

# **Revenue Accelerators White Paper**

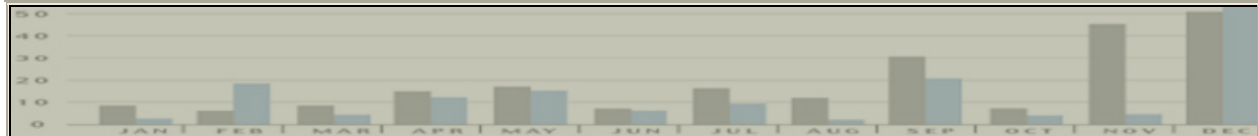
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Teach Your Salespeople to Prospect with the Buyer in Mind

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## Teach Your Salespeople to Prospect with the Buyer in Mind



### **Introduction**

*“The traditional self-focused selling approach is no longer effective because today’s new buyers are unwilling to follow you. They don’t want to be ‘sold’. They want to make educated buying decisions. To make a sale, you must join them on a buying path.”*

*Kevin Davis in  
Getting Your  
Customer’s Head*

With most if not all salespeople, the part of the job they like the least is almost universally answered with one word: prospecting. Despite spending time, effort and money comforting, engaging, encouraging, supporting and demanding that salespeople maintain a pipeline of “suspects-to-prospects,” many efforts fail to produce more than low returns. Ironically, the activity which is singularly involved with driving sales and commissions produces an environment of generally low morale.

When looked at objectively, effective prospecting is very similar if not identical to effective selling. Proper prospecting requires a customer-view from the salesperson that put the value delivered upfront, and in the forefront of the customer-centric message. When performed in a manner substantiated by all the leading consultative sales organizations and practices in the country, research into effective prospecting has proven that, these efforts are highly productive and invigorating to a salesperson, credentialing to the vendor organization, and can establish a powerful link between marketing and sales within the company. Improvements in prospecting will lead to quick and immediate returns on investment (ROI), perhaps more than any other form of sales improvement.

### **Prospecting with the buyer in mind**

Generally accepted research has established that a suspect or potential “prospect” must at least meet one of three situations before it realistically progresses up into a sales pipeline or new business forecast. This is true regardless of technology or the solution that you are selling:

- The prospect has confirmed urgency about a pain or problem that the vendor can address.
- The prospect has expressed frustration or defined a need that they want to address.
- The suspect has considered in some verifiable way the possibility that the vendor may have something of interest that addresses a pain or problem.

*“Instead of thinking about value-added think about knowledge-added. What knowledge can you add to your service, or communicate about your service, that will make you more attractive to...business partners and customers?”*

Harry Beckwith in  
The invisible Touch

By establishing needs and particularly urgency, the two main components from which all complex sales develop, you are “earning the right” to present a solution. In fact, most pros in the field of consultative selling will actually have the prospect “close themselves”.

### **Effective Prospecting**

Effective prospecting is an endeavor that establishes for the potential prospect/customer an interest in exploring how the vendor may improve the buyer’s business performance...or commonly referred to the bottom line. Effective prospecting focuses on customer/client problems, issues or needs, not on the seller’s features, corporate background and accomplishments, organizational characteristics, etc. Connecting the vendor’s solutions to an urgent need is therefore the path to concluding a sale.

Sales people who prospect, which is everyone, need to create a target-rich setting of prospects who are likely to be receptive and/or interested. How does a prospector do this and help focus on needs vs. unconfirmed sales rhetoric? By focusing on value! Because of the competitive nature of most sales situations, using a value-proposition becomes a strong tool to presenting logic to help drive home a persuasive point. With the commoditization of many technology solutions, it is imperative that we understand that in many deals, there are two conditions that are usually present:

- The prospect usually sees little difference between alternative offerings.
- Despite seeing little difference, the prospects paid more than the lowest cost alternative.

This leads us to believe that interpreting how vendors succeed in selling higher-priced offerings to buyers who saw little difference other than price between various offerings, would establish a clear definition of value selling.

These conclusions can be very dramatic to you day-to-day selling efforts. Prospects/customers are willing; often even eager, to pay a premium for the vendor who can provide value in the form of the three basic components during the selling process.

These three points comprise what is termed the Value-Construction Archetype

### **Value Creating Archetype**

*“As differentiation from product advantages is reduced or neutralized, the customer relationship built on value grows in importance.”*

Gartner Group

1. Help uncover *“latent” vs. active pain*, helping prospects understand their problems and issues.
2. Offer an *unforeseen solution by helping prospects* come to a better solutions than on their own.
3. Act as a *broker of competence*, teaming with the prospect to work together on a solution.

Good sales people have discovered that these value-creating efforts make the difference between great prospecting and high pay-off vs. leaving a plethora of unanswered voice and emails. Prospecting messages should be:

- **Challenging vs. Informative:** A good prospecting message drives interest, and does not lecture or simply inform. The purpose of the prospecting phase is to move the suspect into a legitimate sales cycle. *The prospecting message does not do the selling.*
- **Brief:** Whether the prospecting medium is voice or the written word, it is imperative that the message be short, to the point, and usually no more than a 20-25 sec sound-bite or read.
- **Credentialing.** The vendor needs to feel a sense of professionalism about what they are saying and prove this with references and statements of proof.
- **Value-Creating.** It is equally important that a sales person select one of three value-creating selling activities mentioned above as the theme of a prospecting message. If the sales person has thoroughly developed a set of proposition from the problems most current and urgent to a particular industry vertical, this should be a relatively straightforward issue.

Whatever kind of message is created, it should be rehearsed and practiced before it's tried. In the end, customers will respond more frequently to a prospecting message that sounds as though the seller may help them be successful, than to the message of the seller trying to sound successful.

### **Conclusion**

Good prospecting has a lot to do about timing as well as crafting messages which are tuned to the prospect who either recognizes a potential need for change, is currently evaluating alternative vendors, or is about to make a buying decision on your solution environment. Prospects who perceive no need to change or have just made a buy are those where the vendor is either too early or too late. Knowing this helps to make timing and avoiding wasting your time essential. *It is reflected in your offer message.*

Prospecting can be a process that credentials and invigorates a sales force if the results are predictable and the actions are kept in an objective mindset. *Actions to avoid failure and despair are to:*

1. Separate the open market into verticals and research current/urgent issues.
2. Focus on pains/issues helping salespeople speak of the "latent" issues.
3. Define the value proposition clearly as it pertains to the prospects title and job description; relating it in their language.
4. Speak of latent or unrecognized issues; not what may be the obvious.
5. Paint a vision, be descriptive, and use references to "show the value".

Constructing messages that will resonate with each prospect, based on their pains and the implications of those problems, is a much more successful approach than the typical "all-about-me-and-my-company" message most prospectors use. Like all other phases of selling, connecting what prospects care about to the vendor's capabilities in order to generate positive change is vital.

**Edward Golod**, Chief Revenue Architect of Revenue Accelerators has over 20 years of sales leadership experience building high tech consultative sales engines, where he has sold over \$140M in new technology solutions. Ed has held leading sales roles at the world's largest software firms including SAS Institute and Microsoft, and is an entrepreneur of several technology firms in the Enterprise sector. He now leads the market in helping small technology company CEOs drive new business and lower their costs of sales. To learn more, visit [www.RevAccel.com](http://www.RevAccel.com).

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