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## Your Selling Approach: Slick, Data Dump or Trusted Advisor?

By Ron Snyder

Have you ever observed a slick sales person tell a buyer all the reasons to buy something before the buyer decided if there was any reason to buy what they were selling? Have you found it frustrating to get the information you wanted on the website of a potential product or service provider?

You have probably noticed that some sales people and websites dump piles of facts on the buyer while others make information available in a manner that is organized to respond to the buyer's thought process. In dealing with *these* sales people or websites, it's almost as if they could read your mind... and give you exactly what you wanted.

### Complex Sales

The more complex the sale, product or service, the more important it is to be a trusted advisor.

- Does the purchase involve choices that require detailed consideration of multiple choices and price points?
- Does the implementation or usage impact many people?
- Is there significant risk involved- for example, mission critical processes and data, new technology, a new way of doing business or concerns about technology obsolescence?
- Does it require a long-term relationship - including support, maintenance, upgrades?

Read on to learn how to become a trusted source of information and guidance.

How easily and quickly can your buyer:

- Get trustworthy information they can use to make buying decisions?
- Select the best configuration and tailor it to meet their needs?
- Determine that the value/ROI is clearly beneficial to them?
- Resolve their concerns?

### Aligning Buying and Selling

Synchronizing the steps of the buying and sales processes will:

- Accelerate the sales process by ensuring that every selling activity is in step with the buyer's needs
- Improve conversion rates between key sales milestones by having an effective sales approach and sales tools to help the buyer move forward
- Increase the return on marketing programs because each deliverable supports the buying process

Today's business buyer has as many goals and pressures as you, so they need to be able to find the information they want easily and quickly. They are looking for a trusted advisor who will provide credible information and guidance. To do this, you must truly understand your buyer and their process.

### How to become a Trusted Advisor?

#### 1. Understand your buyer's behavior

There are many ways to gather buyer feedback- from online surveys and comment forms to interviews by third parties. You can also observe buyers using your site and listen to them talking

with your salespeople. This will enable you to identify where your process breaks down and what type of interaction would be most helpful to them.

2. Streamline the process

Poll your most successful sales people. Chart the key milestones in their sales processes. Using input from your buyers, fine-tune the milestones to ensure that they are in synch with your buyers' needs. Train your sales team to manage their process to hit these key milestones like your superstars. Provide sales tools that help the buyer accomplish their objectives at each step of the process.

3. Adjust your interactions

Prioritize the ideas that you captured from your buyers, top sellers and web metrics. Make changes in your sales and web interactions to respond to the top challenges identified by your buyers. For example, adjust your website, automated tools and the methods your sales people use- to better fit your buyer's expectations. Certain sales people may need to modify their style to be more buyer-focused as opposed to driving the process from their perspective and objectives. You may need to add new online tools for direct use by buyers, while adding others for your sales team. In addition to adding information and tools to your site, look at the persona (the "personality" or style) of your website and fine-tune its layout, color and tone to resonate better with your target audience.

It will take effort and require rethinking the way you interact with your buyers. Being a trusted advisor, like being on top of your game, requires work every day... and it's worth it!

**Checklist of Actions that Support the Buying Process**

Evaluate how well you enable your buyers to satisfy the following buying requirements.

<b>PROCESS STEP</b>	<b>HUMAN INTERACTION</b>	<b>WEB INTERACTION</b>
<b>Identify Need</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Review company information for needs <input type="checkbox"/> Identify problems you help them solve <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss the current impact of the problem <input type="checkbox"/> Show how you help achieve desired results <input type="checkbox"/> Establish a compelling need <input type="checkbox"/> Verify ball-park dollar fit	<input type="checkbox"/> Post company and product overviews <input type="checkbox"/> Verify potential to solve a problem and produce desired results <input type="checkbox"/> List testimonials of problems solved, results produced- by industry, role, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide pricing to determine right ball park
<b>Select Solution</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Show how capabilities meet needs, decision criteria <input type="checkbox"/> Compare versus alternative solutions <input type="checkbox"/> Tailor solution to fit needs, budget <input type="checkbox"/> Provide economic justification <input type="checkbox"/> Generate a tailored proposal	<input type="checkbox"/> Present capabilities, pricing, specs to determine solution fits their decision criteria <input type="checkbox"/> Provide table of comparative offerings <input type="checkbox"/> Deliver self-paced or live web-based demo re capabilities, information, usability
<b>Resolve Concerns</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Clarify and address concerns <input type="checkbox"/> Reach agreement	<input type="checkbox"/> Post reference list by segment, role <input type="checkbox"/> Provide white papers, case studies, third party validation <input type="checkbox"/> Deliver free trials
<b>Commit</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Sign contract <input type="checkbox"/> Make specific implementation suggestions	<input type="checkbox"/> Enable online purchase <input type="checkbox"/> Provide implementation recommendations

<b>Produce Results</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Deliver user training, technical support <input type="checkbox"/> Provide user group meetings <input type="checkbox"/> Share best practices, resources <input type="checkbox"/> Track user results, add to reference list	<input type="checkbox"/> Deliver online help, support <input type="checkbox"/> Provide online user groups, forums, best practice sharing <input type="checkbox"/> Post knowledge base of usage, solutions
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**Expand:** Return the top and identify new needs (for upgrades and other products) and begin the process over.

Go to [www.breakthrough-inc.com](http://www.breakthrough-inc.com) for more information.

### About the Author

For the past 16 years, Ron Snyder has run the business and delivered consulting services to technology-based companies, especially software and medical capital equipment companies, enabling them to improve and align their sales and marketing processes and skills to accelerate sales performance.

Ron has worked with executives, managers and teams to create shared strategic direction, implement strategic initiatives and make critical transitions (i.e. realigning organizations, entering new markets, implementing new business models and sales and marketing methods). These companies include rapidly-growing companies such as NetSuite, Exodus Communications, Adobe and Macromedia and large, established companies such as Hewlett-Packard, Synopsys, Cisco Systems, Agilent Technologies, Siemens and Philips.