# Assemble Sales Activity:

*The how to guide for establishing selling practice that works*

# Contents



Written by:
Mark Hocknell

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ABN: 323 4865 7071

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www.markhocknell.com

# Introduction

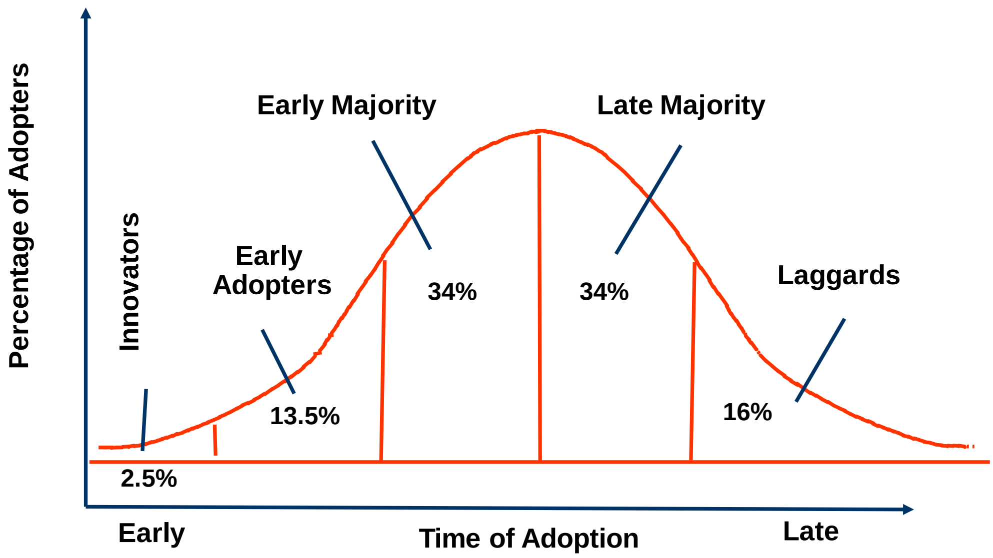
The activity of your sales people needs to be designed to suit your strategy, your business, your customers - in fact the whole context of what you are trying to achieve and the market you are in.

Assembling your sales activity needs to take into account a range of factors.  Firstly, your customer strategy (that is based on your business or organisational strategy), and what you want to achieve with each customer group.  Then, consider what phase of the Innovation Adoption curve your products and/or services are in, and which customer groups are more likely to be receptive to your offerings.  The decision-making process of these customers then needs to inform the method for engaging with these customers - is it to be scripted, or a higher level method..?  Another key factor for the engagement approach is the sales cycle - if it is short (minutes) then scripted is better, long (months/years) then a high level process and method is more appropriate.  The other considerations for assembling your sales activity are about *how* you expect your customers to use or adopt your product or service, as this also needs to be reflected in *how* you sell.  The perception our customers have of organisations and businesses, is heavily biased (about 70-80% of the perception) on their interactions with people - sales and service people.  Therefore, the values (and ethics) of the people that interact with customers needs to be congruent with the values of your business.

This paper provides a how to guide to assembling your sales activity to ensure a sales leader can align the resources available to them and maximise their results.

## Innovation Adoption

Let's first consider the types of customers from the perspective of how innovative your product or service is in the market place. This theory was articulated by Everett Rogers[i] in 1962 and has wide acceptance and many applications. In this section we look at how we assemble the optimal team and selling activity to achieve our results.




Let's look at the various customer types.

- **Innovators**. Representing around 2.5% of the available market, these are the portion of the population that are almost obsessed with trying out new ideas and products.
- **Early Adopters**. Represents 13.5% of the population. These are distinct from innovators because they are much more reliant on group norms and values. Typically they are also more orientated to the local community and are likely to be opinion leaders.
- **Early Majority.** The next 34% are very deliberate and are likely to collect more information and evaluate more brands that the earlier groups.
- **Late Majority.** The next 34% adopt a new product mainly because most of their friends have adopted the product. They are a group reliant on norms and the adoption is the result of pressure to conform.
- **Laggards.** This final 16% have a similarity with innovators in not replying on the group norms. Their purchasing decisions are made in terms of the past, by the time laggards adopt new products, they have probably been superseded.

The key message from the innovation adoption theory for sales leaders is that customers in the early stages of adoption, buy. Customers in the later stages, need to be sold[ii].

If your product or service is in the early stage of adoption, which means it will have appeal for Innovators and Early Adopters, then the challenge for the sales leader is not to find the best way to sell the product or service, but the challenge lies in finding the customer. If your offering is truly innovative then it will only appeal 2.5% (approximately) of your available market. Any traditional marketing approach aimed at all you potential customers will be wasted. The essential sales activity here is to identity Innovators in your market. Once identified, the sales process would typically rely upon sales people approaching potential (Innovator) customers with a quiet word about how exciting and new this offering is. These customers will buy. This is one of the key principles behind New Solution Selling[iii] and Eades here proposes to align the right type of sales person[iv] to the task. Remember the challenge of selling to Innovators is not skills in persuasion, or relationship building, it is a passion to find the right customer and present the new thing. The customer will buy.

Similarly for Early Adopters, the aim for the sales team will be search and locate these customers. Once located appointments will be relatively easy to obtain, as long as the message appeals to the Early Adopter. And that message is something like, "we can show you how innovators have used our new offering, be one of the first in your market to have/use this new product or service". With Early adopters we use the stories and lessons learned from the Innovators to empower them to buy.

When we are approaching the Early Majority we again use the stories from how Early Adopters have used the product or service, but in this context for customers who are more majority types, the stories will be case studies. Whilst the Early Majority will still have a propensity to buy, the sales call will most likely follow the four stages put forward by Rackham[v] as - 1) Preliminaries; 2) Investigating (confirming and uncovering needs), 3) Demonstrating Capability, and 4) Obtaining Commitment. With the Early Majority, high conversion rates will depend mainly on two preparation activities - firstly, identifying the Early Majority customers as separate from the Late Majority or Laggards, and secondly using meaningful case studies from the Early Adopters (typically, the Early Majority will not be impressed by the stories from Innovators as these customers see Innovators as risks takers).

Once your product or service offering is in the Late majority or with Laggards, then you will need people who are good relationship builders, persistent and disciplined to follow sales processes that match the decision-making process for your customers.

In terms of assembling the optimal sales activity, from a diffusion of innovation perspective - know what market your offerings are in, if it is in the early stages of adoption, the customers buy, so get the right people to find the customer and share the innovative products and service with these customers. If your offerings are in the late stages of adoption, ensure you have people who can match the needs and attitudes of these customers.

## Values

Our discussion on assembling the optimal sales activity from a values dimension will cover two perspectives. Firstly, alignment of values between the behaviour of the sales person and the company brand; and secondly, ethics in sales and behaviour[vi].

### Alignment of Behaviour and Values

If you went into a Vodafone store you would (or should) instantly get a sense of energy from the sales people. Vodafone sales teams talk about RED, the vibrancy and energy of their brand (symbolised is the past by the association with Formula 1 racing and sports clubs such as Manchester United). The sales people in the Vodafone store are keen to represent their brand because they know that the customers coming into their store have been in some way attracted by the brand, and secondly, when the customer purchases, there needs to be congruence between the behaviour of the sales people and the ongoing relationship between the customer and the brand. Which is why when you enter a high-end department store (for example, Tiffany's) you are more likely to be formally greeted by a sales assistant with immaculate personal appearance, not an energetic person in a bright red polo asking "*how ya doin'*..."

If the sales experience is incongruent with the post sales experience then buyer dissonance will be higher, reducing longer term value for the business. Sales leaders that design sales behaviours with the value attributes of the brand will provide alignment through the customer experience, that will in turn provide better results for the business (for example, higher conversion rates, longer customer retention, higher repurchase rates).

### Ethics in practice

Cron and DeCarlo (2006:281) start their discussion on ethics this way:

> *"Sales ethics provide a morale framework to guide sales people in their daily contacts with customers. Ethical dilemmas are common in selling because sales people often have to make decisions in the field in response to customer's demands and competitive offers. How a sales person deals with these dilemmas reflects not only on a person's character, but also the company's culture and leadership."*

The potential for ethical dilemmas in the sales environment is real due to the high result orientation and often the sales person's interest in closing the sale. The sales person represents the business for which they work. In Australia, the Trade Practices Act (particularly sections 51-65), requires that businesses need to avoid unconscionable conduct and making misleading statements. Serious ethical breaches could be, bribes, gifts, kickbacks, fraud, deception, falsification of information and really any behaviour or means justified by the intended end (Hair et al, 2009:33[vii]). How we sell is more important than getting the result by any means. A successful sales force (long term) will be the one that can demonstrate trustworthiness, sincerity, and with a genuine interest in understanding and meeting the needs of their customers.

The role of the sales leader here is to provide clear guidance in "what the right thing to do is" in a wide range of circumstances and provide guidelines when there is no apparent '*right way*'. The role of the sales leader is to reduce the ethical dilemmas that the sales people will face. They do this by providing clears choices (and consequences) between the rules, choices where there are no rules, choices between two or more courses of action that are incompatible and choices that seen to be in one's self interest - but may also violate a moral principle.

The values-based ethical framework that the sales leader puts in place would cover the following areas:

- **Team based values and behaviours** - providing a clear description of the values to be adopted and the corresponding behaviours. Developing this artefact in a collaborative manner with the sales team will also introduce a self managing element for the team, where team members can support each other and *call* behaviour that they observe to be outside the agreed framework.
- **Establish policies, rules and protocols** that provide guidance on sales activity and the conduct of the sales people. This area will also provide formal delegations for discounts (for example) and the clear guidance on the boundaries of trust and responsibilities.
- Provide a **management focus that supports the values and ethical considerations** of the sales environment. That is, not creating a pressurised setting that promotes "results at any cost", but providing a supportive, collaborative focus on improving performance of the person and the team.

The sales leader guides and assembles a coherent code of selling activity and sales person behaviours that are congruent with the stated values of the business, their brand, their legal responsibilities and the commitments they make to their customers.

## Product/Service Adoption

This dimension of assembling sales activity considers how the customer adopts the usage of the product or service. Typically, customers - whether they are businesses or consumers - that adopt a new product or service will pass along the following route[viii]:

- **Awareness** - the consumer or business become aware that either a new product is out there that can meet their need, or replace the current product they are using.
- **Knowledge** - the customer seeks knowledge about the perceived new product or service, such as searching the web, talking with friends, family or colleagues.
- **Evaluation** - of the new product or service, features, benefits assessment against perceived needs.
- **Trial of the new product or service**. And if everything is acceptable to the customer, in contract to the alternatives, then there is,
- **Adoption** of the new product or service.

Sales people can potentially come into contact with the customer at each one of these stages, their actions and behaviours will have an influence on if the product/service is adopted (beyond the purchase).

Let's look at a few examples:

- A business becomes aware that a new software package is available that may overcome some of the frustrations they are experiencing with their current system. Following their Google searching they find a reseller that is in their region and make some enquiries. A sales person makes contact and agrees to see the customer to provide a demonstration. If this sales person has a sales leader who has followed the advice in the previous section on values and ethics, they will present themselves and the business honestly, describing what the new system can actually do. However, let's assume this person is on a high commission and they do not get involved in the implementation of the software. If the sales person makes assertions about the product that are not completely true and correct, and the customer buys based on these statements, then when the delivery team turns up to install the software and train the customer's team there will be problems. All depending how the selling business deals with this, they may have to configure the software further to make it do what the sales person said, maybe reduce the price or some other sort of remedy. Or the customer has to just use the system the way it is delivered, and live with their expectations unmet. Either way the sales persons actions have cost the selling business - reputational damage, implementation costs, potential loss of future revenue based on the potential for negative word-of-mouth from this customer.

- Financial services providers of credit cards want their customers to use their cards, more often than any other card the customer may carry, in fact the goal is that their card is the *only* one to use. If a new customer contacts the credit card provider and is "oversold" the benefits of the card (where it can be used for example) and does not fully inform the customer of all the charges and fees, and even how to avoid them, then once the customer starts to use the card they will (most likely) be unhappy with their choice, tell lots of people about how they were misinformed and not use the credit card in the way the providers wants them to, in order to achieve their goals. The sales person's role in this context is to ensure the customer is fully informed and empowered to use the credit card in the way the card service provider wants them to. This might mean telling the customer about fees and some other unpleasant things, but the objective is to have the customer take the card and use it, if the card is sold but not used, then it does not achieve the company's goals.

- If a retail sales person in an electronic goods store does not fully understand their customers' needs and their intent on how to use a product - let's say a high end, large screen television - then they could potentially provide inaccurate advice and steer the customer towards a product that does not suit them. The end of this story could be a complaint, a returned product, and additional cost to the store. The sales person needs to understand how the customer is going to use the product to provide the most appropriate advice and guide the customer towards an informed decision about the product they choose. If satisfied the customer becomes an advocate and a repeat-purchaser, if not, future sales are lost (not just from that customer, but also everyone that the customer tells about their experience).

In each example the results of the business are better served when the sales person's actions and behaviours are aligned with how the customer will adopt and use the new product or service.

It is the sales leader's role to ensure the selling activity is aligned with how the business desires the customer to adopt and use the product/service offering (and become an advocate).

## Decision-making Process

The sales approach adopted by the selling organisation must always be aligned with the way the target customer makes a decision to buy.

This is regardless of the length of the sales cycle (next section) or if the target customer is an organisation/business or an individual consumer. The sales leader needs to direct research[1] efforts to understand how buying decisions are made by specific customer groups, and what criteria has the most leverage in making that decision.

### B2C

The first principle to recognise about the decision-making process for consumer-customers is that they will seek advice from their family, friends and social network in their initial search for service or products they have become interested in. This principle accepts the value of positive word of mouth in the market place that the selling business operates within, and therefore all of the previous selling and service activity needs to contribute to that body of positive word-of-mouth[ix].

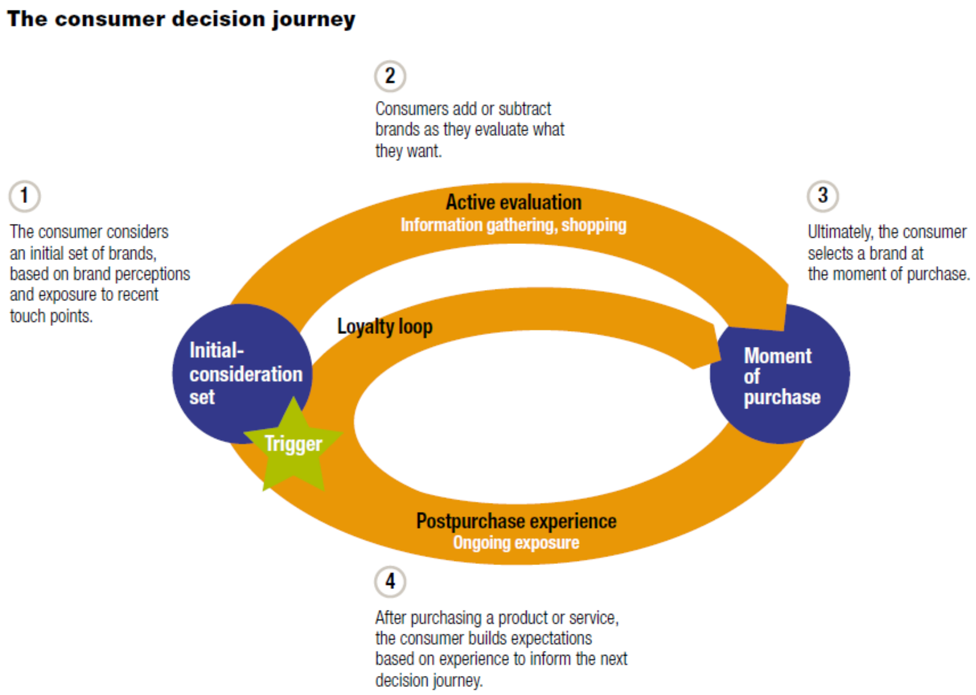
Below is a depiction of the typical process a consumer goes through to make a purchasing decision[x]

| Recognise | Elaborate | Identify | Evaluate | Decide | Implement | Modify |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| That a problem or opportunity exists | On the nature of the problem or opportunity | Alternate courses of action to solve the problem | Alternativ e courses of action | As to the course of action selected | the decision | Actions the decision is implemented |

For consumers this process could last moments (such as choosing a chocolate bar on the way through the supermarket checkout) to weeks or months to select a home loan provider or the new car we have been working towards for a few years. Either way the selling business needs to know the process of their target customer and align the way they sell[2] the product to match how the customer makes the decision.

[1] Which could range from a full research program into how customers make decisions to (at least) workshopping with sales and marketing people to understand how the customer makes a purchasing decision.
[2] Whether this is a process or a high-level method is covered in the following sections.

However, recent research by McKinsey's[xi] suggests that this decision-making process for customer (consumers) may becoming more shallow (in terms of the amount of potential sources of a solution) and shorter (in terms of how much time it takes to play out). With the process being depicted in the diagram below:




(McKinsey 2009)

For the sales leader the key message in this recent research shows that the sales team have a lot of influence over the final decision the customer makes (assuming they are in stage three) and that they make the decision at the time of purchase. In other words, they will make the decision in store, often depending on how the sales person responds to them, how they meet the needs of the customer and responds to their questions.

## B2B

Organisations make purchasing decisions in similar ways to consumer customers, however there are a number of additional complexities.

1. The decision-making process itself will involve a few more steps, and will likely take much longer.
2. The use of a buying centre or decision-making unit.
3. A more analytical approach to the actual decision.

### Decision-making process

The following table describes the decision-making process linked to three kinds of "buy classes"[xii].

| Decision-making process (or Buyphase) | Purchase class | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | New Task | Modified Rebuy | Straight Rebuy |
| 1. Recognise a Problem/Opportunity | Yes | Maybe | No |
| 2. Need description | Yes | Maybe | No |
| 3. Solution specification | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 4. Supplier search | Yes | Maybe | No |
| 5. Request for Proposal/Quote | Yes | Maybe | No |
| 6. Supplier selection | Yes | Maybe | No |
| 7. Negotiation and agreements | Yes | Maybe | No |
| 8. Performance review | Yes | Yes | Yes |

- **Recognise a Problem/Opportunity** - people within the organisation identify problems or opportunities that can, or potentially can be taken care of by solutions offered in the market. This can also be identified within the business or a sales person may have raised the awareness of the problem or opportunity within the organisation.
- **Need description** - from the identification of the problem or opportunity comes the initial level of understanding and the description of the need.
- **Solution specification** - the organisation will usually set up a team to quantify the problem or opportunity and evaluate the benefits that could come from this opportunity.
- **Supplier search** - typically this is done through a web search and also through the people within the organisation talking with their professional networks. Often in this phase the buying organisation will come into contact with the selling organisation, seeking information. It is critical for sales leaders to ensure that the sales team identify at which stage of the buying

process the organisation is in, and then understand the optimal tactics and approach to take. For example, this stage is typically not about 'closing a sale', it is about building rapport and supporting the buying organisation with support, information and coaching - and most importantly ensuring the selling business is on the short list of potential suppliers.

- **Request for Proposal/Quote** (RFP or RFQ) may sometimes be prefaced by a Request For Information. If the solution seems complex some buying organisations will seek information about the potential product or solution. Once the information about the problem/opportunity is clear and the organisation has established a list of potential suppliers that could meet their needs, then a RFP/Q is distributed to the list.
- **Supplier selection** - organisations buying from the market will typically have a specific selection criteria (normally published in the RFP/Q) and a weighting-rating system (with the intent) to ensure an unbiased decision is made.
- **Negotiation and agreements** - once the supplier is selected (often so pre-negotiation may occur) the buyer and seller formalise their commitments in agreements or contracts.
- **Performance review** - the buying organisation will review the performance of the supplier, usually from the start of the work and definitely over time to ensure they are realising the benefits they expected.

## Buying Centre

One of the key differences between organisation and consumer buying for the sales person is the use of a buying centre or decision-making unit. These are business teams who become involved in the process of the purchase from the beginning to the end and can involve large numbers, but normally have a core team. These teams are used for the purchase of new computer systems, stationery suppliers, photocopiers, fleets of cars, consulting engagements or just about anything the organisation does not supply or perform in-house.

There are essentially six roles of the buying centre structure[xiii]. Some people my double up in their roles within this group, or some people may have a role that is not visible to the selling team but still have influence.

- **Users**. The members of an organisation who will actually use the product/solution being sold, and will often be the source of the initial problem or solution and are involved in the solution specification
- **Influencers**. These people influence the buying decision, they may also help with the specification. Influencers can also be Users and may also have a Technical role.
- **Deciders**. Organisational members who have the power, either directly or indirectly to decide which product or supplier to select.
- **Informers**. Those who provide information and add decision criteria throughout the process.
- **Buyers**. Those who have the authority to execute the contractual arrangements. Also called "Economic Buyers" and can say 'yes' when everybody else has said 'no'[xiv].
- **Gatekeepers**. The organisation members who control the flow of information to other members of the buying centre, can provide or prevent access.

The sales person selling into a business must identify who the members of the buying centre are. Sometimes one individual can occupy several roles, whilst some influencers and buyers may not ever come into contact with the sales force. A business selling into another business must understand the decision-making process and buying centre composition for their products or services and apply the optimal tactics for engaging with the relevant roles.

## Decision

The decisions made by the buying organisations will involve a complex interplay between the above roles, interactions with the selling business and the buying evaluation process (mentioned in step 6 of the decision-making process, Supplier Selection). The selling team has influence over the decision being made, particularly through their behaviours and approach. Sales people often mistake the importance of price on the decision. Typically, price will not be more that around 30% of the overall decision criteria[xv]. Other factors will vary by organisation and are likely to include:

- The confidence the buying organisation has in the sales person or team, and selling business
- Consistency of product/solution performance
- Level of technical support and service
- On-time delivery
- The total solution presented
- Quality dimensions, and
- Post sales support.

Within this context, Rackham[xvi] discusses the "Value Equation" where there is a balance between the seriousness of the problem (or opportunity) and the cost of the solution. Where the customer perceives that the costs outweigh the seriousness of the problem, then there is no purchase/sale. One of the key principles behind B2B selling then is to expand on the explicit needs that the customer knows about and uncover further implied needs that can increase the benefits[xvii] and therefore tip the value equation towards a purchase.

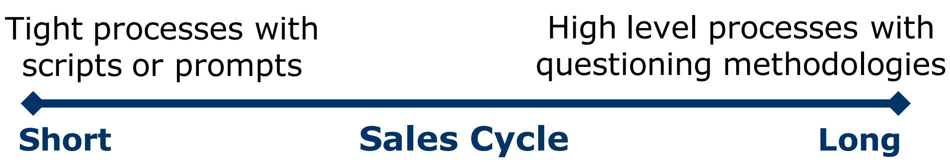
## Sales Cycle

The sales cycle is the length of time from the beginning of the sales process to the decision being made[xviii]. It is also a key factor in determining the sales management approach.

The sales cycle can be a few minutes to a few years. If you are selling car insurance policies over the phone, then you have about five minutes to help the customer make a decision that is in line with the company you represent. Referring back to the consumer decision-making process (in the previous section) if the customer has called into the contact centre then they are probably somewhere in the Evaluate-Decide-Implement phase or at the 'moment of purchase'. Therefore the sales person firstly needs to identify which stage the customer is in (Implementation or Evaluate). If it is Evaluate, then it is about providing information to guide the customer towards choosing your product, which means if the sales person provides good information they might call back or make a decision now. If the customer is in the Implementation phase, then it is about making a decision, and this is the only chance to make this sale. The sales cycle is minutes, so each word is important.

If you are selling mining equipment or passenger jets then the sales cycle could be years and likely to involve some (potentially) complex organisational decision-making. When the customer context is like this then high level processes and methods are far more appropriate, and will suit the way the customer will make decisions.

For sales leaders their role is to ensure the sales approach is appropriate for the sales cycle. If the sales cycle is short, then the sales team are better equipped with processes, scripts or prompts that are in sync with the time the customer needs to make a decision. The shorter the time frame, then the greater the importance of scripting or the use of prompts. This does not mean that the sales people repeat the scripts with a robotic tone, they still need to inject their own personality into the conversation and be genuine and sincere. However the words chosen are of significance. For longer sales cycles, which often means larger dollar value decisions, then the emphasis is on the method or approach taken with a high level process and working through each stage of the process. In other words for longer sales cycles the objective for each stage is to complete that phase and move into the next phase[xix].



## Process with Prompts vs. Methodology

Following on from the discussion about the length of the sales cycle and whether to use a tight process that is scripted or has prompts or a sales method, this section will look at the differences between these two approaches. Firstly, the scripted discussion will focus on and example of the short sales cycle typically B2C and provide a fairly tight process that uses prompts, where scripting could be developed to suit the process. Secondly, Rackham's[xx] broad four stages of the large/complex/B2B sale is used as a model to represent the methodology of a sales approach. Although we are talking about processes and methodologies for sales, they must still have the customer at the centre of their design.

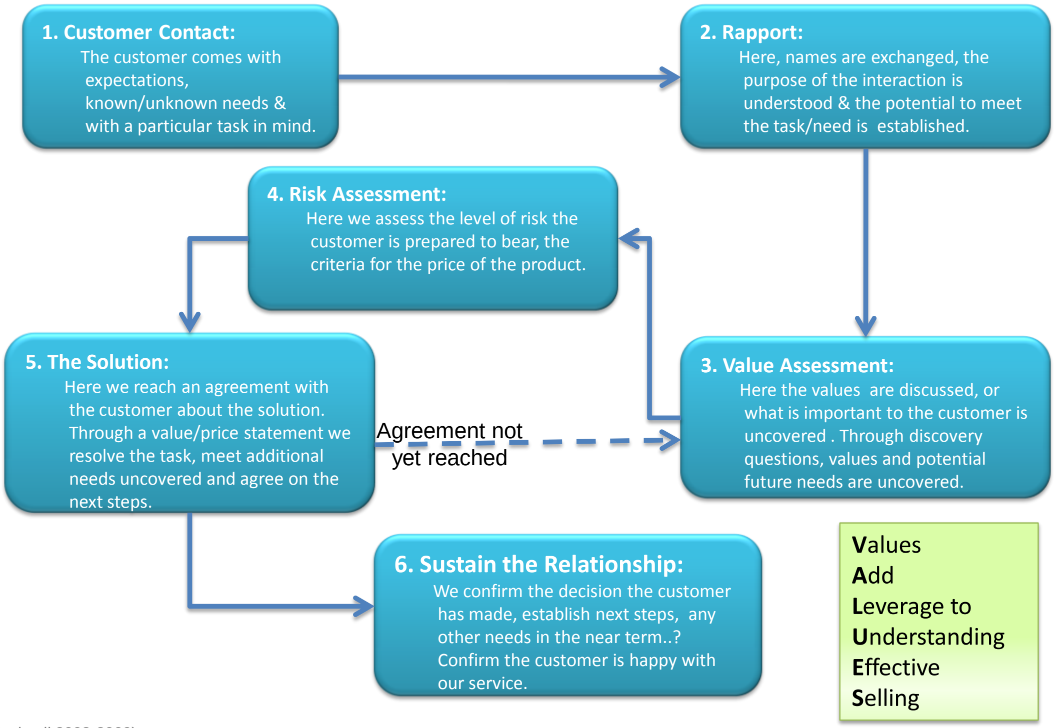
### Process with Prompts

As an example of a process with prompts we will use the Values Based Sales Process[xxi]. Some processes that are developed for shorter sales cycles recommend a scripted process. Scripts are okay from the perspective of ensuring you get the words *right*. However, one of the key skills in sales for the shorter sales cycle, is the ability to build rapport in a tight timeframe. The argument against scripts here is that the sales person needs to come across to the customer as genuine and sincere, and not like they are delivering a script. Some people can do this well, most can't. The recommendation then is to develop sales processes that suit the sales cycle and customer decision-making process and use prompts (rather than scripts) that allow the sales person to inject their own personality into the process and at the same time deliver the 'best' words while being genuine and sincere.

The *Values* Based Sales Process (figure next page) applies a step-by-step approach to inbound sales situations with a sales cycle of between three and ten minutes (approximately). This approach addresses the issue of having customers and prospects push the sales person towards giving the price before explaining the value. By addressing this task focus of the customer first, then focusing on the customers values, and using both to present a solution to the customer, an informed decision can be made by the customer that takes into account their personal values and what they also value about the product or service. Therefore by using the values of the customer in the presentation of the solution, the sales person is adding leverage to the selling situation and at the same time respecting the purchasing behaviour of the customer.

**The *Values* Based Sales Process**

*"never tell the price until you have explained the value"*




(Mark Hocknell 2003-2009)

With a process like this it is relatively easy for the sales leader to collate key statements and expressions that are likely to resonate with customers. Given the short sales cycle, the sales people must ensure that they make every moment, word and feeling count towards bringing the customer to the conclusion that their offering is the best one for them. Using the process will assist the sales people in guiding the conversation towards this end, and using prompts will allow them to get the words mostly right and at the same time build valid rapport.

## Methodology

With the longer sales cycle scripts are rather impractical, yet at certain points in the sales and purchasing journey well chosen and prepared words can be very powerful. Whilst longer sales cycles are typically about B2B - and here we will be using a B2B method as an example - longer sales cycles can also apply B2C sales. For example, a real estate agent selling a house from their available stock list to people who want to buy their new home can be a long sales cycle. A method, as opposed to a sales script is far more suitable to this situation. The sales person (realtor) needs to follow the decision-making process of the customer, where they will define their requirements, see some houses, fine tune their requirements (including price expectations) and eventually refine the search field to one that is just right, then start the negotiations. This is a long sales cycle and is best suited toward an overarching method, rather than a detailed process with prompts.

For an example of a B2B sales method we have used the approach SPIN Selling that identifies the four stages of this approach.

1. ***Preliminaries***. The warming up events before the serious selling, introductions early conversation etc. The first two minutes of the interaction form the initial impressions that will influence the rest of the sale.
2. ***Investigation***. Investigating is the most important stage of B2B selling. It is more than collecting data and understanding the customer, their organisation, it is also about understanding their business problems.
3. ***Demonstrating capability***. Every sale will require the seller to demonstrate they have the capability to solve the business problem. It is likely to involve presentations, demonstrations of the product, references from other customers and perhaps even developing a proof of concept.
4. ***Obtaining commitment***. Every successful sales process will end with some sort of commitment from the customer and in larger sales there is likely to be a series of commitments before and order is placed or contracts signed.

We can see that the four stages above align to the B2B decision-making process described earlier. The key for B2B sales people and sales teams is to work through these for stages, the objective for each stage is to complete the stage - not close the sale. If the selling team has fully understood the customer's needs (implied and explicit), and then fully demonstrated that they can match these needs and deliver the benefits, then that stage is closed and they will then move into Obtaining commitment.

The sales leader needs to determine when to use processes with prompts or a methodology. To achieve maximum results these approaches must be modeled to fit the customer buying process/decision making and designed for the type/size of the purchase. The sales leader needs to ensure the process or method are fully adopted by the sales team as these processes will become the model for sales managers to manage against, to provide coaching, development, and performance guidance and management.

# Conclusion

The role is the sales leader is not limited to hiring good people and then managing them.  It is to create the environment where each sales person can excel.  And as a team flourish.  One component of this role is to ensure the right people are in the right roles and doing the right things at the right time.  Assembling sales activity that considers the elements in the approach presented will ensure the sales people are collectively on the best track, then the sales leader is the one to observe, listen and then coach across the team to share these learnings and practices that are working.  In this way the sales leader can be sure they are aligning their resources and maximising the results for the business.

## About the author

Mark is a speaker and consultant based in South-East Queensland Australia. He is regarded as a thought leader in customer centric business, selling and sales management, and in the implementation of performance measurement and performance management frameworks.

Mark seeks to free organisations from management thinking and practice that does not work - to align their resources, continually improve and deliver value for their customers and maximise the realisation of business results. With an extensive career (spanning 25 years) in management consulting, executive management, and academia, Mark uses his skills to help lift the performance of organisations and businesses and achieve the change and results they are striving for.

## References and Endnotes


[i] Rogers, E.M., (1983), *Diffusion of Innovation*, 3rd ed, Free Press, New York.
[ii] This picks up on the principles behind Solution Based Selling (next reference) and the ideas from Cox, J., and Stevens, H., (2000), *Selling The Wheel: Choosing The Best Way To Sell For You, Your Company And Your Customers*, Simon and Schuster, New York.
[iii] Eades, Keith M., (2004) *New Solution Selling*, McGraw Hill, New York
[iv] Eades refers to best salespeople for the early stages of adoption as "Eagles".
[v] Rackham, Neil, (1988), *SPIN Selling*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York.
[vi] Alignment of the sales person behaviours with the values and ethics of the business is widely accepted, but often not discussed within organisations. The following resources will provide some content and research to support this perspective:
Cron, W. L. and DeCarlo, T.E. (2006), *Dalrymple's Sales Management (9th Edition)*, John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken (chapter 10, Ethical Leadership);
Nasirabadi, E.Z. and Golestani, R. (2013) The Impact Salesperson and Dealer on Brand Loyalty, *Research Journal of Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology 5 (12): 3306-3311*, April 10, Maxwell Scientific Organization
Su-Hsiu Lin, (2012) Effects of Ethical Sales Behaviour Considered through Transaction Cost Theory: To Whom Is the Customer Loyal?, *The Journal of International Management Studies*, Volume 7 Number 1, April;
Wentzel, D. and Henkel, S. (2009) The Impact of Employee Behaviour on Brand Personality Impressions: The Moderating Effect of Pseudorelevant Information, *Advances in Consumer Research* Volume 36; and
Woodside, A.G. and Davenport, J. (1974) The Effect of Salesman Similarity and Expertise on Consumer Purchasing Behaviour, *Journal of Marketing Research* Vol. XI, May, 198-202.
[vii] Hair, J.F., Anderson, R.E., Mehta, R. and Babin, B. (2009) *Sales Management: Building Customer Relationships and Partnerships*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston.
[viii] McColl-Kennedy, J.R., & Kiel, G.C., (2000), Marketing, Nelson Thomson Learning, South Melbourne (page 369)
[ix] Kumar, V., Petersen J.A., & Leone, R.P., (2007) 'How valuable is word of mouth?', *Harvard Business Review*, October, pages 139-146; Sernovitz, A., (2009) *Word of Mouth Marketing*, Kaplan Publishing, New York.
[x] For example: McColl-Kennedy, J.R., & Kiel, G.C., (2000), *Marketing*, Nelson Thomson Learning, South Melbourne. And, Kotler, P. (1997), *Marketing Management*, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey.
[xi] Court, D., Elzinga, D., Mulder, S. and Vetvik, O.J. (2009), The consumer decision journey, *McKinsey Quarterly*, Number 3.
[xii] Drawn from - Kotler, P. (1997), *Marketing Management*, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey; and McColl-Kennedy, J.R., & Kiel, G.C., (2000), *Marketing*, Nelson Thomson Learning, South Melbourne
[xiii] Ronsenbloom, B. (2004) *Marketing Channels - A Management View*, (7th ed) South-Western, Ohio.
[xiv] Robert B. Miller, Stephen E. Heiman, Diane Sanchez, and Tad Tuleja (2005) *The New Strategic Selling: The Unique Sales System Proven Successful by the World's Best Companies* (3rd Ed.), Kogan Page, London.
[xv] Forsyth, Gupta, Haldar and Marn, (2000) *Shedding the commodity mind-set*, The McKinsey Quarterly, Number 4, and, Stevens, H. And Kinni, T. (2007), *Achieve Sales Excellence*, Platinum Press, USA.
[xvi] Rackham, Neil, (1988), *SPIN Selling*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York
[xvii] Rackham identified that the effect of the sales person using Features is to increase price sensitivity, whereas using Benefits demonstrates how the product or service explicitly addresses needs expressed by the customer, and achieves their engagement through the customer literally seeing value in the offer.
[xviii] Jobber, D. and Lancaster, G. (2012) *Selling and Sales Management* (9th ed.), Pearson Education, Harlow
[xix] Rackham, Neil, (1988), *SPIN Selling*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York.
[xx] ibid
[xxi] The Values Based Sales process was first published in: Hocknell, M. (2004) *Sales Management Study Guide*, QUT; Brisbane. Then fully revised in 2009 and published as a Whitepaper by 451 Consulting Pty Ltd.