



# Business Development in Small Business

## CREATING AND KEEPING CUSTOMERS

### What is Business Development?

That's a good question, as there is some confusion. Some companies use the term "business development" (BD) as a substitution for the term "sales," attempting to minimize customer perceptions – real or not – of the negative connotations of sales. Many larger corporations think of business development as a distinct business function, separate from both sales and marketing. In the latter instance, it's usually aligned more closely to marketing, rather than sales.

Scott Pollack in a March 2012 *Forbes* article helps us to better understand this large corporation definition of Business Development.

***Business development is the creation of long-term value for an organization from customers, markets, and relationships.***

As Pollack notes in his article, the definition falls somewhat short of its full meaning. Further, we believe that only larger, enterprise-level organizations have the managerial interest and financial resources to approach business development as a distinct business function. Many businesses don't have that option as they don't have those resources.

Because this book and this chapter's focus are to support "small and mid-sized businesses" (SMB), we put forward that business development in SMB should be seen as a way to broadly describe Sales, Marketing and all other Customer-facing Services. Let's explore these elements.

Like the Pollack definition in *Forbes*, the creation of long-term value in SMB remains the same as in larger organizations – it's focused on customers, markets and relationships. How that is accomplished in SMB is different. Resources are limited. As such, SMB owners must be exceedingly pragmatic to be successful. They must streamline business functions and processes to optimize performance in all business functions. Efficiency is required. Multi-tasking is commonplace.



(Placeholder image)

**Marketing, Sales and Customer-facing Services** are the three pillars of Business Development. These three functions support the Mission, Vision and Purpose while being the face of the company's brand value to its customers.

As a case in point – I once held the title of Vice President of Sales & Marketing for a \$5million commercial contractor and jointly was General Manager of an aligned subsidiary operation. Typically, both positions would be separate full-time positions. Performing well in both jobs simultaneously was challenging; it helped that I created alignment in target markets. Jointly leading both efforts matched

my capabilities and was necessary for the firm's bottom line. SMB owners consistently strive to carefully manage limited human and financial resources to accomplish goals and objectives.

Economic pressures in recent years have seen many SMB CEOs, Presidents and General Managers minimize staff and consolidate job responsibilities to weather the storm of "the great recession." One business owner shared what I believe was a consensus opinion, that for too many years it felt like the only option was to "hunker down, streamline costs wherever possible and just wait it out." Now, many SMB owners are seeking new avenues to grow their business. We agree it is time to step out of the bunker, to re-evaluate your processes, practices and policies, and in some instances, your people. It is time to take a new look at how you go about ... developing business.

Therefore, we posit that Business Development in SMB isn't a separate business function; rather it's all of the processes and activities dedicated to creating and keeping customers. Let's explore three core areas of "developing business" – Marketing, Sales, and Customer-facing Services.

### **A Quick Disclaimer**

These perspectives aren't directed at the C-Suites or the owners of big businesses that have the wherewithal to create and support a highly specialized, standalone Business Development Department, a Marketing Department with a dozen or more employees and an even larger Sales Department. We are thinking of the SMB owners with one, two or three marketing employees, or have yet to hire a dedicated marketing professional. We are thinking about the Sales Manager that may be fully responsible for all sales activities or manage a small group of sales representatives. We are thinking about business owners with a handful or two of employees to maybe a few hundred employees.

While our message is applicable to businesses of all sizes in all industries, our goal is to promote: (1) a better understanding of business development functions in SMB, (2) how its three disciplines are aligned, and (3) how business owners can augment the capabilities of existing operations by hiring the right consultant.

The latter is relevant if your management team is already stretched too thin, or if the needed experiences and/or subject matter expertise are currently missing in your business.

Setting a new direction can be accomplished with existing staff, but many business owners have found that hiring outside expertise makes financial sense, brings new perspectives to the organization, and, in many instances is the best course of action given the volume of ongoing staff responsibilities.

## **MARKETING – Pillar Number One**

### **Understanding Marketing's Role**

Somewhat like business development, marketing is also misunderstood. If asked to define it, many answers are exceptionally vague, even from business owners and executives who actively engage with marketing in some capacity. Most acknowledge that marketing and sales are aligned, connected functions. Some hold that marketing is the dominate function, others believe that sales is.

We look at it differently.

We believe the dominance of one discipline over the other is irrelevant; collectively, the company's Mission, Vision and Purpose must be the driving forces. Sales and marketing, in fact, all functions of a successful business, must be subservient to the strategic goals and objectives of the company and the needs of its customers. Both sales and marketing must be the voice-of-the-customer and be in sync. Working hand-in-hand with leadership and sales professionals, and collaborating with other departments, the marketing function can and must weave a tapestry connecting all employees together to more effectively create and keep its customers.

### **Skin Deep**

Marketing – it's a word that everyone understands, but that understanding tends to be skin deep. A few informal conversations with colleagues will confirm that marketing is a business function minimally understood. Sure, we recognize it, especially when it is directed at us. But there is a limited understanding of the marketing function and how we can be more effective in our businesses by using marketing to connect with our customers (and our employees).

Today, marketing is so pervasive in our media intense world that we are less and less aware that we are being "marketed." We experience many thousands of consumer-oriented brand images and messages, but most of us most of the time we are adept at tuning it out of our conscious mind. We are numbed to countless marketing messages, so more marketing messages are increasingly disruptive or patently outrageous – just to get our attention.

Some owners question the value of marketing, especially when business is challenged to make ends meet. When times are tough, some SMB owners cut marketing budgets first, seeing those expenditures as being optional. We hold that approach to be shortsighted and having serious negative consequences. When times are tough, it's time to re-invest in marketing. Strengthen marketing budgets to become more targeted, to create more customers and more revenue.

### **Promises and Loyalty**

We accept the brand promises proffered by one company and, in exchange, offer them brand loyalty. We reject others. Some company's products and services are differentiated from the competition, and their brand messages resonate with us and earn our trust. Others do not. It is a dynamic marketplace, with new products and services constantly vying for our attention and our dollars.

We watch a favorite television program, tune out the deluge of intermittent advertising and are consciously oblivious (or not) to the placement of the can of Coca-Cola or Pepsi in the storyline. But, there is an unconscious impression. We shop for products and services, buying familiar brands and walking away from others that may have better value, whose value proposition doesn't make sense to us or is unknown.

Some purchases are agonized over and analyzed to determine a best value – like buying a home or a new car. Yet, almost every buying decision we make is an emotional decision that a marketer is

attempting to influence in some manner. In every case, their objective is to earn our trust and motivate us to buy.

As consumers going about our daily routines, we are exposed to many thousands of brand images and brand messages from a wide variety of media channels – from marketing professionals in thousands of companies, big and small. In most instances, company images and messages are agonized over by large teams of professionals until every possible nuance of the meaning is refined to convey a specific brand message. The goal is to accomplish a marketing campaign designed to connect to targeted customers, to build perceptions of value and brand recognition. In many instances, enterprise-level corporations are spending millions and millions of dollars to introduce a new product or open a new market.

Some brand images and messages are so embedded in our brains that the brand is instantly recognized, even at the faintest of suggestions. Think “golden arches.” Think a “red bull’s eye.” Think of the jingle “It’s the real thing.” We rest our case.

### **Small Business Realities**

We are enthusiastic fans of many noted authors, chief among them are Jim Collins, Lewis Carbone, Daniel Pink, and, of course, Peter Drucker. In our opinion, one of Drucker’s most poignant statements should be a guiding principle of every business owner everywhere.

***“The business of business is creating and keeping customers.”***

It’s elegant in its simplicity, and profound in how it can focus and transform a business. It really does boil down to **creating and keeping customers**, and is so central to our thinking that we will constantly reference it as we make our case.

But, let’s consider scale and resources. Those are the real issues for SMB owners.

With rare exceptions, business owner’s wants their business to grow. What should you do if you aren’t an enterprise-level corporation? What should you do if you don’t have a huge team of marketing professionals to hone your brand or have large budgets to constantly export that brand to your market? What if you are the owner of a SMB with a limited number of employees and limited financial resources?

You still have big dreams and tangible goals for your business. You want more clients, revenue, profits and cash flow. You want more communication among your employees, problem-solving, productivity and thrilled customers. You still want to transition your company from its present level of success to the future you envision for it. But getting to that desired tomorrow – whether it’s a year away or a decade or more – means that you must persevere and overcome countless gaps and challenges that rob your company of its potential for optimized performance.

You may have identified a handful of business challenges likely to have a negative impact on company goals and objectives, or maybe you see market opportunities that could accelerate the achievement of those same goals. But, you aren’t sure how to make it happen. Maybe you know needed experience and

expertise to eliminate the challenges or take advantage of the opportunities are missing in your executive team. The roadblocks must be addressed. The opportunities must be tackled. You still need to build your brand, to **create customers**. You still need to **keep customers**, to constantly reinforce their engagement, trust and loyalty, their decision to purchase from you.

As a business owner you are confronted on a daily basis with dozens of decisions about your business. Some decisions are easy and some are more complex. Far too many issues keep you up at night. You constantly worry about cash flow, profitability, how to make payroll, paying your vendors on a timely basis or how to accomplish a yearend goal. You worry about whether or not you have the right employees on the right seat on the bus (again, tipping a hat to Jim Collins and *Good to Great*). You worry about losing key clients and how to land more key clients. You worry about retirement and transitioning your business to others, and having the equity to make it happen as you have long envisioned it.

A few decisions might be beyond the experience and expertise of your management team, or maybe your team is already overwhelmed with the scope of their responsibilities. In some instances, you may conclude that help is needed, that the expertise of an outside consultant is a viable option. But how do you select the right marketing professional to help you and your team to achieve your objectives? Do you hire someone on a part-time or full-time basis? Do you hire an outside consultant to kick start a new strategy or implement a specific initiative? Then later, after outside expertise is gone, how do you maintain newly forged business growth?

### **The Tapestry of SMB Marketing**

Again, it's about the scale of your business. As your SMB doesn't have unlimited financial or human resources, every aspect of your marketing must be scaled to your business, to your market and to your customers. **EVERY MARKETING MESSAGE. EVERY BRAND IMAGE. EVERY EMAIL. EVERY CONVERSATION. EVERY DOCUMENT. EVERY FACE-TO-FACE CUSTOMER ENCOUNTER.** Every aspect of your interaction with your prospective customers and active customers must be choreographed to be consistent, genuine and convey your value proposition.

Let's keep this simple. The core function of marketing in every business – small or large – is to effectively communicate the Vision, Mission and Purpose of the company – its value proposition, its brand – to its prospective and existing customers. But, how is that accomplished in a SMB environment?

Let's consider a **hypothetical example**, one that's an amalgamation of several real life stories.

### **ABC Manufacturing Company – outstate Minnesota, near the Twin Cities**

#### **PAST/PRESENT STATE SITUATION OVERVIEW**

- Founded in 1981, sold in 1994 to John and Jane Smith, both 34 at the time.
- In 1994, sales in a 6-state region were \$6,300,000 with 55 employees.
- ABC designs and manufactures a broad line of high-end decorative lighting products.
- Sales are to residential consumers and commercial businesses via a 2-step distribution network.
- Sales peaked in 2006 at \$25,000,000, with 240 employees and profitability near industry norms.
- Profitability dipped as sales fell to \$19,000,000 in 2009, and rebounded to \$22,000,000 in 2013.
- With 210 employees in 2014, revenues from 24 states are flat. Profitability is below industry norms.

## **PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT**

The Smith's remain focused on growing their business, with a vague exit strategy and dreams of retirement (traveling the world) by age 60 being pushed back. They want to step it up. Marketing is led by a VP and executed by two department employees. Sales efforts are led by another VP, managing four Regional Sales Managers. Their design, product development and operational activities are led by a VP with six direct reports. The Smith's see fundamental strengths in their Executive Team, but sense that new perspectives are required. They have interviewed several consultants to make recommendations and support change management, but are unsure how to make the hiring decision.

Based upon the above summary and understanding that the owners want substantial business growth to support an ill-defined exit strategy and retirement in six years, we concur that outside marketing expertise is needed, that an exit strategy consultant should be engaged, and that additional discovery is also needed. We concur that picking the right consultant is equally important.

Whether your specific circumstances are similar or different to this hypothetical example, there are common approaches that apply to all SMB. Here are suggestions for you to consider.

### **Seek More Than “Marketing” Expertise**

First, let's assume each consultant has moderate to exceptional experiences and expertise in “marketing.” However, marketing is a broad discipline with many areas of specialization. All areas of specialization may or may not have relevance to your business. Be aware of their areas of specialization. Know the consultant team and how they augment their deliverables if needed with the expertise of others, and with your team. Again, marketing is a broad business discipline with many areas of specialization.

Marketing expertise is a given. But, look for much more. Ask lots of questions.

Look for leadership skills and core attributes such as integrity, respect for others, creativity, commitment and a host of similar qualities. Look for solid problem-solving skills. That always involves the ability to ask thought-provoking questions, matched by the ability to listen well. The consultant needs to find the gaps, the issues holding you back. Then look for good communication skills – verbal and written. Then look for a sense of urgency and time management skills. Equally important is the ability to analyze and dig deep when needed, when answers don't quite add up. Understanding is paramount to building a solid plan.

The accumulation of relevant facts must be balanced with the ability to bring clarity to complex sets of data. And, understand that marketing doesn't function in isolation inside your business, so the marketing consultant must have a solid understanding of financial imperatives and general business, and a basic understanding of the markets and the channels where your business operates. While there are exceptions, in many instances the marketing consultant does NOT need to be steeped in your industry experience. You bring that to the table as you collaborate and resolve problems, so be sure to stay involved. Make sure the consultant is committed to keeping you fully informed.

Finally, and possibly most important, a high-performing marketing consultant must have strong people skills, and understand that marketing must support building a positive culture inside the company and then export that culture (your brand personified) to your prospects and clients. Your company's culture in the workplace is literally reflected in its brand image and messages. Pay close attention to cultural attributes. Your marketing consultant should, too.

**Special note:** With virtually no exceptions, the “Seek More Than...” recommendations above are applicable for hiring any consultant supporting the business development process.

**SIDEBAR.** Marketers have a classic acronym to describe the marketing process – 4Ps. It is only one of many ways to look at marketing activities. But, we advance that the 4Ps should be 5Ps – with the fifth P standing for People. Your employees – your people – can be a powerful force to leverage the 4Ps, and your brand. We will explore more about the 5Ps in a short while.

### Roadmaps & Methodologies

Here's another way to organize your next growth or marketing initiative. It's a process roadmap to promote company achievement. It's easy to use. It can save you thousands of dollars and countless months or even years of worry and frustration, setting your company on the road to success.

**Awareness (or Discovery) is a critical first step.** We recommend determining a solid understanding of where you are **Today (Present State)** and then securing a clear understanding (**Vision**) of where you are going **Tomorrow (Desired Future State)**. It is nearly impossible to craft a plan or execute a plan without first knowing where you want to go. The challenges or gaps preventing you from achieving your goals are more visible if you understand where you are and where you want to go.

This is typically accomplished through employee surveys and in-depth interviewing of the executive team, generating a **SWOT** (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat) **Analysis** and a **Gap Analysis**. Discovery may also require market and competitor analysis. Build on what you already have.

**Action (or Planning) is the next step.** By understanding where you are today and where you want to be tomorrow, only then can your marketing consultant and your management team begin to craft a viable plan. In many instances, that plan is best accomplished with outside perspectives offering new insights, with marketing consultants looking at your business comprehensively. Other disciplines must contribute, but marketing typically leads the effort. Every business must repeatedly navigate business challenges and create or update an effective strategic plan to accomplish their goals and objectives. Planning is a continuous process. Marketing can best lead this role.

Interestingly, the first efforts of a company to move forward also can occur early in the Awareness or Action steps. Fueled by a companywide understanding that “progress is afoot,” many employees begin to “step it up,” to elevate their performance and be more engaged. Often, a new sense of shared purpose can be seen throughout the company. Take advantage of that momentum.

**Attainment (or Implementation) is the final step.** But this one is very closely linked to the **Action** step and is open-ended. This is where most businesses tend to fail. Let me repeat. This is where most businesses tend to fail. Maybe old habits just creep back into patterns of behavior, or maybe leadership shifted its focus. Maybe the consultant's recommendations were too complex or not scaled to the resources of the company.

This is the time when champions, change management and all executives must remain focused. It certainly requires leadership and perseverance, and it requires having specific, incremental and measurable goals. Are you achieving goals or just holding ground? Pay close attention to your Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and the predictive metrics supporting the KPIs. Constantly adapt and refine your plans.

Marketers love to refer to the 4Ps. Although somewhat simplistic, the classic 4Ps are **Product, Place, Price and Promotion**. (We won't elaborate on their worth; there are countless resources to pursue that further.) Every business must address those elements in their marketing strategy. But, we strongly recommend the addition of **People** to that classic set. That fifth P is representative of the power of a company's positive culture, which is a powerful leverage point to your brand.

Training your people and building your culture can make your brand shine stronger.

## **SALES – Pillar Number Two**

### **Elevating Sales Performance**

In countless conversations with business owners, with only rare exceptions, "increasing sales" is far and away their highest priority. We believe that priority is rooted in the fact that many companies and sales management haven't carefully defined their sales methodologies and trained their sales team to execute it. To whatever degree sales methodologies, systems and training are missing, they are just winging it.

Business owners typically hire sales executives hoping even praying that he or she would be a "rainmaker" – seeking one of the 20% that sell 80% of the company's products and services. We suggest that few questions in the hiring process are posed to understand foundational methodologies and systems that support rainmaker outcomes.

In the "old days" of sales, as in the classic play "*Death of a Salesman*," sales jobs were characterized by personality, guts and perseverance. "Sales" was shrouded in mystery and a drop of snake oil – capturing a buyer's attention using persuasion, charm and power selling phrases. "Closing" was the objective and success was measured by signatures on the dotted line.

Fortunately, businesses learned that selling could be elevated from hard-sell and arm twisting contests to real conversations, creating new business and long-term customer relationships. And, then, with the massive shift of access to information via the internet, a buyer's reliance on learning about a company's value proposition from the sales representative was forever changed. Buyers had more choices and

vastly more vendor options. Consequently, sales methodologies and training evolved to be even more competitive, to reflect a more profound understanding of the changing market environment, human psychology, motivation, behavior and decision making.

The modern age of professional sales had arrived.

A comprehensively trained sales force and consistently utilized sales methodology are requisite foundations for creating customers and building future revenue. It becomes the business development roadmap ALL employees with roles and responsibilities for **creating and keeping** customers should follow and actively support. Successful companies simply don't take an off-the-cuff "make it up as you go" attitude toward sales.

So, wanting to "increase sales," how do you as a business owner instill a more professional sales methodology or system?

### **Training and Engagement**

Virtually all companies should have one or more trained sales representatives and a defined system for active sales engagement to be effective in achieving their business goals and objectives.

A fully trained sales representative is a Sales Professional, capable of effectively communicating a value proposition and securing the sale of company products and/or services. Maybe it would be illustrative to informally look at the level of sales expertise on a familiar scale used in other industries: Apprentice, Journeyman, and Master Sales Professionals. Certainly, the level of sales expertise varies per individual. The point is to elevate the individual and team selling skills and capabilities to achieve better outcomes.

**SIDEBAR QUOTE.** Consider the classic corporate conversation about training and personnel development. "What if we train them and they leave? Think of the wasted money." The poignant response, "What if we don't and they stay?"

Active sales engagement refers to the set of business development interactions that occur to support the sales process with new and existing customers. Broadly defined, the major interactions in a wide swath of industries are: Sales Executive < > Customer, Sales < > Marketing, Sales < > Customer-Facing Services, Sales < > Executive Suite, Marketing < > Customer, and Customer < > Customer-facing Services. Other interactions may exist in some companies.

Each of these interactions must be mapped, designed, trained and managed to be supportive of the business development process – to **create and keep customers**.

### **Training Products**

Enhancing sales training for your professional sales team can be highly formalized by using a standardized sales training product, or customized and adapted by the company from multiple sources, learning models and experience sets.

A business can purchase an off-the-shelf sales system offered by nationally known and marketed sales training organizations. These products usually have books or online instructional manuals to be read,

where their methodologies are outlined. Other companies have also created proprietary sales training products sold in a more limited geographic market. Enterprise-level organizations have also created custom-tailored systems for their own products and markets, some of which are marketed more broadly.

Off-the-shelf products, the proprietary intellectual properties of the authors, are often sold as training courses to strengthen and hone existing sales skills, generally through instruction provided by the sales training organization, by franchises or licensed trainers at a per student seat price. These products follow a strict learning design, generally require multiple days to a week or more to cover the curriculum and follow set procedural methods. There is any number of these for sale; the ones that have stayed the test of time are very effective. They can be very useful to a business development operation.

A potential drawback to using a proprietary sales method is its rigid focus on procedure and technique. Sales trainers, who have one sales system or methodology to sell and teach, have a vested interest in wanting their students/clients to strictly follow the underlying philosophy and steps. Business prospects also take these sales courses and read sales training books, and react quite negatively to any hint of a sales technique being used or directed at them. This can rapidly derail a salesperson's effort.

We have witnessed numerous sales representatives in action and can readily identify specific sales techniques. Some are more subtle and natural, and some are more overt and formulaic. Regardless of the sales processes and techniques you employ, always be genuine, sincere and truthful. Never berate the competition and never lie or even stretch the truth.

**SIDEBAR STORY.** (Position next to above paragraph) I recall a logistics question posed in a final contract negotiation, one not anticipated and obviously central to a prospect's decision to purchase over \$4 million of dollars of services. I didn't know the answer and could have guessed, but I said "I don't know, but can get the answer quickly." The buyer shared later that the contract was awarded to my company based upon the honesty and the substance of that answer.

Be aware that no single sales product can encompass the totality of effective sales knowledge and practice. People who consider selling to be a profession should never stop learning. Neither should companies that want to grow. There are dozens of great sales training and method books available, and they provide a tremendous way to continuously learn and improve. Further, sales managers, business development teams and representatives should always be aware of potentially narrow thinking. By reviewing other sales training content they can continuously expand thinking, behaviors and application to improve "hit rates." Conversely, don't change systems repeatedly. That is equally dysfunctional.

It can be a benefit for a company's sales strategy to establish a common set of skills and to experience solid results before developing more expansive sales skills. We recommend that business owners evaluate different products, consultants and training organizations and make a choice suited for their company. For the selected sales training product to be effective, the entire sales team should consistently adapt to the process. The reluctance or failure of one or more sales professionals to accept the sales methodology can weaken the team's effectiveness.

As long as the chosen methodologies accommodate individual personalities, styles and values, it can be a workable system. Systems that promote contrived elevator speeches, stock answers and cookie-cutter solutions should be avoided. On an ongoing basis, all sales teams should be encouraged to constantly seek out knowledge and ideas, to always be a learning team.

Today, more than ever before, an effective sales effort is systematic and professional.

### **Plus Behavioral Awareness**

Business owners, executive management and the whole business development team can also approach enhancing sales skills by applying a broader perspective – attuned to human behaviors. It's a more diverse even holistic approach to sales skills building. It leverages the strengths of a professional sales executive by expanding the sales universe.

People buy from companies and people they trust and like. Sure, there is a rational aspect to choices being made, but the bottom line is that buying decisions are predominately emotional in nature.

A behavioral approach focuses on the emotional nature of decision-making and draws from a variety of sales theory, scholarship, behavioral schools of thought, and especially, applied methods. It focuses on people, on human behaviors and how to best to interact with customers to heighten their positive “customer experiences” and their loyalty to your brand. The consultant's goal should be to draw from the best-of-the-best of sales thinking and application, and to be proficient and flexible in using this knowledge to engage the sales team differently so that they engage their customers differently, too.

There are strong commonalities to all sales training products and they revolve around established values and applications. There is a consistent emphasis and focus on creating professional rapport, asking good questions, discovering needs, offering precise solutions, and carefully matching products and services to the prospect. They are very much like “variations on a theme.”

Some sales training products and consultants have incorporated behavioral knowledge in their systems to help businesses be even more competitive.

### **Optimizing Sales Performance**

Let's take a moment to address positive and negative company and sales cultures.

In Company A the sales team is making quotas, profits are high, customers are happy and bonus checks are making sales execs happy. Life is good. Some employees are stressed with the workload, but most employees are smiling. A positive attitude is pervasive throughout the company. Operational employees are busy delivering products and services. The sense of optimism is palpable. It's a winning team.

In Company B sales quotas are falling short, profits are flat or down, customers are less than happy and bonus checks aren't being cut. The boss and as such most employees aren't smiling. There is a harder edge to many conversations. A darker, more negative attitude exists in most departments. The team isn't winning.

Granted the two hypothetical company profiles are strikingly different, and many companies would have a blended profile, but the point is a successful sales team can and does have a powerful impact on the entire company culture. My colleague in the chapter on **Making Your Culture Count** addresses this issue more fully.

There are many reasons for inadequate revenues, profits or client growth metrics – for “poor” sales performance – including, as we have already addressed, the lack of a sales methodology or lack of sales training. But, let’s focus on the positive side.

We are avid proponents of elevating individual employee performance, of setting and achieving individual and company goals and objectives. We advocate that companies should have individual and team sales goals, quantify sales calls, appointments made and other leading performance indicators.

Business development organization should be a learning organization. Finding and getting customers into the door, serving them, and thrilling them should be a continuous process of learning and performing. Whether or not a company uses one consultant or many, the processes and methodologies should be able to be learned and implemented by anyone who “touches” one of their customers. There should be roles and responsibilities for every “touch point” in the customer experience lifecycle.

Because we believe that a comprehensive cultural approach to business development is the foundation to building more clients and more revenues, the consultant you choose should have a broad set of capabilities to get you there.

### **Business Performance**

Current understanding of business performance zeroes in on employee engagement. A business culture – a sales culture – must have a clear vision, employee alignment and buy-in to that vision, and engaged people fulfilling specific roles and responsibilities to that vision. Business research and data clearly support the perspective that without an engaged workforce you will not have engaged customers. They are locked in to each other and that mutual and interactive relationship determines the financial results for companies.

Working with your consultant you can understand how your particular marketing and sales strategies play out in your culture, in your workforce and with your customers. You can become aware of your metrics and your aesthetics, or more simply put – what you do and how you go about doing it. Remember again, the balance between those two concepts.

If your objective is to have more customers and revenues, then everyone needs to do some things differently to get more of what your company wants.

The consultant should have the capabilities to help you assess your companywide strengths and weaknesses to determine how they play out in getting and serving customers. There should be an entire “mapping process” that clearly identifies your “go to market” strategies and tactics, your selling processes, and your customer service processes. These elements are all linked together, and they must continuously adapt to a changing marketplace.

This business development map is somewhat like an organizational chart, but much more targeted. **Creating and keeping customers** as a continuous stream of activity; account for and manage the individual and team roles and responsibilities associated with it and customer interactions. Remember, business development is a companywide set of policies and practices, roles and responsibilities aligned to the company's mission, vision and purpose.

Some employees will have roles and responsibilities specifically designated as “professional sales;” other employees will have roles and responsibilities assigned to other business disciplines, but interact with prospects and customers. Remember those customer touch points? Every employee has responsibility in **creating and keeping customers** – in business development and specifically in the sales process.

Sales and marketing employees are highly focused on **finding or creating customers** – and other employees actively support them and those activities – but all employees play a vital role in **keeping and thrilling customers**. It might be mailing statements or invoices, answering phones or emails, selling ideas, innovation or customer-oriented solutions to other employees, or evidenced in countless other ways. It is especially important to (1) communicate clearly and effectively throughout the company about opportunities and challenges, (2) proactively “upsell” additional products, services and value offerings when appropriate, and (3) aggressively prioritize solving any client problems.

A growing realization in business is that everybody in every company “sells” in some form or another.

### **Specialized Sales Expertise**

Some sales representatives have specific roles based on their ability or talent. Common terms are “hunters” or “farmers.” Hunters are charged to **find and create new customers** – to land a new customer. Farmers are charged with a more supportive sales role, with nurturing, account management and problem-solving abilities – more adept at **keeping existing customers**. Simply put, some are responsible for creating customers, others for keeping and growing existing customers.

A skilled consultant will teach and train a business development team and other staff on a range of sales and sales support skills. Depending on the array of professional and non-professional sales staff, the skills must be there to support customers. A modern sales team must have effective interpersonal communication and collaborate with everybody else in the company who might affect the relationships of customers and clients.

Today, selling practices must incorporate a modern understanding of human behavior and embody the “soft skills” of interpersonal communication where sales success can really happen. Gone are the days of one-sided sales pitches and gimmicky closing techniques. Those are the dark ages of selling. Today's sales people are selling to prospects that live in a savvy, hyper-aware, enlightened age. Buyer expectations are elevated. Buyers no longer look to the sales representative to provide them with critical product information. The internet has changed that forever.

Today, buyers expect a company's sales executive to communicate well and take a more educational approach. Given that, a sales consultant must teach a wide range of professional selling skills, but

understand that selling is helping customers to fully understand the value proposition. It is about educating the buyer. Selling is about how things get done in the marketplace.

Your sales team must discover market opportunities and identify the specific needs of each prospect. Critical sales communication skills include eliminating jargon, using open-ended questions to probe for client needs, listening intently and then understanding the answers. Additionally, your company will not be able **create and keep customers** without sales personnel having effective presentation skills. And, that is not just about delivering slick PowerPoint presentations. Salespeople need the ability to create alignment to get an agreement with your prospect, and match their needs with your solutions.

A modern and professional salesperson will need to display verbal and non-verbal balance in the sales encounters – using patience and understanding. It is necessary to show empathy to a prospect or a client, particularly if they express an objection. These are emotional intelligence skills and they are vital to business success.

To produce good customer experiences, support staff must also have an effective range of those same abilities for customer-facing services. Every employee must be able to work through barriers and objections, complaints and unanticipated customer requests.

### **Lead Generation Tools**

Prospecting is an old term used in sales. Today it is called lead generation. Who is going to find your new sales prospects? How will you use technology to manage the flow of lead generation? Although you will not find the “sales prospect funnel” listed on any corporate financial sheets, a company should view sales prospects as company assets. In days past it was common to allow sales prospect information to reside in the heads of the salespeople – or on paper lists, entries in notebooks. etc. That information is much too valuable to be recorded in such haphazard fashions, as it is easily lost. Often when a salesperson leaves a company, that information goes out the door.

We painfully remember Monday morning sales meetings, more frequently than not just exercises in futility and frustration. There is probably no question met with such dread as when the sales manager asks “so what have we got in the pipeline for sales today?” Salespeople by nature tend to be optimistic about their prospects; yet there is great danger in overestimation. The great benefit to sales automation technology is that it helps bring a lot more reality to the business development forecast. Things that are written down and have documentation tend to be more real.

A business development consultant should be able to help you with sales automation tools such as Customer Relationship Management software (CRM), to help you manage contacts, sales and customer communication, work flow, and sales forecasting. Successful sales organizations need information to manage its potential, and much of that information can be managed within the CRM. If the data wasn't entered into the CRM, the sales person would not be paid the commission. That was a commitment to sales process.

## Prep and Presentation Tools

Technology has become instrumental in today's selling environment. The internet has made alternatives to paper based marketing and sales materials possible. Printed sales materials have always been costly, cumbersome and all too soon out of date. With laptop computers and tablets, it has become much easier to illustrate and to support selling. We have become a world of color, action and interactivity. Technology has made it possible to "show your stuff" in many interesting and efficient ways.

We have become a mobile society with mobile communication and just-in-time information. The more diverse and widespread a company's sales effort is the more valuable mobile technology will be. Sales consultants, marketing and technology consultants can work hand-in-hand to develop sales support tools. Your team must use technology to research the prospects in your marketplace. Remember always, those prospects are using technology to research you. Your prospects and customers are using technology in their lives and businesses, and they will be expecting you to do the same.

## CUSTOMER-FACING SERVICES – Pillar Number Three

### Everybody Must Sell

This concept expands the concept of selling, moving it outside the exclusive domain of the professional sales force. It first necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the business' selling proposition, which also requires a custom-tailored approach. In this approach the business development process illuminates and maps a companywide set of processes, practices and policies and the people, "sales-oriented roles and responsibilities" employees have.

If a "Process, Practice, Policy, or People" interact with a prospect or customer in any manner, it must be accounted for, mapped and designed to support the Mission, Vision and Purpose of the company. The last P – People (your employees) – is undoubtedly the most important. If it is about creating new customers, building revenue, making more profits and keeping customers happy – everybody has to do it. Every employee in your company has some measure of a sales responsibility. Everybody supports the sales process in some manner. You can have the best processes, practices and policies, but people can either implement them successfully, or not. They must be consistently executed.

With everybody in the company selling, it is not just about following a technique-based sales methodology. It is far more comprehensive, and custom-tailored to how each company **creates and keeps its customers**. The company's culture – from senior management to the most junior employees – is committed to getting customers and hanging on to them. As it's implemented, the company becomes a goal-driven culture that carefully defines, prioritizes and implements all of its business development disciplines – Marketing, Sales and all Customer-facing Services.

A skilled sales consultant can help instill specific cultural attributes, values and behaviors for a product or service-based company to build its business, but this is a change management process that requires company leadership and the commitment of all executives. It can't be a selective opt-in or opt-out decision by various managers.

The across-the-board “buy-in” and dedication to **create and keep customers** must be woven into the fabric of the company. Business Development mindsets – in Marketing, Sales, and Customer-facing Services – must be infused into all levels of the company. Success is achieved by clearly understanding the company’s market vision, matching goods and services to prospective customers who also value the same things, and who see why these relationships are important.

This companywide approach to BD and selling isn’t traditional. For whatever reasons, leaders often view business development as functions only of the sales staff, and everything “sales related” is relegated for them to accomplish. Enlightened leaders understand where their business comes from, and who gets the business for them – every employee. They know everybody “pulls the cart.”

For a company to **create new clients** and grow revenues there must be an emphasis on professional sales and professional marketing. For a company to **keep customers** and sustain growth there must be an emphasis on optimizing customer-facing services. We are not undervaluing other business disciplines, such as operations, human resources, administrative services, etc. In fact, they are part of the customer-facing services we include in “everybody must sell.”

It’s about your customer – about **creating and keeping** their loyalty. It’s about delivering value. It’s about designing and consistently delivering an enhanced customer experience with every aspect of your company.

Customer experiences can be positive, subconsciously affirm or even thrill the customer, or they can be negative and have an adverse impact on future sales. A single, insignificant negative customer experience might be shrugged off, but negative experiences are cumulative. Beware!

The challenge for companies is that about 90% of the time customers will simply find other providers if the negative experiences pile up too high. You may never know why. They just leave.

### **Implementing Everybody Sells**

Today, every market and every industry is highly competitive. Delivering an “enhanced customer experience” is critical to differentiate and promote company success. So, how might an outside consultant help? Remember, the consultant must have the ability to adapt a wide range of knowledge and skills to the situation at hand.

Experience, insight, and capabilities are premiums, and a business development mindset supports the desired behaviors. It begins with clarifying and understanding the purpose of the business, and linking that to how it will benefit the customer.

Once this linkage has been accomplished – remember the progression of **Awareness, Action and Attainment** – it needs to be “plugged in” to a fully defined and working sales system. And this process must involve everybody who has a role or a responsibility to help **create and keep a customer**.

### **SIDEBAR. *But, I'm not in Sales! That's not my job!***

It's an all-too-familiar comment from virtually every role in a company. However, if any employee interacts with a customer – either directly or through their work product – that customer-facing interaction has a direct bearing on how the customer “experiences” the products and services your company provides. Therefore, these employees have a responsibility to support the sales function. Think of it like this:

**PROJECT MANAGER** (primary role & responsibility)  
AND SALES (secondary role & responsibility)

Making this type of change isn't accomplished with a single companywide meeting or by simply redistributing updated job descriptions that highlight a sales support responsibility. This is a cultural change initiative that requires planning, many open conversations and outside facilitation. Abruptly announcing that everyone now has “sales responsibilities” will not be universally well-received. Some employees may not understand that supporting the sales process is not the same as being in sales.

Many people would say “I could never be a sales person.” The reasons behind that statement are different for everyone, but many simply don't see themselves selling. The challenge for the consultant and those leading change in the company is to educate and train that supporting the sales process is inherent in every job function. It's about communicating and solving company and customer problems, and giving each employee the tools to make that happen. It's about smiling on the phone and helping a customer to solve a problem. It's about delivering value and service to your customer.

It's about **creating and keeping your customers.**

### **SIDEBAR QUOTE.**

Peter Drucker – “If you think training is expensive, try ignorance.”

## **IN CONCLUSION**

Leadership's commitment to an organization-wide system of business development processes and workflow is vital to long-term company success. These processes and systems are the frameworks, and all your sales strategies and activities must be linked to the frameworks. Integrity, consistency and accountability are vital to create new clients, and to make more revenues.

Without methodology, behavioral and technology tools, and a commitment to use them skillfully, it is difficult to manage marketing and sales efforts. It will be even more difficult to manage customer relationships.

We advocate customizing business development systems that everyone builds together and commits to using. For employees not in a professional sales role it might be teaching a set of skills that are either absent or inadequate. For others it could be a “graduate level” sales course tying in the best processes and content available from both experience and the research literature.

For everyone in the company it is an ongoing learning experience to make sales communication and customer support much more effective. The payoffs can be enormous.

Drucker's mantra is worth repeating, **"The business of business is to create and keep customers."**



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