



One of the most common questions we are asked by senior executives is, “What makes a top sales performer?” What makes certain people in a wide range of industries so successful at consistently winning big deals while others fail or only achieve sub-par outcomes? Is their success due to random chance, genetics, or do they simply do things differently from less successful sales people?

This is usually quickly followed by, “What do you think is the best sales methodology to deploy? Is it Strategic Selling, Challenger Selling, Relationship Selling, or another one of the sales processes on the market?” This is not an easy question to answer because there are sales people who succeed and who fail using each of the models. So it must be more than just choosing a sales process.

Equally important to these questions in today’s world is, “Will the characteristics and processes of the most popular selling approaches still be relevant in the world of selling and buying, given all the systemic disruptions that are occurring?”

How many of these have you experienced?

- Customers using technology and social media to gather

information—get peer reviews, find competitive offerings, and locate pricing data without any interaction with a sales person.

- A pervasive customer attitude of “Don’t contact us...we will call you...maybe.”
- Buying decisions being made or directed by globalized buying or project teams rather than being limited to individual stakeholders or procurement professionals.
- Increasingly complex sales cycles that require a team-selling approach with more and more clients.
- Internal demand for use of CRM systems, marketing automation, and other analytical tools that reduce sales people’s time building real connections with clients.

Starting in the early 2000s, we began to work with several high-level sales and business development professionals across a variety of global companies. They used a wide range of differing sales methodologies. They were all unique individuals and worked in many different industries in different cultures all over the world. Yet they all shared a common set of characteristics. And they were all highly successful! As we got to know them better, we realized that many of these individuals had also failed in sales at one point in their career. What changed? How did they learn the secret of how to sell so successfully? What were they doing differently from earlier in their careers when they struggled, and why was it working? Would these learnings help us all to adapt to the seismic changes occurring in the sales world?

Over the last several years at TRACOM, we have researched these issues to understand what these top performers had in common and to determine if these skill sets could be learned and applied by others. This book is a summary of what we have learned. It is designed to help you, the sales professional, to learn about and apply the key behaviors of top sales performers.

This book would not have been possible without the ongoing support of our clients who have incorporated TRACOM's solutions into their sales organizations. We would like to thank Jim Knauss, Peter Matthews, Nancy Kopp, David Bruesehoff, Tracy Embo, Andrew Wright, John Maguire, Ernie Smith, Henry "Hawk" Macintosh, Mike Miller, Fred Dulin, Anita Natesh, and Tony Sammut for sharing their stories and insights into how TRACOM has benefitted them and their organizations. Without our hundreds of client firms across the globe, this book would not have been possible.

David Collins
CEO TRACOM Group

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Chairman TRACOM Group

How is this Book Different?

This book will show how the Adaptive Selling approach uniquely integrates the following:

- The importance of properly managing relationships during the selling process.
- The most commonly used sales processes including Spin Selling, Consultative Selling, Challenger Selling, and many others.
- TRACOM's proprietary and empirically researched SOCIAL STYLE Model as a tool for enhancing any Sales Methodology.
- Advanced sales tools and strategies like Decision Mapping, Win-Loss Reviews, and Meeting Preparation.

You will find many formidable books on several of these topics—for example, *The Versatility Factor* and *Personal Styles and Effective Performance* as well as various Sales Application Guides from TRACOM, books on Solution Selling and SPIN from Huthwaite, Miller Heiman's work around account strategies, and newer works such as *Challenger Sales* from The Corporate Executive Board along with *Insight Selling* from RAIN Group. There are also Decision Mapping/Power Mapping approaches and tools from such providers as Salesforce.com, Altify, and Demand Metric. What you can't find is a book that integrates these various methods and skills together as simply and applicably as this one does.

In addition, this book takes SOCIAL STYLE to places that you likely won't find elsewhere, such as Messaging and Organizing Meetings and even doing Win-Loss Reviews by Style. SOCIAL

STYLE is embedded into all sections as it is the key to Adaptive Selling and such areas as Baggage Handling, Decision Mapping, Preparing for Important Meetings and Presentations, and conducting Win-Loss Reviews.

TRACOM didn't invent all of these techniques. What we have done is provide an application that increases the power and usefulness of any set of selling skills across all of the most popular sales process methodologies of today. In TRACOM's fifty-plus years pursuing competitive deals, we have learned first-hand which techniques work and can be integrated together with positive results. And so have our many global clients who have successfully implemented Adaptive Selling within their companies. This book is based on what has proved to work in a variety of marketplaces.

Who Benefits from This Book?

Most obviously, individuals and organizations with the challenges listed earlier will benefit from the methods detailed in this book. The skills and applications described in this book can improve the chances of winning large, complex deals. In consulting terms, this complexity refers to the competitive nature of deals as well as the presence of multiple members on both the selling and buying teams. The techniques and skills apply just as well to smaller, less complex sales with only one buyer.

Sales professionals and account teams will also find this book useful in terms of better understanding their clients and how to build better and deeper relationships with them. It will also provide insight into how to evaluate the client situation and how to select the appropriate sales approach.

Types of organizations that can benefit most from this book

because of the nature of their marketplaces include:

- Professional Services
- Consulting
- Systems Integration Services
- Software Providers
- Technology Providers
- Finance and Banking
- Insurance
- Investment Banking
- Consumer Goods
- Hospitality
- Pharmaceuticals
- Retail
- Medical Equipment
- Commercial Real Estate
- Manufacturing
- Legal



THE CHANGING DYNAMICS OF BUYING AND SELLING

The Case for Becoming an Adaptive Sales Person

Over the past twenty-five years, the Internet has reshaped the worlds of retailing, publishing, entertainment, and information along with many others in ways that your parents may never have imagined. These changes are now appearing in the world of selling and buying and causing seismic disruptions at an increasingly rapid pace. This “brave new world” requires new skills to survive and prosper. Sales professionals must adapt! And to become more adaptive we need to start by understanding some of the changes that are occurring and which skill sets will be needed.

The State of Sales 2018 report from LinkedIn provides insight into why we must learn to sell adaptively versus being constrained by a specific sales methodology.

“B2B sales has never been more challenging. Highly personalized services like Netflix and Amazon are driving customers to expect more from the brands they interact with, including those with B2B sales teams. Millennials,

who have especially high expectations for personalization, are gaining influence in the workforce and will make up 46 percent of professionals by 2020.”

Sellers today must meet these heightened expectations while building consensus among a larger group of stakeholders: the average buyer's circle is now 6.8 people. They must also team up with their marketing counterparts to reach each of these individuals at every stage of the path to purchase. To be successful in modern sales, you need to build relationships at scale tapping into advanced sales technology to engage with the right contacts faster, while fostering human connection and trust.”¹

State of Sales 2018, published by LinkedIn, August 2018

If you are in sales or procurement, you are experiencing changes that are creating tectonic shifts in the landscapes of selling and buying. For the unprepared, these changes threaten careers, economic futures, and long-held beliefs about the very nature of selling and buying. So is this the demise of selling and buying as they have played out for the past 150 years?

Let's consider some of the types of tremors and shocks that have been occurring in the world of sales people and their buyers over the past twenty years and consider how they have impacted you and your organization:

- Technology has given birth to digitization, CRM, blogs, webinars, video conferencing, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and social media which have sent seismic changes throughout the selling and buying processes.
- Today's procurement professionals are independent,

demanding, and connected with others in their industries and make decisions based on lots of information including third-party reviews, endorsements, and critiques.

- Customers are regularly seeking and finding information and alternative suppliers themselves without engaging with any sales person at early stages of a purchasing process.
- A move toward project-based and team-based procurement efforts comprised of employees across multiple geographies and disciplines and the corresponding demand for team-based sales approaches.
- Major sales now require multiple meetings where sales people need to do more listening than talking, more discovery, more team-based selling, and dealing with more multi-buyer situations and the need to create more individualized solutions.
- Follow-up is no longer a thank-you note or holiday gift, but a series of technology-supported communications that are quicker and more efficient to execute and capable of continuing personalized, ongoing contact with the customer(s).

And what about the very personal level of disruption that has been occurring between the sales person and their buyer? If you're a sales person relying solely on your interpersonal skills, your knowledge of the company's products, and your negotiation ability to gain access to customers, you may be in trouble. Here is how you will know.

Are you experiencing any of the following symptoms?

- The client has a standardized buying process, and they have little time or inclination to meet with you.
- You're no longer dealing with individual decision-makers with unique needs and the latitude to call their own shots.
- Your clients are not asking about the features and benefits of your products and services. That's what the Internet is for, they say!
- They are expecting you to bring new and unique ideas specific to their business.
- It seems that every decision isn't based on the value of your solution or your knowledge of the customer, but is based more on competitive comparison and price.

Amidst all these disruptions, sales people need to see that the future does not have to be so scary.

As a sales professional, you have a bright future ahead of you if you can respond to key trends in the B2B world. Each trend offers an opportunity to develop a new skill for sales professionals and adopt a new practice. Because these practices are not yet "best practices," Gouillart and Quancard refer to them as "next practices,"² in that they are likely to become best practices over time. They are already at work in the most innovative companies. Each of them offers an opportunity to add new value.

Let's consider some of these trends and corresponding next practices and how they may impact you.

Trend #1: The Problems that Companies' Sales and Procurement People are Asked to Tackle are Broader and More Complex than Ever

- **Next Practice #1:** *Sales and Procurement Professionals Work Together to Address New Problems of Increasing Magnitude*

What this means for you is that you will need to think more strategically about client challenges and present innovative solutions to address them rather than an “out of the box” standard offering. In order to be innovative, you will need to build more trust with your customers to learn more information about the problems and challenges they are facing. And as you will learn in a later chapter, you will need to overcome cognitive biases in order to win.

Trend #2: Sales and Procurement Networks are Becoming More Diffuse and Complex

- **Next Practice #2:** *Sales and Procurement Professionals Organize Problem-Solving Networks Across Company Boundaries*

You will need to master the skills of networking across client organizations as well as within your own in order to be able to navigate complex opportunities. And you need to learn how to influence others toward a common goal.

Trend #3: People Expect Problems to Be Solved in Real Time as a Group

- **Next Practice #3:** *Sales and Procurement Professionals Must Structure a Process and Platform for Live Cross-Company Engagement*

You will need to build trusting relationships with more people both in person and via technology that earn you the right to be considered a strategic asset for developing and implementing creative solutions. And you will need to enhance your ability to operate with increased resiliency and agility to accomplish this goal.

Trend #4: Big Data Has Arrived in Sales and Procurement

- **Next Practice #4:** *Sales and Procurement Professionals Facilitate the Development of New Data-Driven, Cross-Company Interactions Fed by Digital Platforms*

You will need to do deep dives into increasingly complex sets of data using a multitude of tools and facilitating and participating in cross-functional and cross-company project teams. You will need to know how to quickly understand the way people prefer to interact with others, use their time, and make decisions.

Trend #5: Sales and Procurement Professionals Use Their Own Transformation to Transform the Work Experience of Others

- **Next Practice #5:** *Sales and Procurement Professionals Facilitate the Creation of New Personal Experiences for Individuals in Their Network*

You will need to gain insight into the strengths and preferences of clients and colleagues and actively seek to engage them in projects through building and facilitating mutually beneficial relationships.