say, “That stuff is great on the website, and I read it earlier.” So it’s bigger than that. Much bigger than that.

Think of it this way. Professional selling should not be just the products and services you sell. We believe it should be able to help you keep up with what the buyer wants so that the experience of full value is not only achieved, but is repeated. What makes this so difficult is the way it must be achieved – through conversations between buyer and seller, with the full support of the selling organization. These conversations, conducted over time, create expectations that must be managed.

Oh, by the way, don’t forget your job is to protect this definition of value, even if you’re not quite sure what it is because the customer won’t tell you.

And it’s not just the conversations you’ll have during the sales process. It’s the conversations you’ll have after the sale, which, by the way, is another reason why the sales funnel is dead – especially if yours ends with “deal closed.” Today’s buyer does not want you to disappear after he or she has bought something. Get this, buyers actually want you to stick around and deal with problems when they happen. Are they nuts? You don’t do that. That’s the job of Customer Service (or Accounting, the relationship manager, or Supply, or . . .). Well, get over it, because, as we warned you already, the ride is only going to get bumpier. Welcome to the new professional reality, where more and more sales professionals will find themselves covering the entire customer buying experience as part of an intensely complex buyer-seller relationship, all in the name of value. And, here’s a little secret: We know several companies who have already aligned their sales force to this new reality. These companies now have one single point of contact for the

entire customer experience because the customers demanded it. And yes, this single point of contact is the salesperson.

But we digress . . .

Look at it this way. Randomly ask someone on your sales team whether she is spending enough quality time with customers. Ninety-nine times out of one hundred the answer will be “no.” What’s driving that result? Salespeople are having to manage the force of “full value.” Well, come to find out managing the force of full value requires a lot of paperwork, documentation, tracking, internal meetings, project management, and general administrative “stuff” that never existed before. You need to rethink what it means to take care of your customers. Why? Because the definition of value, the “thing” that your customer has paid you for, has changed. In fact, the definition has actually grown. And all of this so-called extra stuff is now permanently part of your job. Bonus check not necessarily included.

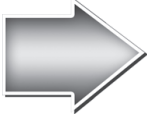
Force 3: The Force of Community

Decision making is now a public event. It is no longer about the buyer and seller; it is about the buying community and the selling community as they intermingle to create connected agreement. Yes, it’s true. The days of the “one decision-maker” are over—and they have been for a long time. Again, we have to give a nod to technology here and call it the buyer network. Buyer networks began when the Internet (and company intranet) became a part of everyday life and connected whole groups of people. These groups were able to be involved, positively and negatively, in the decision to buy. As a result, buyers have become extended networks. These networks can be simple or complex. Here’s a real-life example:

A multi-national organization needed to make a buying decision on software. The staff of the corporate head office involved individuals from a combination of ten subsidiaries and wholly owned corporations as part of the buying network. There was no “one” decision-maker. In fact, each of the designees was appointed to a buying committee from the subsidiaries (forming a “sub-buying” network), while they

still represented their own individual buying entity. The sales funnel was woefully inadequate to deal with the complexity of this type of deal (the sales funnel was stuck in “discover” phase for almost nine months!). Forecasting was a waste of time because the salesperson couldn’t exactly determine when the deal was going to close. Managing the global buying network spanning four countries that was comprised of representatives from ten different buying networks was a full-time job. Compounding the issue was the multi-million-dollar size of the deal, multi-year agreements, and high expectations for quality, responsiveness, and ease of use.

CONSIDER THIS



You can’t sell alone anymore. If you sell in a complex environment and believe the community isn’t impacting your effectiveness as a seller, how often do you find yourself complaining about others getting in the way? Isn’t it time to do something about that?

Pause. In the example above, think about what it took to close the sale. Obviously, we are talking both sides of the game here. Remember what we said in Force 2 about the sales professional being responsible for managing the force of full value? Well, we forgot to mention (actually we didn’t, we were just setting you up for the sucker punch) that the responsibility goes two ways. For every vice president, engineer, accountant, purchasing agent, and maintenance technician on the buyer’s side, there is a lawyer, sales director, inventory manager, marketing lead, and contract specialist on the seller’s side. And everyone has a company-mandated job to do, even if it gets in the way of you trying to do your job in managing multiple buying networks across each customer experience.

Furthermore, each of these players constantly connect with their counterparts in other organizations. Make a mistake with one, and the offended party will electronically broadcast (or even Twitter) his displeasure throughout his network. Emails

are sent as a formal record of your mistake so that, at the end of the day, if the deal goes south, someone can be blamed. And we're including folks on the same side in this behavior (anyone ever complain to your colleagues about the Legal team?).

To compound things, authority levels to make decisions are going higher and higher, often to folks who have nothing to do with generating revenue. In our buyer-network example above, staff at the corporate head office had to formalize and create the team. They had to set aside some corporate money and help coordinate quarterly meetings. And they had to poke, prod, and otherwise kick the subsidiaries to come up with most of the investment dollars. Just talking about the customer's perspective, this deal was spread across ten different organizations, with support money coming from headquarters. Who's "the buyer" now? And don't get us going on what it took internally to sell the deal.

As one experienced sales executive told us, "It's getting to the point where the average salesperson can't do his job any more without going to someone at the home office for final approval on the most basic of deals. And I always get nervous when Finance has the last say."

USING THESE FORCES TO OVERCOME COMPLEXITY

We believe that selling should not be focused on just the buyer-seller relationship. It should be enlarged to address the entire system that supports a series of sales conversations, while overcoming these three forces.

Perhaps the most frustrating part of this dynamic is that the salesperson is no longer in charge of the customer relationship, but the buyer is expecting him or her to be. Read that again. Salespeople are expected to represent the entire company from marketing to fulfillment and delivery, but they often don't have the power to do so. Still want to protect the full value that was sold? The silos in buying and selling communities make that all but impossible. Or, as we like to say, "Everything looks great on paper until people get involved."

How are you feeling right now? Did you know these things already, or did the moisture leave your mouth as you suddenly

realized the cause of your pain? Honestly, if you have already identified any of these elements (the forces of the non-linear, full value, and community), good for you. But if you've never been able to put these dynamics into words . . . well, don't sweat it. We say that once you identify a problem it loses half of its strength. Feel better? Because the next question is the one that will hurt the most.

What are you going to do about it? Seriously, if the world of selling has changed, how are you going to change?

THREE CHOICES ALL SALESPEOPLE HAVE TO MAKE

The way we see it, you have three choices:

1. Work harder or
2. Work smarter using old tools or
3. Work smarter using a new perspective and new tools

Now, before you start answering the question, sit still for a moment while we calibrate a few things, especially the term "old." Waaaay back in the 20th century (chuckle if you want, but to today's generation, the 1980s and 1990s are just as irrelevant as the 1950s and 1960s), the theory was to play the numbers game in sales. You know. If you needed X result, just put in Y business leads and work the system based on the percentages of past success. In other words, work harder. And by the way, if you can't do it, we'll fire you and hire someone who can. Enter Alec Baldwin, stage right (anybody want a set of steak knives?).

Working harder and getting the same results you always have (which, for most of you, is "flat to declining") is the axiomatic definition of insanity. And you can try to work smarter, but if you are using the same old tools (even the sparkly technological ones), today's reality quickly transforms your smart work into old-fashioned hard work. It's like trying to chop wood with a dull axe blade. Not fun, and you are working even harder, only to obtain limited results.

PAY ATTENTION

You have three choices:

1. Work harder or
2. Work smarter using old tools or
3. Work smarter using a new perspective and new tools



THE DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFT IN SALES

In a way, they were right. Baby Boomers dominated the workplace. Their sheer numbers meant two things: First, there were hundreds of opportunities out there, because few people had actually connected with their market the way they could. There simply wasn't enough time in the day to do it all.

Second, replacing poor performers was easy. The "numbers game" also applied to workforce planning. Boomers were so plentiful that finding someone who was both good at what he did and dissatisfied with his current job wasn't too hard. People were always looking for greener grass (even if it was shiny and plastic).

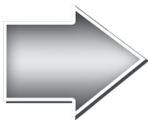
Then a couple of things changed (well, actually a lot of things, but for the sake of getting to the point, let's focus on two). First, the creation of the Internet and its associated technology boom suddenly transformed access to the market exponentially. Seemingly overnight, people were mass emailing, multi-tasking, and BlackBerry-ing their workday into overdrive. The market matured just as fast, and brand new markets emerged explosively (especially Brazil, Russia, India, and China). We finally created a twenty-four-hour workday, seven days a week.

Second, Boomers grew older. They started filling out senior leadership roles and (worse) retiring. The next generation, Gen X, didn't have the numbers to support a strategy of "make it or you're fired." There just wasn't enough talent to go around, and the talent that was going around was far more cautious about

shiny, artificial grass. Gen X'ers were not about to put everything into a workplace that sacrificed their private lives.

So Generation X started working smarter. They started focusing their activities in the market by blending communication technology with their work. They segmented the market into micro-segments, targeting where growth was easier and, if necessary, taking the business global through technology. Needed to talk with India, London, and San Francisco at the same time? No problem. Wanted to work from home, eliminating the wasted time of driving to and from work and to and from customers? Talk to IT. Want to interrupt someone who is in an important meeting? Just text the person (because you know she can't resist the urge to glance down at a vibrating phone).

Meanwhile, the Boomers (who were still running the show) quickly adopted the ideas and enlarged them to include cost-management plans to go with their revenue-generation plans (off-shoring, anyone?). The result? Both buyer and seller quickly made the operations side of the ball leaner than TQM in the 1980s, thus increasing demands on the sellers to be even more efficient for even less cost.



CONSIDER THIS

Of all the sales books you have read lately, which have really explained the complexities of selling? Are you still using 1980s or 1990s thinking in an attempt to solve New Millennium challenges? While the selling world is becoming more and more complex, many sales books are written to be overly simplistic and motivational.

And what is happening now? Boomers and Gen X are still running around, with Millennials joining the party in massive waves. The value of technology has become almost a burden. You no longer have the traditional refuge of being out of the office (you turned your home into the office, remember?), while the personal lives of the Millennials seems to be creeping into

the workplace through, you guessed it, technology. And the so-called emerging markets are pretty darn sophisticated, while the “old” markets are even more chaotic than they were just a few years ago.

That leaves us with the choice to work smarter using a new perspective and new tools. Seriously, new means new. We are not talking about managing sales funnels. We are not talking about how to sell products, services, or solutions. And we are not even talking about sales as a function. We are talking about things that are bigger, more complex, and require a completely different way of looking at your business. We are talking about taking the forces of the non-linear, full value, and community and letting them carry you away. Are you ready for that?

If you just answered yes, then we cordially invite you join us in the chaos—Sales Chaos, that is.

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Making It Stick



Diagnostic Tool: Evaluating the Forces You Encounter

This diagnostic is designed to help you analyze the three key forces found in this chapter against one of your key clients or customers. Let's see whether the forces are at play.

Simply answer "yes" or "no" to each of the following questions. To begin, make sure you pick one of your most important customers. By answering each question honestly, you will begin to understand the impact of the complexity around you.

Customer/Company Name: _____

Deal/Opportunity: _____

Evaluating the Impact of Force 1 – Non-Linear

1. Do you constantly have to adjust your approach to this customer based on external market forces and trends?

2. Is it common for you to adjust your schedule for this customer? _____
3. Does your sales funnel contain non-critical noise about this customer? _____
4. Do you believe your forecast for this customer has serious gaps in accuracy or information? _____
5. Does your sales process overly simplify how this customer actually makes buying decisions? _____

Evaluating the Impact of Force 2 – Full Value

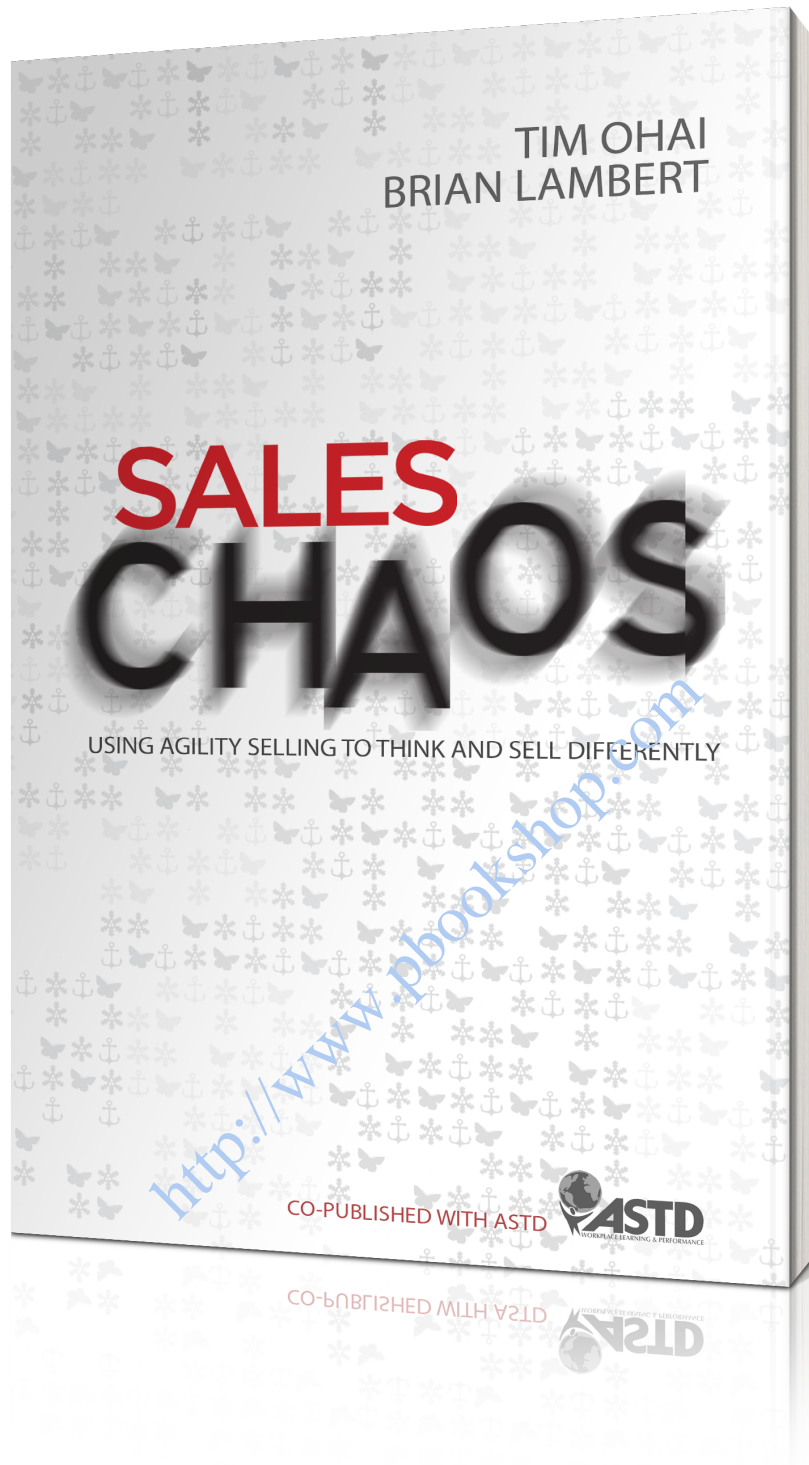
1. Does your customer appreciate your involvement before and after the sale? _____
2. Is your customer's definition of value different from what you (and/or your company) define as a unique selling proposition? _____
3. Do you have to customize messages and actions often in order to position your value for this customer? _____

4. Does your customer complain about things that are outside of features and functions? _____
5. Does the number of administrative and “non-selling” activities impact the amount of quality time with this customer? _____

Evaluating the Impact of Force 3–Community

1. Do you often find that more than one or two people are involved in the purchase decision and can say “no” (including those internal to your own organization)? _____
2. Do you find that you need to bring other people into the discussion in order to solve issues, problems, and concerns for this customer? _____
3. Do you often rely on others to facilitate an introduction in order to move the sale forward or acquire key information for this customer? _____
4. Do you believe you are well supported by your organization at the point of sale and beyond? _____
5. Do you wish you had more information flow internally to support your efforts with this customer? _____

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