



COFFEE IS FOR CLOSERS

New Business Dynamics |04 - asks if sales is the new marketing. We review the widespread reappraisal of sales underway at the moment, and recommend the marketing services sector embraces it.

Rainmaker Consulting
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Selling **runs** our lives.

It's how we interact and compromise. It's how we get along with one another. Without selling, there'd certainly be no buying. And without that, there'd be no commerce at all.

We're all familiar with the stereotype of a salesperson - not a positive one, in the main - whether or not you believe, as I do, that this view is damaging to our economy.

In terms of a career move, many marketers have often regarded 'sales' as a poor relation of 'marketing', and perhaps by way of justification for this, sales to be a very useful 'product' of marketing. Though clearly very much two sides of the same coin, 'marketing' is popularly viewed as sexy, chic and cool, whilst 'sales' on the other hand is desperate, stop gap and embarrassing. It's thought that sales pushes and marketing pulls - so sales is for the pushy and marketing is for the alluring. These distortions rise to the surface easily and are reinforced by reality TV shows like *The Apprentice* and *Dragons' Den* - and from a more highbrow perspective via Alec Baldwin's character Blake, in the 1990s motion picture *Glengarry Glen Ross* (tagline - 'the hardest thing in life is to sell').

There is certainly a cultural legacy that positions sales as a low-caste function, rather than what it is - a critical business driver. This phenomenon couples nicely with a seemingly inbuilt reticence on the part of many of us to talk to strangers. The decade of the 1980s sought to remove the moral compass to disorientate us - witness Michael Douglas in *Wall Street*. The economic success of the US in the 19th & 20th Centuries has much to do with the energies of a less inhibited culture that embraces - indeed enthuses - about pitching ideas, products and services. It is ironic therefore that the data shows that US agencies are even more wet than the very bashful UK ones when it comes to selling marketing services. By way of an explanation, I think it's possible that many of those that enter marketing services as a career move may be reluctant to associate with what they perceive as a low-caste activity.

But now a new wave of interest in the importance of sales from industry pundits, and a more scientific approach into understanding consumers by research consultancies, is challenging these conventions. And it's a quieter, more questioning and more thoughtful approach that is what successful sales is really all about and one upon which our economies can really motor ahead. Firstly, let us ask which sibling is really the driver? After all, the whole point of marketing is sales. Good marketing creates credibility and levers for the sales person or sales environment to exploit. Marketing is a tool. The selling function

doesn't necessarily need marketing to perform, but the marketing function will always need a selling mechanism in order to transact.

It's no surprise then that the status of sales is being reevaluated by thought-leaders such as The Economist's "uber guru" Tom Peters* who places it as, the most important business function within today's progressive-thinking organisations. He says: "I'm on a new campaign. I am trying to put 'Sales' back on the pedestal it deserves. In the process, I suppose I'm downgrading marketing - and that's more than okay with me. Of course, I think marketing is incredibly important, but I think it intellectually comes second after sales - and the likes of MBA programs have mostly eliminated sales from the picture".

Recent research by the leading sales training house TACK, of over 1,000 senior managers, found board directors across the UK are increasingly placing sales at the core of their organisational planning. Their findings show that 72% of senior managers feel the sales team is now the most important function in their organisation. They also report that 66% declared that more budget is to be invested in the sales teams, and 79% said that currently not enough of their personnel understand the sales function.

The Times (May 10, 2007) reports that the academic world is beginning to appraise the subject too and that there's been "a skills gap which we've been very slow to address". It says universities haven't offered undergraduate degrees in sales because of a combination of stigma and an erroneous belief that salespeople are naturally good at what they do - that sales "has been missed off the educational map". But this is now changing with growing investment in sales education. You can do a Masters in Sales Management at the University of Portsmouth, a PhD in Sales and Marketing at the University of Wales, an MA in Sales Management at Huddersfield University Business School, a Sales Directors' and Sales Leadership Programme at Ashridge Business School, and a postgraduate programme in Industrial Sales and Strategic Marketing from Loughborough University. In Europe, for example, there's a Masters in Sales and Marketing Management offered at the ESADE Business School, Spain.

For the circa 8,000 marketing agencies on Rainmaker's UK database, and for the many more in the US, this reappraisal of the role of 'sales', is not only something that should spur an urgent review with client work - for example with direct and multi-channel marketing - but is also something we think they should incorporate into their own sales/new business activity.

*Tom Peters is described as "The Bestselling Prophet of the Management Revolution" with high profile clients and offices in the UK and US. "In no small part, what American corporations have become is what Peters has encouraged them to be" (The New Yorker). "Peters is the father of the post-modern corporation" (Los Angeles Times). "We live in a Tom Peters World" (Fortune). The 2004 Bloomsbury Press book 'Movers and Shakers' includes Peters as one of 'The 100 Most Influential Figures in Modern Business'.



The first and last rule of new business success

There are countless sales and new business techniques. Some are published as self-help books. Some are institutionalised within the sales cultures of particular organisations. Some border on the semi-religious - the more demented of which haven't done a great deal to help redress the stereotypes referred to in our introduction. Having experimented with many of these, I will save you a lot of reading (and trial and error field work) by stating categorically that they all boil down to one essential principle: the first and last rule of new business success is that you've got to ask questions.

Sustainable new business success for agencies is not, as is commonly thought, about chutzpah or force of personality. Though in terms of assisting stamina this may be a useful attribute for a sales person who's been tasked (wrongly) with tens of thousands of buying points, for agencies with a few hundred strategically vital targets, you simply can't afford to be pushy. If you do, you will turn off far more than you turn on with unpleasant consequences for your brand. We heard recently from a Top 10 London advertising agency that was using a new business agency that promises persuasive and high-energy cold calling. A very desirable prospect subsequently contacted them, advising them that the person calling on their behalf was damaging their reputation. A senior marketing decision-maker had this to say to us generally on the subject during our very first survey in 20 02, but it's still well put: "It's all about attitude at the first point of contact on the phone. They should be informal, but not cocky, not patronising, not "salesy" and actually show that they realise people are busy."

Likewise, there is limited and only short-term value from insider knowledge or a well-guarded little black book of contacts. Knowledge becomes dated; contacts get used up quickly, or move on and become irrelevant. The best new business people don't need black books or classical debating skills - they have small egos. Rather than being a self-absorbed motor mouth, they insist on looking at the world only from the other fellow's perspective. They are curious and genuinely interested in other people and their plans. They are driven to uncover the facts, as the issues that shape an organisation's agenda. With this information they want to help construct a tailored proposal to solve the other party's problem. This is a true creative quality, which is fuelled by confidence and the ability to ask questions.

Questions are important at the stage of initial dialogue in determining issues and agenda. They are important during any further discussion, to eliminate confusion and ambiguity, to clarify the position. They are important pre-meeting, to prepare and focus, and post-meeting to better define the brief. If a pitch doesn't work out, we must ask why. Where, in the process to that point, were the wrong questions asked, or perhaps insufficient numbers of questions asked, so that the prospect's needs were miscalculated?



With telephone prospecting, if you get stuck and don't know what to say, simply ask a question. As long as your agency's branding and delivery has positioned you with sufficient relevance and credibility people actually don't mind talking about themselves and their brands/companies. It is this simple reorientation of the selling mind that opens doors and engages your agency with its strategic prospects, faster. And this, interestingly, is entirely in line with what we espy as the most important trend in the offerings of the marketing services sector: the rise in the importance of customer insight*.

*The Intelligent New Business Survey 2007

Sales logic...



...the marriage of sales and marketing.

Our concept 'sales logic', sets out the business case as succinctly as possible, for why anyone would want to use a particular type of marketing agency, and use it rather than any alternative. In achieving this, it has the opportunity to differentiate, but if done poorly, will blend you in with the rest. For the purposes of new business lead generation, it is designed to provide an easily digestible distil that enables decision-makers to decide in five seconds flat (which is about as long as you get) whether they want to invest any more time in a conversation.

It is not a strapline or brand articulation, though it does inform them. It does not describe a sales hook, and is definitely not a crib or script (both anathema for successful sales). Rather, it enshrines the thing the agency does by testament of the results it can achieve better than anyone else. And it remains the key marker for the agency's brand personality throughout the sales cycle with the prospect. It is also to be used 'inside out' for the agency in terms of all communications. The more singular you can be about the concept within the sales logic, the more easily you can differentiate, and thus get in front of more people faster, to then expand fully on the whole range of the offering(s) face to face (or when the opportunity to establish chemistry is better than five seconds).

The more that agencies attempt to be comprehensive, usually through anxiety not to leave anything out, the more diluted the effect on the sales logic - too many colours make brown. And so a sales logic is about having what really is a kind of courage to stand on one position, which can then be consistently and repeatedly communicated to define the agency's brand and improve awareness of its power to transform clients' businesses for the better. Once established, the next challenge is to articulate the sales logic as a phrase. This could be a strapline - although this is not always appropriate - at least, a phrase that may be used as a campaign theme or attitude for everyone involved in selling the agency to relate to. Of course in reality, every agency's proposition is different, but here's a simple illustration of how it works: -

1. Factor A is changing consumer behaviour
2. AnyAgency Ltd. harnesses this change on behalf of its clients better than any alternative
3. It can do this because it has unique research tool B and innovative planning method C
4. These combined enable outcome D
5. Which drives ultimate client business objective E
6. And we can prove this via case studies F & G

If the agency's staff, partners and prospects can get their heads round the way the logic flows for its business, then they should find it easier to sell its services. And although the sales logic draws on competitor and market research for important information to help get things back into their correct sequence, 'marketing' is what you then do once you've figured out how to sell your agency.

The Creative Selling Technique

Let's review the very effective 'DIPADA' technique. This is a popular sales technique and one that we employ to assist creatively selling our agency clients. Although it's a process and nobody wants to be process-driven, it is 'creative' in that you construct a case to solve the problem of the other party by means of your service or product.



Firstly, let's consider the individual qualities of a good creative sales person. When asked to describe a sales person, most people will list adjectives from the active column below. In fact, a good balance of both passive and active qualities is required. A good sales person is a well-adjusted human being indeed: -

Active Qualities

Articulate
Persuasive
A team player
Enthusiastic
Friendly
Opportunistic
Self-assured
Energetic
Assertive
Persistent
A networker
Confident
Passionate

Passive Qualities

Thoughtful
A good listener
Empathetic
Has market knowledge
Has business acumen
Thorough
Intelligent
Sensitive
Focused
Calm under pressure
Emotionally balanced
Imaginative

In an important sense, this provides us with a set of abilities that enable us to both 'think' and 'do'. When asked to sell a product or service, most people will simply provide a long list of the qualities of that product or service. But creative selling is about identifying 'benefits', not 'qualities'. Though a brief introduction is always required on the part of the seller, creative selling will find out what the other party needs before offering a solution. The process required is outlined via the memory jogger DIPADA: -

- D** Define (the other party's needs)
- I** Identify (the match between your product or service and their needs)
- P** Prove (the qualities of your product or service match their needs)
- A** Agree (secure the other party's agreement that this is the case)
- D** Desire (build desire with the other party to transact)
- A** Action (provide a 'call to action' / close)

Define

We use open questions to elicit information (Who? What? Why? When? Where? How?) and closed ones to confirm our understanding to end in a yes or no (rather like a barrister might do when questioning a witness). The most important question to begin with of course is 'are you the decision-maker?' Then begin with your open questions. If you're not sure what to do, ask a question. If you get stuck, ask a question. You can never ask too many, and as a result you should build up a rich picture of the decision-making credentials and business issues of that particular individual as they relate to your product or service.

Identify

Now we understand their needs, we must identify the match between their needs X, Y and Z and the qualities of our product or service. In theory you wouldn't have said anything about your offer yet (although that rarely works in practice). If the quality matches a need, it becomes a 'benefit'.

Prove

Then we must prove these benefits represent the best solution for the other side by going through them one by one, proving the case, backing up with facts and figures as appropriate. Ideally the proof points should be hard-hitting and memorable.

Agree

We need to know if the other side agrees that we have matched their needs and proven that we have the best solution in order to move forward. So let's ask them....

Desire

Though this is a methodical sequence of actions, building desire requires empathy and social skills. This aspect is not confined to this stage of DIPADA; rather it runs all the way through. Your passion, animation and enthusiasm are half the battle. People will buy into your energy and commitment. Be emotional where appropriate. Use visual imagery to help people mentally view the benefits.

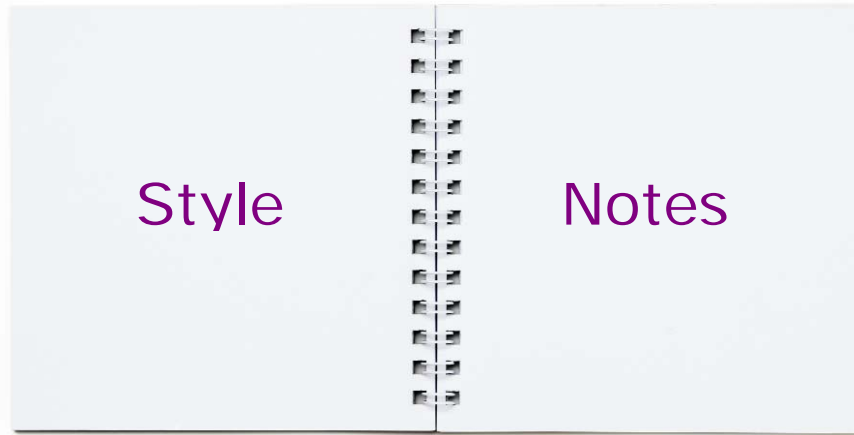
Action

When you are happy you've matched properly and that the prospect sees clear benefits in using your offer, give the 'call to action', or bring the discussion to a 'close'. Closing gets to the point and gives you the initiative. If you don't ask, you won't get, so you must always close. Closing is not an art. That thinking belongs in the introductory remarks about stereotypes. If you have matched properly, the discussion should practically close itself. If the answer to the question 'do you want to buy then?' is no, then we must have fallen down somewhere in the process - a misinterpretation perhaps about decision-making credentials or the precise needs of the other party? We need to go back to identifying the match and probing for information. Once more, the way forwards is with a question: "Is there something I'm missing?" etc.... But if there's still a problem, we will need to deal with the 'objection', and there's a similar creative selling technique for doing so.

You may get a 'buying signal' from the other party at any time, perhaps something along the lines of: -

"How much does it cost?" "Have you any experience in my category?" "Do you do PR as well as advertising?" Or simply, "Yes, I'm interested". Technically speaking, having received one you should close, but if it feels awkward at that stage (e.g. too early in the conversation) you should at the very least recognise it and then move your questioning into that area.

Creative selling means you must always look at things from the prospect's perspective. You should hear your own voice and imagine how you're coming across and how they are viewing the process. In order to communicate effectively you must speak the same language. Using intuition and empathy you should adapt your pace and tone to the conversation, respond to small talk but getting down to business swiftly to take the initiative.



Tone & Pace

The sales person should sound authoritative and be full of energy, even when they don't feel like it! They should use power words, landing firmly on the benefits and stressing important phrases. Delivery is dynamic including pausing for effect - especially after closing - never break the silence! Make the introduction rapid, succinct, clear (because everyone's busy) then follow this with a more measured approach. Alternate slow and measured with passionate, light and fluffy with commercial gravity: -

Sentence 1

Confident
Articulate
Animated
Pacey

Sentence 2

Slow
Measured
Precise
Intelligent

From the Bench

Stay focused

Always focus totally on the action at hand. Focus on the call and when you know what to do, don't think about it anymore, just do it.

Self-discipline

Motivate yourself to crank out as much effort as possible. The harder you work, the easier it is, and the more you'll benefit.

Qualify absolutely everything

"So, picking up on what you said earlier, you're saying that $1 + 2 = 4$...is that right?"

Stick with it

Hang on in! You'll have good days and bad days, good weeks and bad weeks - in any job or situation. You're only human, but be a fighter. People buy people so have a personality and use humour to break the ice. Sound like someone you'd want to spend an hour with.

Believe in it...

...or do something else.

Never mention the competition...

...it sounds vulnerable.

Listen to all comments and understand them

...don't just nod your head.

Never waste time on an unproductive process

...be perceptive and recognise a timewaster or a valid objection.

The phone is your best friend

There is a time and a place for a well-crafted letter or email. Never labour at the keyboard when you can just pick up the phone instead. We can grasp someone's attention and hold it for longer, dealing with any objections on the spot. We can explore ideas and move the conversation in any profitable direction. We can gather new information.

Open Sesame!

There are various hooks and roads-in that the sales person# might like to consider, based on the particular strengths of their agency.

Relevant Client Experience

- * Sector relevance
- * Demographic
- * Geography
- * Business problem
- * Solution/offer
- * Insight
- * Awards - list of awards zoned by type

Research

- * Industry/sector insights
- * Future trends & predictions
- * Customer insights

Agency Propositions

- * Structure
- * Ethos
- * Research
- * Educative
- * Multiple

Calendar/Events

- * Seminar/workshop
- * Breakfast club
- * Conference

Personal Connections

- * The CEO/MD's little black book
- * Networks

Innovation/cutting-edge

- * We were the first to...
- * No one else has this...
- * This is a totally new approach...

Accreditations

- * Not very useful for proactive cold new business, more useful to reassure blue-chip clients

Preferred supplier/roster placement

- * We are on your approved roster, but you may not know that we are?

#Or new business manager, or business development manager, or sales and marketing manager, or business development and marketing manager - or whatever title it takes for people to feel better about themselves and for their companies to adopt to help convince them they're not really selling...

Excerpt from Glengarry-Glen-Ross

Blake [Alec Baldwin]

You see this watch? You see this watch?

Dave Moss [Ed Harris]

Yeah.

Blake

That watch costs more than you car. I made \$970,000 last year. How much you make? You see pal, that's who I am, and you're nothing. Nice guy? I don't give a sh*t. Good father? F*ck you! Go home and play with your kids. You wanna work here - close! You think this is abuse? You think this is abuse, you c*cks*cker? You can't take this, how can you take the abuse you get on a sh*t? You don't like it, leave.

[Fade]

Blake

You got leads. Mitch & Murray paid good money. Get their names to sell them. You can't close the leads you're given, you can't close sh*t, you are sh*t - hit the bricks pal, and beat it, 'cause you are going out.

Shelley Levene [Jack Lemmon]

The leads are weak.

Blake

"The leads are weak." The f*cking leads are weak? You're weak. I've been in this business fifteen years...

Dave Moss

What's your name?

Blake

F*ck you. That's my name.

[Moss laughs]

Blake

You know why, mister? 'Cause you drove a Hyundai to get here tonight, I drove an eighty thousand dollar BMW. That's my name.