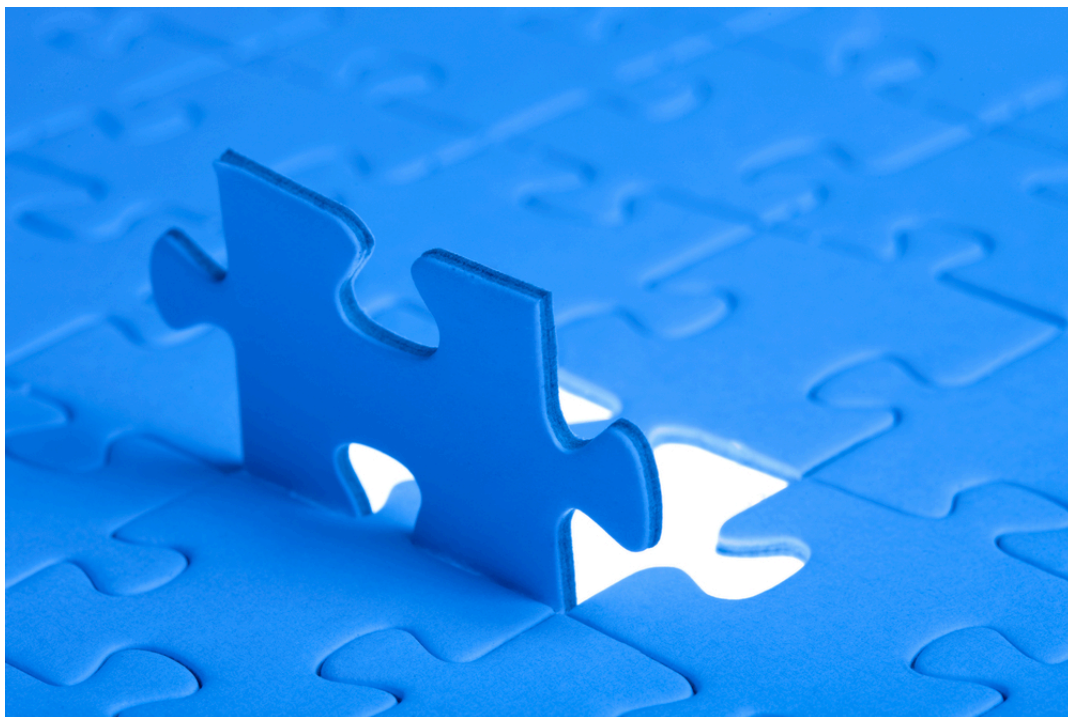


WHY DO THEY NEED YOU?

THE VALUE OF THE REP !



The Missing Piece of the Puzzle!

In today's markets, why do you need sales reps?

In my training programs, I've had some fun scaring the sales reps and managers in attendance. We discuss the "internet age" and how today, the typical Buyer can go online and find whatever they want about a product, company, technology or service. So I ask them: "If the customer can find out whatever they want on their own, then why do they need you?"

It's amazing the number of blank expressions and looks of sheer panic that I receive, because for some reason, none of them have asked that question before.

The market has changed and Sales' role as being the main source of information for products and solutions is becoming a thing of the past. Today's customers are better informed, and can access most of the information they need on their own.

The challenge for Sales is that customers are now relying less on a sales person to help them uncover and define their needs. In many instances, they are waiting until they have completed their research before bringing in company sales reps to request more information. Unfortunately for Sales, that means being brought into the sales process late, and in many instances only *after* the RFP has been generated.

Arriving into the process late is in most instances a recipe for failure. The dialogue with the client becomes a discussion of the decision criteria they have already chosen and how they expect you will meet their requirements. Once this occurs the ability to truly influence the customer's decision or decision criteria is lost, and the conversation quickly reverts to price.

This market dynamic is challenging sales professionals to evolve and develop alternate ways of working with their clients to prevent this from happening.

These changes involve not only modifying the way they sell, but also the way they select the customers they pursue as high potential opportunities. Additionally, it requires broadening their contact base, adapting their calling patterns with those new buying influences, and deciding who they will spend the time to develop strong relationships with as part of the sales process.

But most importantly, it requires a change in the way they approach the customer and the message they deliver.

How do you approach today's customer?

From the analysis of over 25,000+ sales calls and client interactions over a 20 year period, we have looked at the evolution of the sales process and the changes made by the top performing reps - those reps that consistently blow out their quotas year, after year, after year.

This evolution is not a mind blowing change to selling. Basically, most of the information that has been published about selling, the sales process... is all very similar. And there are a variety of trainers and large training organizations that have done a great job of packaging the same content in a variety of different ways. But overall the sales processes used by each, are not radically different.

What we've found is that the top reps are using those processes in a different way, based on the needs of the Buyer, and how the buying process has changed over time.

Today's Buyers are overloaded with information. They receive as much information in a month on their smartphones as their grandparents received in their lifetime. With the internet, they have access to almost everything they need to make a purchasing decision, and therefore are much better informed than ever before.

The top performers have recognized this change and found new ways to be a resource, and of value to the customer. I call this "The You Factor" - the value of you.

So back to the question I asked at the beginning, "If the customer can get all the information they need online, then why do they need you?" In one simple word - as a *filter!*

Information Overload

Put yourself in your customer's shoes and think about the last time you Googled something? How many hits did you get - 2 million? Did you go past page 1 or 2 of the search results, or was it just too much information to sort through?

If you did review many of the search results, did you find the information to be valuable or credible? Or because the source was "unknown" did you discount the data as being potentially unreliable?

Well the top reps have realized the challenges of the informed Buyer, and have been able to position themselves as a resource or filter for the mountains of information that they receive.

They work with their customers to help navigate the information. Their intimate knowledge of the customer's business allows them to be a *filter* of the information, thereby developing themselves as a *resource* from whom they can *learn*.

Not only are they helping their clients learn about new products and technologies, but they also use their enhanced business acumen to help their customers identify how they can improve how they do their jobs, and make their organizations more competitive in the marketplace.

This approach isn't new, but is more of a requirement today than in the past. I first stumbled onto it back in 2000, when one of my sales reps was working with a major biotechnology company who had an internal issue that their current supplier couldn't resolve. They asked for our help, and we agreed, however, only under the condition that if we did the work, they would give us the business in return for our effort. Quid Pro Quo. They agreed, however it was my fault for not getting it in writing, because after the work was done, the Buyer developed a case of "amnesia" about the commitment.

Afterwards, my Rep was very frustrated and arranged a meeting to bring me in as the "bad cop" to address the issue from a higher level with the hope of getting follow through on the commitment. The meeting was arranged, I knew why I was attending,

and so did the Buyer. So instead of doing what was expected and jumping right into the issue, I tried a different approach. I started with a discussion on the market, the dynamics of the business, the challenges of the local companies and the growing number of biotech companies in the area, which at the time had increased to 65.

The Buyer then asked: “With so many companies in the area, who do you decide to call on or work with?”

I replied “ I am confident that I can help my customers improve the way they do business, and can help them do what they do, better. So if a customer wants me to help them, I do. If not, I walk across the street to the next company because I can. There are so many customers I can help and not enough time, so I won’t waste my time where it is not valued”.

The customer’s response was a pleasant surprise. He sat up straight like someone had just hit him with a lightning bolt and said “No, we want you to work with us.” And he did.

What are the best reps doing differently?

From that point on I focused on refining this approach, and for the past 12 years have analyzed *why*, and *how* this has applied to the top reps. What I’ve discovered is that the top reps:

- Know their customers and their customer’s business as well as they do.
- Are a filter of information, and only provide information that is useful to the client.
- Are a resource to help teach customers how to improve the way they do business, and tie that improvement into the products and solutions that can be provided by their company.
- Don’t push products or solutions. They lead their customers to the solution by first helping identify issues that they didn’t know existed.

The end result is that the customer views them as a business partner, someone who is working to help them improve their business, not someone just trying to sell product, or uncover ways to “add value”, which most buyers will perceive as a smoke screen for selling a product at a higher price.

They have *business conversations*, not *product discussions*. They talk about topics related to the client’s *industry* and *company* as well as issues related to the client's *job, personal and professional interests*. They are a resource for information, and provide significant value in the one area that *every* customer has as an issue - *time*.

They create value that is intangible - the value of being a resource - The You Factor!

Summary

Although Buyers are changing, and their access to information is making them less reliant on Sales to assist with purchasing decisions, there is still a need for Sales. The sales role, however, needs to evolve to meet the requirements of the new Buyers.

This requires more work and greater knowledge of the customer’s business. It requires being a resource, looking for alternate ways to add value, and doing so in ways that are not initially focused on products and solutions.

If done correctly, you will create value for you and your company that will differentiate you from your competition. And in instances of all things being equal, you will win, and will be able to do so in a competitive environment and even in a down economy.

The You Factor - The Missing piece of the puzzle that the customer doesn’t know they are missing.

If you would like to learn more about this topic, then please go to our website www.tritonconsult.com and download the paper titled: New Buying Influences in Today’s Markets.