

TOP SALES

MARCH 2020

MAGAZINE

A portrait of a middle-aged man with light brown hair, wearing glasses and a blue button-down shirt under a dark suit jacket. He is smiling slightly and looking directly at the camera. The background is a solid dark grey.

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS

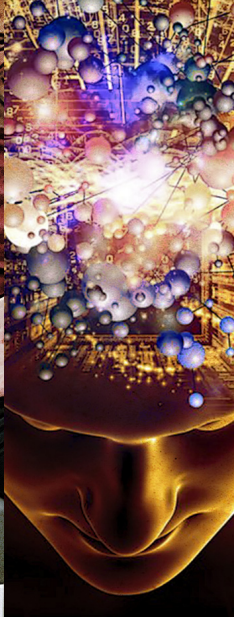
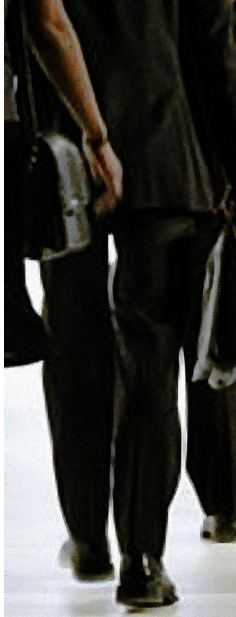
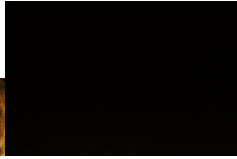
Brian Sullivan
Dave Kurlan
Dan Weinfurter
Linda Richardson
Mary Grothe
Jay Mitchell
Dr. Tony Alessandra
Barb Giamanco
Colleen Francis
Steve Hall

ALSO INSIDE

The Top Post of the
Decade is announced

Accelerating Sales in 2020: What CEOs Need to Know

Jonathan Farrington interviews Joe Galvin



The Big Question - Go or No-Go?
Brian Sullivan

10



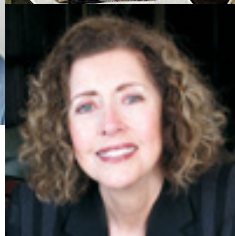
Illuminate and Dust Off Your Sales Force
Dave Kurlan

12



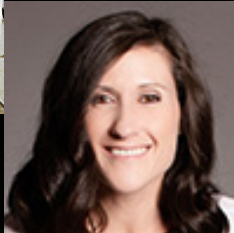
It Pays To Get Onboarding Right!
Dan Weinfurter

14



Critical Communication Skills 2020
Linda Richardson

18



What is BQ?
Mary Grothe

20



Putting the Power of Sales Enablement to the Test
Jay Mitchell

22



Burned
Dr. T. Alessi

24

TOP SALES MAGAZINE

Contents

MARCH 2020



26
about
ony
andra

30
It's Time to
Overhaul Your
Prospecting
Experience
Barb Giamanco

33
Beware Of The
Talk Trap
Colleen Francis

34
The Damaging
Cost Of High
Salesperson
Turnover
Steve Hall



The Greatest Leader That Ever
Came On God's Earth Bar
None?

Jonathan Farrington

PAGE 6



Accelerating Sales in 2020:
What CEOs Need to Know

Jonathan Farrington interviews
Joe Galvin

PAGE 8



February's
Top Sales Post
PAGE 37

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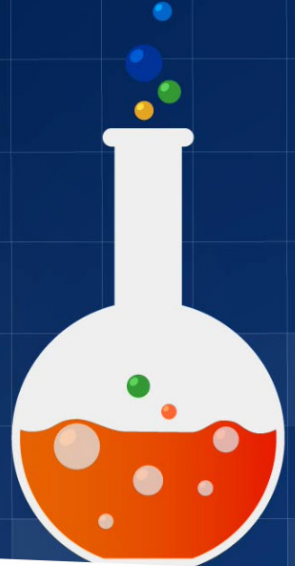
A JF INITIATIVE



Sandler Research Center

Capturing opinions and perceptions regarding today's most impactful selling issues.

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[NEW SURVEY]

The Hunt for New Clients

Participate in the new Sandler Research Center survey through March 7th.

Every commercial organization should focus an appropriate amount of time on hunting for and securing new clients. Too few have a clearly defined strategy that maximizes their sales function's valuable selling time and minimizes the related costs. We want to discover what is working for the most successful companies and why.

Click here to take the survey.

Sandler has partnered with Top Sales World to develop the Sandler Research Center in order to deliver tangible value and make a difference in the fast-changing world of sales. The unique synergy of these two organizations will provide critical insight and direction to commercial organizations across the globe.



Learn more and stay up-to-date on important research insights.

2020 Columnists

Our regular columnists provide thought-provoking commentary on the hot topics that are the most relevant and indeed, the most significant. Plus we have a [world-class team of feature writers](#) who also contribute regularly.



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Director at Mentor Group UK.



The Greatest Leader That Ever Came On God's Earth Bar None?



I have read extensively on the lives, characteristics and leadership styles of all the great leaders, including Alexander the

Great, Montgomery, Elizabeth 1st, Churchill, Ghandi, Mandella, Luther-King et al (the list is pretty extensive).

However, the one that earns my greatest respect and the one with whom I feel the greatest affinity is Shackleton, because I have learned so much from his style of leadership; characteristics that I have endeavored to incorporate within my own management style.

Sir Ernest Shackleton has been called "the greatest leader that ever came on God's earth bar none" for saving the lives of twenty-seven men stranded with him on an Antarctic ice floe for almost two years.

From 1914 to 1916, Shackleton and his men survived the wreck of their ship *Endurance* in the crushing Antarctic ice, stranded twelve hundred miles

from civilization, with no means of communication and no hope of rescue. The temperatures were so low the men could hear the ice freeze. They subsisted on a diet of penguins, seals and ultimately... dogs.

When the ice began to break up, Shackleton set out to save them all on a heroic eight-hundred-mile trip across the frigid South Atlantic – in little more than a rowboat.

Unlike most of the polar expeditions, every man survived – not only in good health, but also in good spirits – all due to the leadership skills of Shackleton.

So, What Are The Leadership Lessons We Can Learn?

Here are just a few that I have worked hard to adopt:

- Cultivate a sense of compassion and responsibility for others. As a leader, you have a bigger impact on the lives of those under you than you can imagine.
- Once a career decision has been made, commit to stick it out through the tough learning period.
- Play your part in creating an upbeat environment -

a positive and vibrant workplace is important to productivity.

- Broaden your cultural and social horizon beyond your normal experiences. Learning to see life from different perspectives will give you greater flexibility when it comes to problem solving at work.
- We live in a rapidly changing world, so be willing to venture in new directions to seize new opportunities and learn new skills.
- Find ways in which to turn setbacks and failures to your advantage. This represents a good time to step forward on your own.
- Be bold in vision and careful in planning. Dare to try something new but be meticulous with your proposal so that your ideas have a good chance of succeeding.
- Learn from your mistakes – yours and those made by others. Sometimes the best teachers are the worst bosses.

- Never insist on achieving a goal or objective at any cost. It must be achieved at a reasonable expense, without undue hardship on your staff.
- Don't be drawn into public disputes with rivals - better to engage in respectful competition. Remember, you may need their co-operation someday (Due to my crusading spirit and refusal to lower my standards of what is fair and right, this is the one that I have had the most difficulty with!).

If you are a leader, you will have identified closely with all of these principles.

If you are a follower, you will be considering how your leader would stand up to such a test?

Jonathan Farrington is the CEO of JF Initiatives. You will find his personal site [here](#) Jonathan is also Director of Research at the [Sandler Research Center](#) You can connect with Jonathan on LinkedIn [here](#)

TOP 10 POSTS

Each week we select [the very best sales articles and posts](#), written by top sales experts from around the world.

We cull through until we find the 10 best pieces of sales advice – which we then share with you.

The four weekly winners then compete for “Top Sales Post of the Month” and then the twelve monthly winners go forward to the “Top Sales Post of the Year” final in December – as part of [Top Sales Awards](#)





Accelerating Sales in 2020: What CEOs Need to Know



Jonathan Farrington
interviews Joe Galvin

When Joe Galvin began his career at Xerox in 1984, it was the “the end of analogue selling,” he says. Fast forward five years, and he was building Gartner’s global sales operations function before becoming the lead analyst at Gartner for CRM-SFA. Later, at Sirius Decisions, Joe created the Sales Optimization research service that formed the foundation of all future Sirius sales research. Now at [Vistage](#), the world’s leading executive coaching firm, he is focused on the issues, topics and decisions most relevant to CEOs of small and midsize businesses (SMBs). I recently spoke to Joe about the key challenges and opportunities facing these CEOs in 2020.

JF: What’s top-of-mind for CEOs this year?

JG: We recently surveyed 1,604 CEOs from small and midsize businesses and found that talent management — specifically, hiring, recruiting and sourcing — is the No. 1 decision for leaders in 2020.

This makes sense, as talent remains the biggest inhibitor to growth in the United States. Multiple years of strong demand for workers, combined with historically low employment rates, have exhausted the employee pool. Our survey showed that 63% of CEOs expect to increase their headcount in 2020, and those workers are likely already employed. Because of these recruitment challenges, we are seeing more CEOs focus on employee retention and employee engagement.

CEOs are also sensing that the economic slowdown is coming to an end. In Q4 2019, the [Vistage CEO Confidence Index](#) rose for the first time since Q4 2017. This suggests that the next business cycle will start in mid-year 2020, which will result in more buyers making decisions. However, not all industries will feel an economic upswing at the same time. We expect that segments connected to consumer spending will experience growth early, while manufacturing, wholesale trade and agriculture will take more time.

Overall, 67% of CEOs expect increased revenue and 57% anticipate increased profits in 2020. This means it’s time for all firms to prepare for prosperity.

JF: What growth strategies are CEOs using to capitalize on this environment?

JG: We analyzed the growth strategies of CEOs who expect greater revenue this year and, interestingly, found that there is no single winning strategy. Rather, CEOs are frequently using three types of growth strategies at the same time: expansion, innovation and execution.

In our survey, 28% of CEOs identified strategies related to expansion as key to their growth. This might mean expanding facilities, adding new equipment or increasing headcount — specifically sales — to increase their company's capacity to produce and perform.

About one-quarter (24%) of CEOs identified innovation as key to their growth strategy. Innovation can translate into creating and launching new products, entering new markets or deploying new technology, all of which can bring in new customers or create new business opportunities.

Nearly half (47%) of CEOs identified tactics related to optimization as key to their growth strategy, and they cited **sales execution as a leading strategy** for improving the productivity of individuals.

JF: To that last point, what does it take to improve sales execution?

JG: It requires leadership that has the right combination of skills, knowledge and processes, as well as the ability to execute across the organization. It also requires finding, developing and retaining sales talent. Finally, it takes the combination of an integrated go-to-market strategy with a customer-centric sales culture. This, of course, is easier said than done.

JF: As markets start to shift, what should sales teams do to adapt?

JG: Getting closer to the customer is always the right answer — regardless of the economic environment. Again, this boils down to talent. Companies that have skilled, knowledgeable and motivated sales teams are best equipped to connect with customers and take advantage of emerging

opportunities. At the same time, sales leaders need to optimize their operations by refining their sales processes, adapting their sales messaging and integrating with marketing.

JF: For the second year in a row, your survey identified technology as the top investment for SMBs. Why do you think this is?

JG: Technology is the change agent of our generation. Consider this: I went from selling a Xerox Memorywriter with an amazing 2.5 –pages of memory in 1986 to deploying Salesforce in 2000. Technology is advancing at unprecedented speeds, and CEOs know that they have to continually invest in it to stay competitive.

It's also worth noting that CRM is the No. 1 business application that SMBs are investing in this year. This underscores the importance of customer engagement in 2020, especially with growth on the horizon.

JF: You referenced a lot of research. Where can readers find your reports?

JG: Our research is available at vistage.com/research-center. We just posted our **CEO Projections 2020**, which explores the decisions, investments and priorities of CEOs in our community. The report is based on the **Vistage CEO Confidence Index**, which predicts economic conditions in the U.S. about six months in advance.

In the spring, we'll publish a new report about building world-class sales teams in small and midsize firms. We'll explore a number of different topics, including how to build a strong sales culture, when to add sales leadership or how to optimize sales training. We'll also analyze the sales strategies of high-performing leaders from the Vistage community. I can't wait to share this with your readers. ■

Joe Galvin is Chief Research Officer at Vistage. [Learn more about Vistage](#)



The Big Question - Go or No-Go?



In a recent edition of *Top Sales Magazine*, I wrote an article called “The Black Boxes of Lost Deals”, which generated a great deal of communication from readers.

It related the importance of conducting post-mortems on lost deals with major accounts to the airline industry’s best practice of capturing information from black boxes after accidents. Aviation’s impressive safety record is driven by its open attitude about failure and the fact that mistakes are openly analyzed, communicated and learned from. And it’s the black boxes that provide the framework.

In selling, though, human nature can trump learning. After losing big deals, selling teams are often inclined to move on, choosing not to dwell on the negative. But there’s another very practical reason why post-mortems aren’t conducted. Very

few selling organizations have post-mortem frameworks to follow - fundamental frameworks that, truthfully, should deliver value long before autopsy time. For much earlier in a major pursuit, Go/No-Go processes help identify opportunities with the highest probabilities of success, fortifying decisions to move ahead or pass on the deals.

I was very surprised that most of the conversations I had with sales leaders after the article weren’t about post-mortems at all but about Go/No-Go processes. Several shared that their organizations simply don’t have Go/No-Go frameworks to utilize. Decisions on pursuits are often made randomly and emotionally with no meaningful process followed. No process? Think about it. How can sales organizations learn from losses if they can’t evaluate the reasons that dictated deals be pursued in the first place? No paths to review. No retraceable logic to learn from.

In the article, I mentioned Sandler Enterprise Selling’s Pursuit Navigator framework as a very practical Go/No-Go model which separates an opportunity’s issues into three areas – Client Issues, Selling Team Issues, and Finance/Contract Issues.

The issues are evaluated to determine the level of stability or risk for each. If you determine you're stable with an issue, you move to the next. But if you spot risks, you develop mitigation plans quickly. Delay is not an option. In enterprise deals, time is money - big money.

A few of the sales leaders asked me about the types of issues that are typically evaluated and given the surprisingly high levels of interest in the topic, I thought it would be valuable to review some of the common issues as examples here:

- We've never worked with the account before – Of course, we all love to win business with new accounts. That said, pursuing unfamiliar prospects demands research not required with current client opportunities.
- We don't have multiple contacts in the account – Often, we're attracted to a deal because of a particular individual in the account. Having a friend inside is great but major deals require multiple contacts at different levels.
- The opportunity came from an RFP – There are RFP's that result from your close interaction with an account, increasing your chances of winning. The same can unfortunately be said of relationships a competitor has with the account. Do your due diligence.
- We've never delivered the required solution before – While this may seem odd to many product firms, the services world understands this well. In any case, there's risk in doing something for the first time so make sure you can depend on what you propose. There's much at stake.
- There's no clear follow-on business – This is less of an issue with some selling organizations than others. The point is to know if your solution is likely a "one and done" initiative. Going in with your eyes open makes your Go/No-Go an educated one.
- The account is unwilling to communicate openly and freely – Of course, some procurement

processes dictate the contact procedures. That said, if you feel there's something amiss regarding communication in a pursuit, don't ignore your sales instincts. You're probably right.

The Pursuit Navigator process reviews over forty issues that are customized to a specific selling organization's business model. It's likely, though, that examples like these would be part of every organization's evaluation framework. In a "deal forum" setting, the relevant selling team members collaborate to determine stability and risk for each issue. Think about the six examples I've shared. Given the potential upside and downside of decisions regarding major pursuits, why would you not evaluate them? How could you possibly contemplate moving forward without clearly understanding their implications? Of course, the results of an effective Go/No-Go process can't insure victory. But they can guarantee that the most timely and credible information is at hand to make decisions as meaningful and educated as possible. Rational thinking trumps emotions. If the decision is made to proceed after risks are mitigated as effectively as possible, the time and effort spent on due diligence increase the chances of winning. And if the decision is made to drop out, the costs and expenses of pursuing a low-percentage deal cease and precious resources are redeployed to other more promising initiatives. At the end of the day, both outcomes are gifts to your organization and its stakeholders.

For all the right reasons, build and follow a Go/No-Go framework. It will absolutely help with your post-mortems, providing constructive insights into the causes of death. But more importantly, it will make your stories have happier endings by allowing you to diagnose and treat problems while you have the time to address them! ■

Brian Sullivan is Vice President, Sandler Enterprise Selling, Sandler Training
Find out more [here](#)



Illuminate and Dust Off Your Sales Force



Have you ever noticed that the inside of your car can appear perfectly clean and then, if the sun hits the dashboard just right, all of the glass and plastic windows, radio, navigation, dials and displays are *filthy dirty with dust*?

Have you ever noticed the same thing in your home, apartment or office? The air looks clear, but when the sun comes beaming through, it suddenly illuminates billions of tiny dust particles that you *didn't know existed*.

Sometimes, you get an even rarer peak into that confused state when you are between awake and asleep. You know you just caught a glimpse of a conversation that even seconds later you can't recall. But it was there.

It's the **illumination factor** that I want to talk about.

Every six months or so, I write an article that speaks to why companies evaluate their sales forces and solicit assistance from Objective Management Group (OMG). If you ask our clients what their experiences

were like, I'm sure you'll hear about how we illuminated their issues with their sales forces. Like the dust, 99% of the time, you don't even know the issues are there. You can't see them. They are hidden. You believe everything is fine and then, bam! You see it. I know that clients would talk about the previously-hidden glimpses. For example, suppose you just inherited a sales force. Depending on size and scope, it could take 18 months to get to know who you have and what were their true capabilities. That knowledge would pale in comparison to what you could learn by having OMG illuminate the hidden world of your sales force. It would be a lot like looking under a vehicle's hood and having a mechanic explain what was there, how

it worked, and why you got the performance you did.

Most executives think they know what they have in their sales forces. To say that they are surprised by the results of a sales force evaluation would be a *huge understatement*. Wouldn't you be surprised to learn that:

1. your top producer isn't your best salesperson?
2. some of your remote salespeople aren't well suited for working remotely?
3. your sales managers are having the opposite effect from what you needed?
4. you've been hiring the wrong salespeople?
5. as a group, your salespeople can't execute your strategies?
6. you don't need to be losing business to the competition because of price?
7. you don't have anyone that can truly hunt for new business?
8. morale isn't what you thought it to be?

9. your B's are really D's?

10. your C's won't become B's?

Those are just 10 of the dozens and dozens of surprise findings which we share with executives *every single day*. We have conducted nearly 25,000 sales force evaluations and assessed nearly 2,000,000 salespeople, sales managers and sales leaders and we're pretty good at answering the business questions that you haven't been able to answer.

Would you like to know what's under your hood?

Would you like to know what you could see, if only you could see it?

Would you like to know why you get the results that you get?

[Learn](#) if we can help. ■

Dave Kurlan is CEO of Objective Management Group and Kurlan & Associates.
Find out more [here](#)

2020 Top 50 Sales & Marketing Blogs

Every year for the past seven years, the editorial team has selected what they believe are the very best 50 sales and marketing blogs based on the quality of writing, relevance, substance, regularity of posting and popularity.

Once again, we are inviting you to play a part by [nominating your favorites here](#). You can do this right up until midnight (Eastern) on Friday March 20th and the results will be announced in April's edition of Top Sales Magazine, which publishes on Wednesday April 1st



It Pays To Get Onboarding Right!



Last year, sales organizations on average replaced 25% of their total head count. For organizations with thousands of salespeople, and even for those with far fewer, this results in a large need to recruit, assess, select, hire, on-board and train replacements who hopefully will deliver results that are better than those individuals that they have replaced.

Considering that turnover statistics for sales organizations have remained relatively constant (depressingly so) for the past 20 years, it would suggest that organizations have a great deal of difficulty finding sales talent that will both fit well into the organizational culture, and also, will perform up to the productivity standards set for new hires. Given the huge numbers in play here and recognizing the organizational imperative to drive organic revenue growth, it is not surprising that there is a fair amount of discussion, consternation and content about what can be done to improve the onboarding experience.

This of course makes sense in that every month of acceleration in the time to productivity in a typical company, the resultant revenue gain will be a pickup of perhaps \$50,000 to \$100,000 in revenue for each month that is shaved off the ramp up curve. In companies with recurring revenue business models,

this acceleration in the time to productivity increases the enterprise valuation by \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 for each month for each new hire. With numbers like this at stake, it clearly and compellingly pays to get onboarding right.

Three areas of success

According to a January 2020 study by Michael Ahearn and Phillip Wiseman from the University of Houston published by the Sales Management Association (SMA), most company onboarding programs that were deemed to be effective by the survey respondents (there were many respondents that did not consider their onboarding efforts successful) focus on three areas of learning. These include characteristics of the role, the company's sales process and product features. Less effective programs focus on competitor characteristics

instead of product features. All of this makes sense of course in that imparting this knowledge to each and every new hire is a prerequisite for success.

What does seem disturbing, however, is the average length of time most companies spend on onboarding education compared to the amount of time necessary to grasp new learning. According to Harvard Business Review as well as other studies, grasping a new skill may well take up to 10,000 hours of practice to get to mastery. You may or may not subscribe to this theory in full, but given that most onboarding programs today are well less than 120 hours, there is such a huge gap between “mastery” and reality that it is hard to fathom that any new recruit is remotely on-boarded in a best in class fashion and ready to be in front of prospects and customers. According to Sirius Decisions, 18% of B2B organizations put new reps in front of customers on the first day. It is hard to make a case that this type of behavior makes sense in any circumstances.

Vicious vs. Virtuous Cycle of Onboarding

Our view is that effective onboarding is a critical leverage point in improving sales rep productivity, and done correctly, a major driver of increasing revenue growth for sales organizations. Of course, proper selection; hiring individuals with the requisite competencies for the role matters a great deal, as does ensuring that all front-line managers are properly skilled and trained to do effective coaching of both new recruits as well as their more experienced and successful reps. Further, effective onboarding must do far more than equip a seller with knowledge of characteristics of the role, knowledge of competitor behavior, and sales process.

The data suggests that what really must be imparted to the new recruits is the skill to engage in a value driven conversation during a discovery process. In addition, successful reps must be able to use information obtained during this discovery process and be able to connect the dots between

the value delivered by their organization’s product or service applied to the customer’s problem or pain. This then must be customized by the buyer persona, delivered with compelling stories for impact, done in a natural, buyer friendly fashion. Doing this well is not easy, especially in today’s world of geographically dispersed talent, rapidly evolving market dynamics and investor demands for results.

Many onboarding programs fall far short of any of the above, resulting in an extension rather than a reduction in the time to productivity, and potentially producing unnecessary stress into the new recruit’s psyche, which increases the potential for this new hire to lose confidence and be at risk of exacerbating the turnover statistics. This becomes a vicious cycle as opposed to the proverbial virtuous cycle that we tend to strive for.

Conclusion

A thoughtful onboarding program, including knowledge transfer through classroom training, e-learning, direct field observation by their manager, coupled with technology to drive sustainment and engagement can dramatically improve the probability of success, and significantly shorten the ramp-up time for a new recruit. Yes, it will not happen without a meaningful investment of time and effort. But considering the alternatives along with the enterprise valuation metrics that can be gained, it is time and money well spent.

Best in class sales organizations get quite adept at communicating to customers the ROI that will result from proper adoption or use of their product or service. Perhaps we should take this medicine ourselves, and all get better at understanding that properly equipping our new recruits with much higher levels of initial readiness will result in revenue gains that are a step change for the firms

**Dan Weinfurter is a Director at
Mentor Group UK. You will find
his personal site [here](#)**

EDITION
2020

Opening the Door to Sales Opportunities

Conversations with Women in Sales

#WomenInSales

— AUTHORED BY
Barbara Giamanco

January 2020

mswordcoverpages.com

The **Conversations with Women in Sales** podcast has become so popular that we decided to create monthly e-books to share with the business world. Anyone in sales or sales leadership will benefit from the expert advice and guidance that you'll find in the chapters of each book.

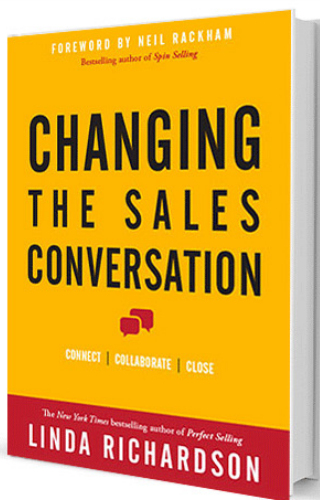
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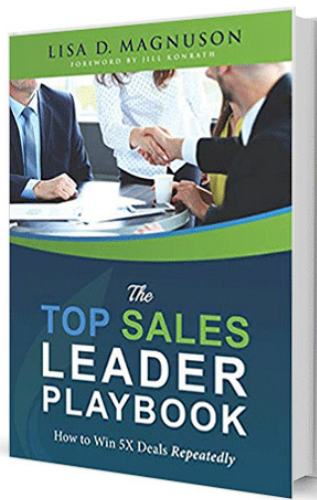
InsideView | VanillaSoft | New Relic | Door Opener Service – Kopp Consulting | Lately
Top Sales World | Women Sales Pros | Bravado | The Sales Experts Channel | No More Cold Calling

Top Sales Book of the Week

In February, Top Sales World featured the following books in the “Top Sales Book of the Week” slot



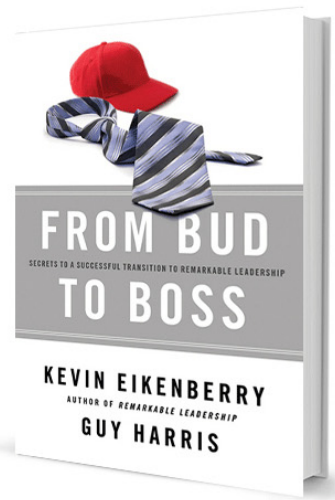
Changing The Sales Conversation:
Connect, Collaborate, And Close
by Linda Richardson [More Details](#)



The Top Sales Leader Playbook:
How To Win 5x Deals Repeatedly
by Lisa D. Magnuson [More Details](#)



Beat The Bots: How Your Humanity Can
Future-Proof Your Tech Sales Career
by Anita Nielsen [More Details](#)



From Bud To Boss: Secrets To A
Successful Transition To Remarkable
Leadership
by Kevin Eikenberry and Guy Harris
[More Details](#)



Six Critical Communication Skills 2020



When I founded Richardson, I identified six skills and used them as the dialogue thread that ran through and

connected all of our programs. In many ways the training was based on them.

For a number of years this model worked very well without major revisions. But the rise of the internet and subsequent explosion of social media prompted some revisions over time. Today the speed of information is unprecedented. Additionally, many of your clients face near crippling disruption in their space, for example the hospitality industry with Airbnb and brick and mortar retail with the internet and big box stores. And as essential as mastery of the skills has always been the level of mastery needed to win today is far greater – and hence more powerful!

These six skills may sound old but they are not the same old same old. They are the heart of your conversations. Let's look at the change:

Questioning – As vital as questioning has always been that pales to what is needed today. The past decade has drilled the importance of probing into the heads of

salespeople. Most salespeople are asking question at a reasonable level but what I see again and again is the lack of connecting questioning with listening.

Good questions combine education with probing and reflect a real understanding of the client's world. But most importantly to really leverage your questions it is vital to listen with intense focus and scan for what you need to probe to go deeper. A good formula to help build this bridge between questioning and listening is to question, listen, and then probe something in the client's response whether a vague term or an emotional tone to learn more and demonstrate your interest. It is by going deeper into what your clients tell you that the gems are found. It is almost magical in helping you make headway in understanding the outcomes your clients seek. It also helps you connect beyond the business level to a personal level.

Listening – Listening has always been a challenge. It is unfortunate that most of us have never been schooled in listening. Listening is not just hearing. Listening is using what you hear. How often in your responses do you incorporate a word or concept your client has used? How often do you ask a question that probes deeper into your customer's the line of thought rather than move on to your next idea or question? How often have you remained silent for a second or two as

encouragement for your client to continue. Moreover, personal connections are made much more when you are listening than when you are talking. And today with solid technical skills you can listen to your clients when they are not even there by tuning into their online profiles and text messages etc. and reading between the lines.

Positioning – Positioning is framing your solution from the customer’s perspective. Today that still applies, but the frame itself – your input as a salesperson – must add value. Your clients are seeking ideas, insights, market knowledge, and opinions. And especially in situations in which your recommendations are contrary to the direction the client is leaning your ability to position to the outcome your client wants and not the means to get there will make your clients much more receptive to your ideas. Clearly your ability to be persuasive is tied tightly to your strength in questioning and listening.

Checking – The skill of checking is asking for feedback on what you have said to gauge how your client is responding. Today it is even more difficult to get client time so in the time you do earn you must gain up to the minute knowledge of how the client is reacting. This is not one big question; that can be deadly if pushed toward the end of the cycle. It is a series of questions, one each time you share an idea, information, or recommendation with your client and all other decision makers and influencers across all platforms. And here is where the personal connections you create come in to give you the kind of access you need so the feedback is meaningful.

Presence – Presence is a way to engender confidence in buyers through how you carry yourself in all venues. Today executive presence is demanded because clients are looking for much more than product expertise. Clients need to have confidence in you as the person they will work with. You are the essential element of every sale. How you present yourself whether sitting face to face, phone, or video

conferencing will either build or break customer confidence. Even dressing is more complex without the once standard “business uniform” always required. Your presence is one way to show you understand and fit into your client’s culture. Additionally, by creating online presence you can draw clients to you based on the value they feel you bring.

Relating – It has always been necessary to connect with decision makers and influencers and across channels. The rise of electronic connections has created new channels for relating but at the risk of the human element. Research and experience show that it is the personal element that is the differentiator. Your ability to show empathy and understanding is the game changer. It is easy to brush this off but in my work, whether with pros or students at the highest rated business schools, empathy, while it may be felt in their hearts, for most is truly absent in their conversations. Expertise is still the foundation. But it is empathy and understanding that engages and keeps clients.

On the surface these six skills seem simple enough but in execution in critical moments in a sales opportunity, a negotiation, or a coaching situation it is clear that these skills while appearing simple are far from easy. Your goal is to drive sales, to be successful, and to add value. Your skills are a key force to get you there. Work on them. ■

Linda Richardson is a New York Times bestselling author, educator, sales leader, and the founder of the Richardson sales performance consulting firm. She has dedicated her work to helping organizations around the world improve sales performance, process, and effectiveness. Richardson began her career as a teacher and educational psychologist and went on to build an international sales organization. Her belief is that great selling is great teaching—collaborative, creative, relevant, and results driven. Find out more [here](#)

What is BQ?



BQ, the behavioral quotient of behavioral intelligence, is the conscious decision to show up and perform every day at your highest ability. BQ is fueled by your thoughts, which turn into feelings, which dictate your actions and result in your performance.



According to Matthew Jones “Your talent means nothing without consistent effort and practice”. As it relates to BQ in a sales role, BQ is negatively impacted by lack of infrastructure, clunky internal processes, mixed messages from management, lack of a high-performing culture and innovation in the company’s product or service.

In my 8-year B2B mid-market SaaS sales career, I was surrounded by hundreds of sales reps and managers. Most of us in the top 20% were technical, knowledgeable, talented, high urgency, well-spoken, emotionally self-aware, able to sell consultatively, demo our own technology, sell to multiple personality styles, and tactfully crush the competition. However, we were not all consistent in our performance and results. It wasn’t because we didn’t know how to sell or weren’t doing it effectively. Trust me, we were sales ninjas.

Our behavioral quotient (BQ) was impacted by several factors throughout the years. Some top reps would have quarters or sales years at 50% of what they’d done previously.

The Components of BQ

1. How You Think

Mental mindset and preparedness fuel your BQ. How you think determines how you feel, which determines how you act, and how you perform.

2. How You Feel

How you think determines how you feel. If you let negative thoughts stay in your mind too long, they start to alter your emotions.

3. How You Act

Your mental mindset fuels your emotional state which sets you up for how you act. Action is everything in a sales and sales management role.

4. How You Perform

Your performance is the outcome of your actions. Low performance is typically a result of not doing the work required to succeed.

How To Track Your BQ

Take the Sales BQ® Quiz and receive a custom output for your score with a plan for improving your BQ.

Sales activity is one indicator of future sales results. A rep can track their BQ daily based on the decisions they make throughout the day. Reps with

high BQ plan their day before it starts. They wake with a plan and execute the plan. Reps with high BQ stay focused and continuously prioritize tasks throughout the day as urgent items pop up and attempt to derail them. Reps can measure their BQ daily by how well they execute their plan, how they handle high-stress and high-urgency situations, and how focused they remain as they get bogged down or overwhelmed. BQ can be measured with sales activity metrics and tracking of high-performing behavior.

Example: if a rep receives word they lost a deal, they may become discouraged and want to “check-out” for the remainder of the day and be upset about it. It may crush their energy and desire to put forth the behaviors needed to close out the day strong. A rep with high BQ will process the loss, learn from the facts and not be consumed by the emotional story they’re creating in their mind, and continue to focus and close out the day strong. ■

Take the [Sales BQ® Quiz](#) now to get your Sales BQ® Score and plan for improvement. Subscribe to our Quota Crusher™ [Podcast](#). [Subscribe](#) to our newsletter for sales tips and happenings at Sales BQ®. [Mary Grothe](#), CEO Sales BQ® [linkedin.com/in/marygrothe](https://www.linkedin.com/in/marygrothe) Twitter [@MaryLGrothe](#)

Mary Grothe is a former #1 MidMarket B2B SaaS Sales Rep who after selling millions in revenue and breaking multiple records, formed Sales BQ®, an outsourced RevOps firm of fractional VPs of Sales, Sales Ops, and CMO's who serve companies across the nation by profitably rebuilding their sales & marketing departments and growing their revenue by focusing on BQ, the behavioral quotient, and proven inbound + outbound strategies.

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Attend this free online event on Friday, March 6th, and learn how to **blow away your buyers' expectations at every stage of the funnel**, from your marketing messages, to your sales conversations, to the support you provide after the sale.

Confirmed speakers for BOUNDLESS 2020 include **Jeffrey Gitomer** (international sales trainer and best-selling author), **John Barrows** (CEO of JBarrows Sales Training), **Christine Volden** (Founder of Soulful Selling), **Dave Blake** (Founder and CEO of ClientSuccess), and **Rob Siefker** (Senior Director of Customer Service at Zappos).

Visit nutshell.com/boundless-2020 to check out the full agenda and register to attend for free. We'll even send you the session recordings after the event, so you can watch them at your convenience.

[Save your seat today!](#)

Putting the Power of Sales Enablement to the Test



The upfront challenges of shifting from a product-based to a subscription-based provider — in a formalized, cross-organizational and profitably sustainable manner — was a catalyst for sweeping change at Axway.



Axway, a €300.0 million publicly-traded information technology organization with dual headquarters in Phoenix, Arizona, and Paris, France, embraced transformation before the company switched to a subscription-based solution. Leadership roles were disrupted. The solution packaging was shifting. The entire culture was ripe for positive change. Mereo helped Axway hone-in on a number of roadblocks it would face as it raced toward its goals, including its sales enablement strategies and practices. Through the action plan grounded in tighter partnership with each client, Axway revamped its go-to-market strategy, as well as aligned as an organization across geographies for immediate results that have only created momentum for future success.

Here is their sales enablement story

Challenges in Time of Change

Axway knew that in its transformation to a subscription-based solution, it would need to

revolutionize how it launched products, educated sales teams and spoke with its customers. Yet, the organization was struggling from common pitfalls that would impede the implementation of these changes:

- The organization was fragmented by geography and departments, resulting in disparate messaging and go-to-market disconnect.
- Current salespeople lacked formal skills and conversation training. They were accustomed to pitching products and rarely looked to engage buyers to understand their needs first before communicating a compelling value proposition.
- The go-to-market strategy lacked alignment between product, sales and marketing teams.

Solutions

Mereo saw ample opportunity to overcome Axway's current challenges through sales enablement activities. Led by the global head of marketing, Axway first set out to create playbooks that would (1) bring together and align leadership across functions for input and development and (2) support the upcoming sales kickoff with effective messaging tools for salespeople — while also (3) building-up formalized and aligned content that marketing could use for campaigns.

This initiative was unprecedented at Axway. More than 60 people within the organization came together across three, two-day workshops in the United States and a two-day workshop in Paris. Axway even brought in three executives from the Mereo Decision Maker Network™, who provided real-time buyer

input and validation to the value messaging framework being created.

Next, Axway embedded sales enablement into their sales kickoff, a gathering that had historically been more of a festive celebration of the global sales team. To maximize the value of the session, Axway's leadership asked salespeople to bring a real opportunity that was directly developed during the sales enablement session with new techniques. During a subsequent sales kickoff, marketing was given even more agenda to educate and train sales on relevant differentiated value messaging.

Over the last two years, Axway has provided additional in-field enablement sessions around new solution offerings and how to sell with the compelling messaging the marketing team had prepared. This cadence of sales enablement has afforded Axway the platform to expand on these efforts from the sales kickoffs and reinforce what was learned.

"Marketing had been generating a lot of leads that hadn't been going anywhere. And sales is accountable for 70% of the pipeline, so marketing's impact is higher by focusing on this alignment and support rather than staying silo-ed in the marketing department. With Mereo's help, we were able to make a bigger impact with my team and its capabilities through sales enablement," said Josh Hardy, Senior Vice President of Global Marketing at Axway.

Gains ... and Counting

This transformational period could have resulted in a number of ways for Axway, some not positive. But, with Mereo's partnership, the talented Axway teams helped the company realize a successful year in its shift to a subscription-based solution model, including:

- Realized growth in marketing-generated opportunities, up 53% in 2017, 58% in 2018 and 28% in 2019.
- Supported commercial momentum of the subscription business, which saw 7.5% growth in

2018 reaching revenue of €40.3 million, and 17.2% growth in 1H 2019 reaching revenue of €23.1 million. Organically, the business grew by 4.4% year-on-year.

- Improved sellers' confidence and capability to engage prospects in effective conversations by 33% overall instilling value-based selling approaches and employing Axway value messaging through an in-person and eLearning sales enablement curriculum.
- Employed an interactive training approach as part of sales kickoff that leveraged sales-selected target accounts as the focal of exercises. 49.7% of these registered opportunities progressed to close by utilizing concepts and techniques learned and/or honed at the kickoff.
- Increased marketing and sales enablement content at sales kickoffs from 1.5 hours in 2017 to a full day of content in 2018, to 2.5 days of content and enablement in 2019, refocusing on education and preparing to succeed in the year to come.
- Experienced growth in return on marketing per business closed by 76% in 2018 and 41% in 2019, for a total of 148% cumulative growth from 2017 to 2019.

This momentum with sales enablement among other initiatives has remained strong, and recent numbers continue to show great achievement:

- 1,583 more MQLS than 2018
- 277 more opportunities created than 2018
- 257 wins with direct marketing attribution that have closed this year
- 84% increase in ROI on variable marketing spend since 2017
- 55% of total opportunities created this year were for net new logos ■

Jay Mitchell is Founder & President of Mereo. Find out more [here](#). For the full Axway client value story, visit Mereo.co/our-clients

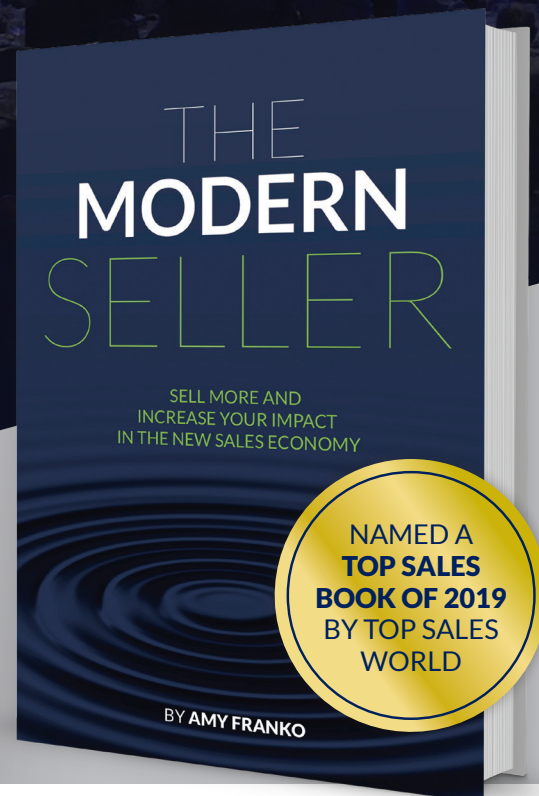
THE NEW SALES ECONOMY REQUIRES MODERN MINDSETS, SELLING SKILLS, AND TOOLS TO SUCCEED.



“Amy kept the audience **captivated** and delivered a **clear, simple message** that provided **powerful tools and actionable ideas** to help our attendees build relationships of value that create lasting business results.”

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TOP POST OF THE DECADE



TOP POST of the DECADE
2010-2019



The winners of the Top Sales Award's Top Post of the Year contest from 2010 through to 2019 competed for the accolade of Top Post of the Decade and suffice to say, the expert judging panel had an extremely tough time selecting the very best of the best. Here then are the results.

It is also extremely appropriate that we congratulate all of the finalists for creating work of such an exceptional standard.

You will find full details [here](#) and you can also meet the expert judging panel [here](#)



2019 - GOLD
Why The M In Cmo Should Be An X
By Shep Hyken



2017 - SILVER
Why Emotionally Intelligent Sales Teams Outperform The Competition
By Colleen Stanley



2014 - BRONZE
Increase In Social Selling Yields No Improvement In Kpi's
By Dave Kurlan



2010
Sales Call Reports—Are They Worth The Hassle?
By Paul McCord



2011
A Method To Consistently Achieve The Most Difficult Sales Goals
By Jon Gilge



2012
Seven Vital Changes In Selling For 2012 – Starting Today
By Linda Richardson



2013
What If You Were At Risk Of Losing Your Best Customer?
By Jill Konrath



2013
Sales Management Best Practices – Are Top Salespeople Challengers?
By Dave Kurlan



2015
Your Sales Manager Is Why Your Sales Team Is Failing
By Paul McCord



2016
Evolving Or Devolving? How Managers Brand Their Team To Fail
By Keith Rosen



2018
Implementing Sales Technology Requires Sales Enablement And Sales Operations To Work Together
By Tamara Schenk



Burnout



How you can try so hard to succeed and yet fail.

Once I knew a salesperson who was so successful that he failed. His sales and commissions were high and yet he failed. He was in his office at 6:00 a.m. each weekday and left at nearly 9:00 p.m. each evening. Weekends were used to work at home to catch up on reading, paperwork and administrative details.

His fierce and unrelenting work schedule was amply rewarded financially. Unfortunately, along the

way, he became a different person. He became irritable, forgetful, impatient, and fatigued. His family, friends, and co workers were disappointed and even disgusted with his new personality. Even though he was very successful at work, he was failing at everything else. Eventually he became bored and disenchanted with the sales profession altogether. He was a classic victim of the vicious cycle of BURNOUT.

What Is Burnout?

What happens when you run a machine too hard and too long? It burns out. The same thing happens to a human machine—a person. When people strive too hard and too long to reach a goal they often

burn out. Burnout is a state of fatigue and/or frustration brought on by an intense pursuit of a goal or devotion to a cause. It brings on a series of physical, emotional and psychological problems.

Who Suffers From Burnout?

Super Achievers suffer from burnout. They usually have overly full schedules and yet still find the time to take on more. They have a difficult time saying No! to the requests of others. When working on projects they usually do more than their share. Part of their problem relates to their inability or unwillingness to delegate things to others. They like things done right and done on time. Consequently, they do almost everything themselves.

I liken burnout victims to jugglers. They pick up three balls (Jobs tasks causes) and start juggling them. Once they feel competent enough, they pick up two more balls. Then three more. Now they are juggling eight tasks at the same time. Other people marvel at the burnout victim's ability to do so many things at the same time. The victim's pat response is "I work well under pressure." That is true. However, nobody works well under extreme levels of tension and pressure for extended periods of time. Eventually the overall quality of their work diminishes. People around them become increasingly skeptical, disappointed, and critical of the victim's work. The victims sense these negative feelings and overcompensate by pushing themselves even harder. They actually pick up four more balls for their juggling act. The quality of their work deteriorates even further. The vicious cycle of burnout claims another victim.

The people who fall prey to burnout are not bad people. They simply lose their perspective of what is really important in life. They strive too hard to reach a goal in one area of their life such as their business or profession and let the other areas of their life (family social personal etc.) flounder. They usually do not heed the warning signals or symptoms of burnout because they honestly believe things will

get better soon. They don't! They simply expose themselves to too much stress over too short a period of time and they burn out. Even when they're lucky enough to achieve their goal and get what they wanted, it usually isn't what they expected. In other words, the reward doesn't seem to compensate them for their efforts.

Are You In The Process Of Burning Out?

Most people like to know whether they are one of the unlucky victims of burnout. If so, you are probably exhibiting some or all of the burnout symptoms. These include constant exhaustion, paranoia, forgetfulness, emotional tension, boredom, lethargy, impatience, irritability, skepticism and cynicism, and a superman complex—a sense of omnipotence. Do not rush to the burnout doctor if you are experiencing some of these symptoms. It is common for everyone to experience some of these ills occasionally, yet temporarily, in some areas of their life. The burnout victims have symptoms that are constant, growing, and pervasive throughout all aspects of their life. They are truly sick physically and emotionally.

How prone are you to burnout? Take the accompanying BURN OUT QUIZ to determine your current potential for burnout.

How Do You Prevent Or Recover From Burnout?

It's not easy. It requires an intense commitment on your part to change your behavior for the better, and the healthier. It will require the same devotion and willpower as quitting smoking or going on a diet. However, don't try too hard. You may burn out by trying too hard to get better.

The following activities can help prevent you from becoming a burnout victim. They can also aid you in recovering from a burnout you already are experiencing. In following these guidelines, do not try to change too many of your behaviors at once.

That will result in a quick case of frustration and a reversion back to your comfortable old behaviors. Attempt one new behavioral change at a time. Do not try an additional new behavior until you have comfortably mastered the previous one. In this way, your new healthy behaviors will last.

1. Limit the number of hours you work. The classic burnout victims work excessively long hours—6 or 7 days per week. Even when they're home or out socializing, they can't stop thinking and talking business. They wear themselves down physically and mentally.

Make a firm commitment to cut your daily workload down by one hour per week, each and every week until you're down to 8 or 9 hours per day, five days per week. Don't say that's impossible. It certainly is if you learn how to manage your time better.

2. Set goals—write them down. Most burnout victims work so hard and so long because they get bogged down in too many trivial tasks. Very often the really important jobs, the ones with a high payoff never get done. This lack of task perspective is very often the direct result of not having clearly defined goals in writing.

By knowing what is truly important to you in your life, and by having clearly written goals and action plans, you are better able to differentiate the high payoff tasks from the low payoff tasks. Then, if you spend most or all of your time doing your high priority tasks, you'll probably accomplish twice as much in half the time.

3. Learn to say "No!" Burnout victims have a difficult time telling people they are not able to do

another task. They feel it shatters their omnipotent image. Ironically, taking on too much puts so much pressure on the burnout victims that the overall quality of their work decreases and their superman image suffers anyway. When you feel you have more than enough to keep you busy, politely refuse to take on more.

“Even though he was very successful at work, he was failing at everything else. Eventually he became bored and disenchanted with the sales profession altogether. He was a classic victim of the vicious cycle of BURNOUT.”

4. Learn to Delegate. One of the major problems afflicting burnout victims is their inability and unwillingness to delegate tasks to others. They must resist the tendency to do things themselves. Train others, especially your secretary or assistant, to do your routine and low priority tasks. Also delegate the right to make mistakes. That's how others learn. Give them their space to do things on their own. You should be spending your time on planning and completing your high priority tasks.

5. Exercise. One of the most effective ways to relieve tension and stress is through exercise. It not only helps you avoid a burnout episode; it also helps you circumvent many other physical ailments. Workaholics and super achievers complain that they do not have the time to exercise. On the contrary, taking time out of a busy

schedule to exercise usually makes you feel less fatigued while you're working and actually increases your level of awareness and productivity on the job. Force yourself to get at least 200 minutes of physical activity per week spread out over at least five separate days.

6. Break your routines. Don't follow too rigid a schedule. Too much structure gets you into a rut. In the field of nutrition, the experts recommend rotational dieting. That simply means not eating the

same foods all the time and adding variety and flexibility to your eating habits. The same advice holds true for your daily and weekly work schedule. Purposely go out of your way to do some things differently, to do some new things, and to do them at different times.

7. Try to relax. Kick back every so often during each day. Let your mind wander, not thinking about anything in particular, and especially not about business. These are necessary recharge breaks. Take long hot baths at home to relieve tension. You will find that this is an ideal way to relax both your mind and body.

8. Eat lunch AWAY from the office. This is an excellent way to accomplish many of the above suggestions. Walking to and from the restaurant or the park is an excellent source of exercise. Eating lunch outside or in the park is an ideal way to relax and cleanse your mind. Leaving the office for meals breaks the routine of being in the office all day.

9. Take vacations. Most burnout victims rarely take vacations. They have too much work to do. Even when their spouse forces them to go on a vacation, they load one suitcase with books, reading materials, and work. If the vacation consists of more than three days in the same location, burnout victims start climbing the walls. They're on a withdrawal from work.

If you react in the above manner, take a series of three day vacations throughout the year and discipline yourself not to bring any work with you. Vacation to relax, not simply to work in another environment.

10. Spend more time with your family. I realize not everyone is married or has a family. Those that do should schedule their family members into their appointment book and respect the entry as they would any other business appointment. Eat at least one meal per day with your family. Try to keep

business calls to a minimum at your home. Spend one evening and one half day per week doing something with your family as a group (TV watching doesn't count!). Get to really know the people who are very important to you in your life.

11. Take time for yourself. Get away by yourself intermittently. Spend some time alone getting to know yourself. Meditate. Relax. Read light, enjoyable material. Pursue a hobby that has absolutely nothing to do with your line of work, but is relaxing and enjoyable. Treat yourself—you deserve it.

12. Don't take life too seriously. Believe it or not, you're not indispensable. Not to the world. Not to your country. Not even to your company. Everything will go on with or without you. Let up on yourself and others. Yes, you do make a contribution—maybe even a major one. But don't overestimate your own value and worth. Do what you do and do it well. But, don't kill yourself in the process, because then you're of no value to the people and causes for which you were working. Take care of yourself and enjoy all aspects of your life—not just work. Everyone will be the better for it, especially you.

Being successful is not easy. It takes hard work, smart work, and dedication. However, if you try TOO hard to succeed, at the expense of other areas of your life, it is only a matter of time before you burn out. The consequences of burnout are not pretty. You don't have to fall victim to it if you just keep your goals in perspective, your total life in balance, and follow the burnout prevention recommendations suggested in this article. You'll be successful in ALL areas of your life, not just work. ■

Dr Tony Alessandra is a Hall of Fame
Keynote Speaker and Founder of
Assessments24x7.com.
Find out more [here](#)



It's Time to Overhaul Your Prospecting Experience



I recently wrote a blog post called **Stop Practicing Random Acts of Lead Generation**. As I did with that post, this article also

calls attention to a horrendous practice in sales that has reached a fevered pitch.

The barrage of spammy email, phone or LinkedIn pitches sent by salespeople that are ill conceived, poorly communicated, lack relevance or value, selfishly focused and downright annoying must stop.

Contrast this ineffective, brand damaging, “spray and pray” prospecting practice with the ongoing complaint from sales leaders that the business development efforts of their salespeople are not producing enough booked sales meetings, shows that a large disconnect exists at the leadership level.

The prospecting experience created when interacting directly with target buyers should lead to an increase in positive results, but the opposite is happening. In part, because billions are invested in technology to make things go faster and reach more people on a broader scale – like phone dialers or marketing automation - while the **QUALITY** of the sales message and how salespeople interact with the humans responsible for purchasing decisions has been sacrificed.

So, let me share a perspective from the buyer's point of view.

For purposes of this example, let's assume that the person receiving the email is the right person. They receive what is clearly a generic, broadcast message, and this is what they think.

“Again? Another stranger with a random sales pitch interrupting my day. Like every other salesperson clogging up my inbox with more noise, this person thinks themselves special enough that I will stop what I'm doing to respond to them. Why

would I? Even with the internet and social media, I can tell this salesperson made no effort to learn anything about me, my role or challenges I might be facing. More insulting is that they want me to watch their video to figure out what they do or how they can help me.

It isn't that I won't meet with salespeople. After all, part of my job is considering purchases we may need to make to address market and competitive challenges, solve problems for our customers, keep pace with rapidly changing technology environments and consistently meet our revenue projections.

The reason I don't grant many salespeople requests for my time is that they bring little business value to the table. They pitch product features without knowing my business or the strategic priorities my team and I must accomplish. Do any of them really care about our problems? It certainly doesn't feel that way. Do salespeople give any thought to what's at stake for us if what they sell doesn't live up to their promises?"

What if that sales email or phone call lands at just the right time?

Salespeople sometimes get lucky. The timing of their contact could come right at the point when a buyer has identified a problem to address, the buying team is researching options to solve that problem, and the next step is deciding who to meet to discuss further. In this case, the executive thinks...

"We probably need to schedule a sales meeting, but will this salesperson be any different? My team tells me that the product this salesperson sells may be exactly what we need. Still, most times when I've said yes to a sales meeting, I've come to regret it. Standard practice in those meetings is for salespeople to talk, talk, talk...about themselves, their product, their company. Rare is the salesperson who invests all their time confirming what is important to me and my decision-making team, much less being able to discuss strategies for remedying our situation. I don't need salespeople. I need trusted advisors. People that I can count on to tell me the truth, present fresh ideas, look at the problem holistically,

work seamlessly with other providers and put our interests ahead of their commission check."

Delivering a quality sales experience is your competitive advantage.

Your prospects have choices. A lot of them. They've been disappointed or downright scammed so often that they default to ignoring most sales attempts to reach them.

Almost 5-years ago, Walker released their 2020 customer experience predictions, citing that experience would overtake product and price as a brand differentiator. The sales experience is ALSO a competitive advantage, with that experience beginning long before a prospective customer decides to buy something.

Business development roles exist to open doors to sales meetings. When the quality of the prospecting experience is poor, good luck with achieving that objective. Sales today is not the "numbers game" it used to be. The interpersonal, people interactions – positive or negative – matter in big ways. In the spirit of keeping it simple, if buyers won't talk to your salespeople, sales opportunities cannot be created, developed or closed.

Google called these ground zero interactions between buyers and sellers ZMOT. That zero moment of truth when buyers and their teams are making critical go/no-go decisions at each stage along their path to purchase.

Pursuing opportunities that are more than quick transactional sales requiring little sophistication to seal the deal, front-line salespeople are not "just booking a meeting" that they pass along to someone else. Everything they do is scrutinized, and first impressions matter! It is here at this first zero moment of truth that sales are lost before they've begun. Isn't it time to overhaul your sales teams prospecting experience? Need some help? Let's talk. ■

Barbara Giamanco, CEO at Social Centered Selling and host of the Conversations with Women in Sales Podcast. Find out more [here](#)



THE SALES FUTURISTS

The Future of Professional Selling is Here

Our Ethos

To continually explore the dynamics of professional selling today, tomorrow, and specifically, into the future ...

We Believe

That the sales space has witnessed more change in the last 5 years than it did in the previous 50 and that rate of change shows no sign of abating. Those organizations which are able to adapt and embrace change are the ones more likely to survive – and even thrive.

Our Mission

The future belongs to all of us. We cannot see it clearly, but we can meet it with courage if we are open to it. We can strive to create a better future for our organizations, our team members, our customers and ourselves. The Sales Futurists team has been created to provide sales leaders, business captains and organizational stakeholders with the information they need to not only get ahead of the competition but to stay there.

[GO TO SITE](#)

Beware Of The Talk Trap



There's a menace in your sales territory today. It's one that can drain your resources, rob you of your time, lay waste to your sales targets and sink the morale of your entire sales team...effortlessly.



That menace is the dreaded **talk trap**. You have to be able to know it and name it first before you can take steps to not fall into it. The talk trap lays waiting for unsuspecting sellers who innocently confuse somebody who will listen to them with someone who also has decision-making authority to buy from them...when in fact **they don't!**

Attention is the lure.

Attention from that somebody is the lure that pulls your sellers into the talk trap. When the talking starts, the sellers can't help themselves. Why? Because suddenly somebody is giving them everything they ever wished for: a person who returns their calls, who listens attentively, and who tells them how much they will simply love using the products/services being offered for sale. The talk trap generously feeds a seller's ego while starving them not only of their ability to make good decisions, but also of the time and focus to learn the needs of the true buyer.

It gets set every day, everywhere.

The talk trap gets set daily and ensnares sellers of every caliber and in every industry. Don't be one of them! Recently at a sales workshop, I heard from two different sales leaders in two different sectors—one in industrial supplies and the other in software—whose teams found themselves caught in a talk trap. In both cases, the team had sunk countless hours talking to and negotiating with someone who turned out to be lacking decision-making authority on purchases for their company. In both cases, a highly valued, fully closed deal got 100% cancelled when the actual decision maker appeared.

It reminds you there are two kinds of lies.

We typically think of lying as the act of saying something that is knowingly untrue. But those who ensnare sellers in a talk trap remind us that there is also the lie of omission: they don't tell the seller that they lack decision-making authority. Or they give the impression they are a qualified buyer but withhold important truths about their company's buying process. In part, it's not their fault. It's the seller's job to ask probing questions to correctly identify a qualified buyer.

So, when on the hunt for prospects, beware of the talk trap. Be on your guard when you are shown a wealth of attention matched by lack of substantive answers to your probing questions. Only once you are able to correctly identify a talk trap are you able to take decisive steps to avoid one: and that second point is what I will cover in the next article in this two-part series. ■

Colleen Francis is President and Founder of Engage Selling Solutions and bestselling author of Nonstop Sales Boom.
Find out more [here](#)

The Damaging Cost Of High Salesperson Turnover



Sales Hacker's 2016 Sales Metrics Report states the average tenure for a B2B sales person is 1.4 years. It takes a new salesperson six months to become effective which doesn't give them long to succeed. This is a huge problem for sales leaders - so what are we doing about this? Often the wrong thing.



Every vendor is after gun salespeople who can bolt out of the gates, meet quarterly targets, achieve constricting KPIs and work ridiculous hours. The mantra is *"More calls, more emails, more content. Selling is a numbers game. If you can't stand the heat get out of the kitchen."*

Salespeople get a year then they're out. Or they burn out and move from job to job. The revolving door spits them out and they take their relationships and knowledge with them.

Sales leaders are so short term focused they kill the goose laying the golden eggs. There may be a sugar hit when a new sales leader pushes the troops over the

top but the law of diminishing returns kicks in and the downward spiral continues.

That's why the average tenure of a sales leader has shrunk to 19 months. It's the same pattern. Start full of energy, push and hustle, burn out, move on.

It wasn't always thus.

At 42, after a career in professional services and marketing management I found myself working as a BDM selling ERPs for a 15 person Australian company. We competed with huge US & European companies so we focused on publishing & consumer electronics distribution, where we had a competitive edge.

It was my first sales job. I used the phone and personalised snail mail, writing about industry issues, not about our software. I talked to publishers about the hassles of managing claims and returns, to consumer electronics distributors about rebates and spare parts.

In my first six months I sold... nothing. Nowt. Zip. Not a sausage.

Transworld Publishing's CIO said they wouldn't replace their ERP for 5 years. Macmillan Distribution's MD liked us but had no budget. HarperCollins' Finance Director wasn't interested. Sanyo, Makita, Pioneer, Homedics, JVC said thanks but no thanks.

After nine months I'd sold....

Nothing.

Then Transworld Publishers' support person retired. My first sale.

Macmillan Distribution needed a system for their new warehouse. I'd built a relationship with their MD and scored my second, much bigger sale.

HarperCollins' new CIO realised they needed another system. Sanyo needed a new ERP for Y2K. Pioneer bought our software when GST came in. Homedics needed an ERP to do their own distribution. Makita's CEO defied orders from Japan to buy us.

After five years I'd sold millions and was in charge of sales & marketing worldwide. Those companies that had said "no thanks" were customers. We'd tripled in size. Bookmaster became the most widely used publishing ERP in the world and I sold over \$100 million in 26 countries on 6 continents.

My sales career ended with a bang - but it began with a whimper.

I was lucky. I was given time to learn, to develop a strategy, to get to know my prospects' business issues. I could have been fired after nine months of "failure" - my groundwork and relationships would have been wasted and my replacement would have started from scratch with no better prospect of success.

But they saw my potential, gave me time to succeed and it paid off.

There's a myth that failure in sales is due to lack of motivation or activity. It isn't.

It's due to poor strategy, poor targeting, short term focus and bad management. That's why sales are tanking. The emphasis on more and more activity, more and more control, is burning salespeople out. They aren't enjoying their jobs. It's a slog and unsustainable.

Customers are getting frustrated too - at the volume of calls & emails, the high turnover of salespeople, the lack of understanding of their needs and the hard sell.

If we slow down, qualify our targets BEFORE we call, have a well thought out strategy, plan for the long term while managing the short term and replace "more" with "better" we'll slash sales force turnover, sell a lot more and have happy, healthy productive salespeople, not frazzled frustrated ones. ■

Steve Hall is MD of Executive Sales Coaching Australia. Find out more [here](#)

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2020 Roundtable Series



TOP SALES FUTURISTS
The Future of Professional Selling is Here

The Latest Top Sales Roundtable Recording Has Been Released **Sales Enablement or Revenue Enablement or Customer Enablement or?**

What we do know is that sales enablement has stalled: Ongoing research suggests that less than 3% of organizations exceeded their objectives in 2019 and even the most vociferous evangelists are admitting that a plateau has been reached.

During this latest Roundtable, we will be trying to understand why, after just five years, the wheels appear to be coming off.

Is it that there has been insufficient understanding and support from the top?

Or have the people charged with creating and driving the strategy lacked the appropriate level of experience?

Maybe it is because too few of the stakeholders really understand what sales enablement actually is and what it is meant to achieve?

And what about the customers/clients, are they any the wiser than they were five years ago? Have they noticed any difference? Do they care?

What is the way forward? Revenue Enablement? Customer Enablement? Or?

Hosted by Jonathan Farrington, the expert panel comprised of George Brontén, Damon Jones, David Mattson and Anita Nielsen. [Please Watch Here](#)



George Brontén



Damon Jones

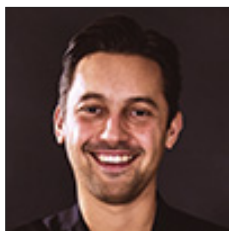


David Mattson



Anita Nielsen

A JF INITIATIVE



February's Top Sales Post

How To Harness Cognitive Bias To Win More Sales
by George Brontén

"I like the sound of your solution, but I've already spent a lot of money with this vendor, so we're going to keep trying to make it work."

"You seem to have built an impressive solution, but we really put a lot into our in-house solution, and even though it's not working right now, we like it, so we're going to keep building on it."

"Everything you had to say makes sense to me, and it seems to fit our situation best, but I see a lot of people getting amazing results with your competitor, so we're going to go that route instead."

We've all heard statements like these from buyers, and we all groan because we know they're not logical. Well, at least not from our perspective. In previous blog articles, I've talked about the cognitive

biases that influence and sometimes interfere with sales, including the sunk cost bias, confirmation bias, bandwagon effect, spacing effect, and Ikea effect.

But what if you could make cognitive bias work in your favor during the sales process? Here are five cognitive biases and how to use them to win more deals.

1. THE SUNK COST BIAS

The sunk cost bias is the cognitive shortcut that causes us to "throw good money after bad"—i.e., continue with something we've already invested in, even if it's not working for us. It works against us when buyers choose a worse solution because they've already spent [Read Full Article Here](#)

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