



SALES LEADERS AND THE PRESENTATION PARADOX

SALES LEADERS AND THE PRESENTATION PARADOX

Right now, in sales teams large and small all over the world, something peculiar is happening. This phenomenon is not only completely non-sensical, the cause of countless missed quotas but also, most alarming of all, a prospect's pet peeve. Yet despite these danger signs, the issue continues to rumble on...and chances are that it's happening within your sales team right now.

Let's face facts - B2B sales today is tougher than it's ever been. If you needed proof, just turn to the many research companies that either tell us that B2B sales people attaining quota is at an all-time low or that we're all going to be replaced by AI robots in the next 5 years. It's tough out there...and getting tougher.

But before we all gather for a pity party, I'd respectfully suggest that, at least in part, the blame lies with the way we now approach the presentation stage in B2B sales. The

reasons/excuses for not taking as much time as we'd like are endless - stacked schedules, slavish adherence to centrally controlled CRM and Sales Enablement processes and ever-more-distant buyers mean that salespeople find themselves running just to keep pace. The first casualty of this mad rush is the lowly sales presentation - when time is tight, pulling out the tried and tested (and central marketing approved) creds deck is the least path of resistance.

The net result of this corner cutting is the phenomenon we call the Presentation Paradox.

To explain, let's take a simplified view of the balance between time, money and energy consumed to get you and your sales team in front of a good prospect and the pay-off of winning the deal and recognising the revenue.



SALES LEADERS AND THE PRESENTATION PARADOX

Let's look at the first stage of the process – **the Investment Phase.**

This is initially dominated by a huge amount of time, effort and money being invested by the **Marketing Team** to get the attention of prospective buyers. Measures of success differ from sector to sector, from general market awareness through to warm leads falling into your sales email box. Around this time, **Sales Management** will start to get involved. Hands on sales leaders take great care to ensure that the most profitable audiences are targeted, that the right marketing campaigns are in place and that their sales teams are on top of CRM pipelines.

Sales Teams start to flex their muscles and demonstrate their worth...and there's no getting away from it, B2B salespeople are now having to work harder than ever to simply connect with a prospect. According to a survey by TeleNet and Ovation Sales Group, the number of cold call attempts to reach a prospect has more than doubled from 3.68 in 2007 to 8 today. That's a lot of calling, coaching and cajoling in anyone's book.

In addition to salespeople investing their own time, their company will likely be funding access to the latest and greatest sales training methodologies and ensuring they go into battle armed with playbooks and collateral aplenty.

Thus far, that's a large amount of investment to deliver on one simple goal - getting your salespeople in front of the right audience.

It's at the point of sales engagement with the prospect that things can go awry; what we call the **Tipping Point Phase** or The Moment of Truth. After all the hard work and investment in getting in front of the prospect, salespeople default to sharing below par presentation materials and ultimately damaging a potentially valuable engagement. Yes, there are plenty of reasons and/or excuses to help justify this failing...but, whichever way you look at it, a failing it is.

This is the Presentation Paradox...and chances are it's happening to a prospect of yours right now. Sadly, the statistics support this claim - we know that 65% of all of the

collateral that is created by marketing for sales is never used because they are not fit for purpose. The remaining 35% are typically so anodyne and generic that they bring little to the party. The net result is that many presentations (often in the form of dull PowerPoint slide after dull PowerPoint slide) are created days if not hours before the big pitch by a salesperson who is unskilled at crafting the story and compelling visuals that are intrinsic to clear sales communication. If proof were needed, visit a Starbucks or Costa Coffee in any major city at 9.30am and view the legions of salespeople adjusting presentations prior to their meeting at 10am. It's the Presentation Paradox in action.

Which ultimately takes us to the **Return of Investment Phase.** The time spent by your sales team preparing, reviewing and crafting their next sales presentation will determine whether all the previous effort and investment pays off. For fear of sounding old-fashioned, simply having respect for the opportunity AND your prospect and preparing accordingly puts you in the driving seat at the 'moment of truth'. Those that pull together content at the last moment will continue to support the statistics of failing B2B sales performance, missed quotas and wasted pipeline. Coming a valiant second because the other guy told a better story is no badge of honour.

So, in conclusion, my plea to sales leaders is simple – be the catalyst for a new way of thinking:

Recognise the power and value of great sales tools. Marketing should be a key partner but Sales should own the entire sales engagement process, including tool creation.

Recognise that presentations are not limited to PowerPoint slides – be more audience centric in your thinking and consider concepts like Blended Presenting to truly engage your audience.

Ensure your team views the chance to share your story with a prospect as a hard-earned opportunity rather than a sales process output.