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Stunningly Awful Sales Tactics – The Future-Sales Prevention Team
Or
The Curse of the Hunter-Farmer Model

Are your sales teams traditional, better or truly great? Contemplate the following (ugly) scenario:

A customer calls his sales person to ask for help implementing software he purchased recently – there seems to be a mismatch regarding the capabilities delivered vs. what he expected…

He leaves a voicemail message, but hears nothing back from the sales rep. He then calls customer service and describes his problem (again) to them. Customer service promises to look into it – but can find no information in the CRM system beyond that the order was received by purchasing a few weeks back. The customer service people send an email to the sales person and receive a curt response, "I brought in the business; your job is implement it!"

Customer service ultimately tells the customer "Sorry, the software you licensed didn't include the capabilities you are asking about…"

Frustrated, the customer reduces the scope of his implementation – and has to tell his management that "The ROI for this purchase may take longer than expected…"

A month later, our customer receives a call from an account manager ("Farmer") at the same vendor. She asks how things are going… Our customer replies, "Not as well as I'd wanted – we had to scale back our planned implementation. I'm a bit frustrated, actually…!"

On the other end of the line, the account manager sighs deeply and says (to herself), "Looks like yet another uphill struggle with yet another customer. I'll never make quota this way…!"

Contemplate a second (ugly) scenario:

This time the customer is talking with the vendor's professional services team. A similar conversation takes place, with the professional services folks ultimately saying either:

1. "Sorry, you didn't license what you need – you'll have to scale back your implementation…"

2. "Darn it, that sales person *promised* the customer those capabilities, now we'll have to implement them for free…!"

Overall, there are several unhappy parties in these scenarios: the account manager, the professional services team and – most important – the customer!

Traditional Sales People…

Many traditional sales people – and especially those who are designated and compensated solely as "Hunters" – are interested in the relationship with the customer up through what point in time? That's right, the moment the PO is received – then these traditional sales people *run*, not walk, to the next opportunity! This results in serious disconnects between a bevy of the vendor's individuals and departments:

- Farmer to Hunter: What did we sell? What do they need? What are their expectations? What can *I* sell? Arrgh!
- Professional Services to Sales: What implementation was promised? What was paid for? When do they expect it? Errrgh!
- Customer Services to Sales: What did they buy? What was promised? What mess do we have to deal with *this* time? Ack!

But wait – what goes around, comes around:

- Marketing to Sales: Who of your customers can we contact to capture some good reference stories? None of your accounts…? Darn…
- Sales to Marketing: How come we don't have any reference stories available? How can I sell to new customers without good references? Arrrgh!

Sales people that simply sell and run are active members of the Future-Sales Prevention Team – helping to ensure that their competition will get the next rounds of business!

Better Sales People…

Better Sales People (and Sales Teams) uncover customers' Critical Dates – dates by when the *customer* needs to have a solution in place – and then walk backwards from those dates to map out the major steps that need to take place to ensure that implementation will be completed successfully, in time for the desired "Go Live" date.

This particular conversation with the customer can also have some delightful consequences:

Customer: "So we need to have your system in operation by September 15, in order to meet our project deadlines…"

Vendor: "Understood. Well, based on the capabilities you need, we should map out a rough time-line to get you up and going."

Customer: "Sounds good…"

Vendor: "OK, for an implementation like yours, based on our experiences with other customers in similar situations, we should plan on a few days of final end-user training, preceded by pre-roll-out testing; before that is configuration, implementation, and admin training… Hmmm, looks like in order for you to meet your target date we need to get contracts to legal tomorrow!"

With a rough plan in place, the profession services team can be brought in to discuss the details. And these Better Sales People and (and Better Sales Teams) then track progress against the final plan to help resolve challenges and ensure that implementation can take plan on time, on spec, and on budget. (Note that the Sales Team here can include a Hunter and corresponding Farmer, in addition to profession services folks).

But wait: there's more!

Truly Great Sales Teams…

What happens when an individual makes a substantial software purchase on behalf of his company – from his perspective? A huge weight descends onto his shoulders – the responsibility associated with the size of the investment. And that weight is not lifted until that investment shows some tangible return.

Truly Great Sales People and Sales Teams map out and track the process of implementation with the customer from Discovery, through purchase, through roll-out and deployment, all the way to that point in time when the customer enjoys a Value Realization event – a small victory that can be announced internally to peers and management.

"We completed this last cycle in one day vs. what previously took us a month – hooray!" And that's the point in time when the weight is lifted from the buyer's (virtual) aching shoulders.

Value Realization events don't necessarily require a full year of ROI. They may simply be an early win or small victory – representing a small, but tangible portion of overall ROI desired.

Truly Great Sales People and Teams identify Value Realization events in early conversations with the customer. Often, these discussions take place towards the end of Discovery – once the customer sees that a solution is possible, he wants to understand how to put that solution into place. This vendor and customer can then rough-out a mutual plan of the steps to achieve the desired Value Realization event.

An example Discovery question might be, "How will you define an initial success for this project? Not the full ROI, but just an early success or victory – what would that look like?"

This also enables the vendor's professional services teams to focus implementation and training on achieving the Value Realization event, in particular. Importantly, the customer sees that the vendor is truly interested in the customer's success – not just selling and running to the next opportunity.

Transition Vision

This process has a name: it's called "Transition Vision". It's the process of helping the customer see how he will move from his current painful situation *through* deployment all the way to the point in time when victory (for him) can be declared.

The vendor that executes this process well vs. the vendor that ignores it has a significant competitive advantage. Consider the following story:

You've decided to trade-in your old Honda and get a new SUV. You visit Car Dealership #1 and, as you walk towards the show-room, you see *exactly* the car you want – the right color, the right options and you are entirely comfortable with the price posted on the car [Editor's note: this is the less-than-believable part of the story…!]. A salesperson comes up and you say, "I'd like to buy this car. I've brought my current Honda to trade-in to help pay the balance of the purchase price."

Salesperson says, "Great! Go ahead and sell your Honda, and when you have the full amount come back and we'll get you into that shiny new SUV…!"

You walk away, disgruntled, and decide to try Car Dealership #2 across town.

You arrive at Car Dealership #2 and, as you are heading to the show-room, you once again see *exactly* the car you want – and again, with the right color, the right options and the price is exactly the same as at Dealership #1. A salesperson comes up and you once again say, "I'd like to buy this car. I've brought my current Honda to trade-in to help pay the balance of the purchase price."

Salesperson says, "Great! Did you bring the registration and ownership papers for your Honda?"

You indicate that you have the papers with you.

Salesperson says, "Very good – if you'll give me those documents we'll take care of all the transfer-of-ownership paperwork and filing – and we'll make sure that the paperwork is all done correctly. You should be able to drive away with your new SUV in about 45 minutes…"

Who will get the order and why? Two (really valuable) observations:

1. The vendor that builds a Transition Vision with customer – a vision of *how* the customer can move from his current, painful situation to that glorious future with the solution in place and yielding the desired results – is in a competitively advantageous position vs. vendors who simply present a solution.

2. The point in time when a customer achieves a Value Realization event is also the point in time when the customer becomes – a reference! (I've seen sales compensation plans include harvesting customer references as a key component. What a terrific idea…)

Truly Great Sales People and Sales Teams become partners to their customers – and those customers will *preferentially* buy from those vendors again. Wouldn't you?

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