

The Evolution of Sales:

Perspectives and Realities Defining the Modern Sales Professional

by Lalia Rach, Ed.D.

This report explores the challenges facing hotels sales today, including the way organizations and individuals think about the sales process, sales management and the sales professionals, and highlights the need for the hospitality industry to change perspective.



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Perspectives and Realities Defining the Modern Sales Professional



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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A song written more than 50 years ago in an era far different from today describes the situation currently facing hotel sales professionals at every level and hotel sales organizations regardless of size or structure. 1963 was a year when external forces solidified and in hindsight was a stunning wash of courage, tragedy, joy and chaos that reset political, social, economic and technological forces. The quest for social equality (e.g., the march on Washington and sit-ins) gained lasting traction, popular culture was rocked by the British music invasion (e.g., The Beatles and The Dave Clark 5) and the assassination of leaders (e.g., John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King) brought the age of presumed innocent to a complete halt.

Five decades later, the times are still changing with remarkable transformation on an economic, social and technological scale. Consider the hotel industry, at the time Dylan wrote his lyrics it was dominated by mom and pop concerns with a smattering of regional brands, the defining principle was building at the right address (location, location, location), with iconic urban properties managed by European trained hosts who defined the concept of gracious hospitality while serving a homogenous market. Today the industry has progressed into global corporations and publicly owned structures with multiple brands serving a heterogeneous market and well-educated management responsible for an ever-improving bottom line. The transformation into the business of hotels is complete with complex organizational structures, focused on emerging nations as the leading strategy for brand growth, with age-old rules being rewritten or discarded (e.g., multiple brands share space in one building), and financial and analytical methods and revenue optimization models now the driving concerns for hotels large and small.

The Evolution of Sales

*Come gather 'round people...
Wherever you roam
And admit that the waters...
Around you have grown
And accept it that soon...
You'll be drenched to the bone
If your time to you is worth savin'
Then you better start swimmin'
or you'll sink like a stone
For the times they are a-changin'.*

First stanza to the song
"The Times They Are A-Changing"
by Bob Dylan written 1963

In response to changing times, the Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International Foundation commissioned this report to explore the hotel sales function and profession. The object of this report is to stimulate different thinking about sales within the hospitality industry and to further the conversation about the necessary redefinition of skills and abilities of sales professionals in an age where buyers, aided by technology, have assumed control of the sale.

HOSPITALITY SALES AND MARKETING ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL

Reviewing historical information allows organizations and individuals to understand how and why the current situation exists, realize that the same or similar situations and solutions existed and were applied decades ago, and to support thinking and action that is different from tradition. The value of knowing "where" and "what" is important in a business world where structure and vision can switch in an instant.

The organization now known as Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMIAI) came into being in the fall of 1927 with the formation of the International Conference on Hotel Business Promotion in Chicago,



IL (Dorf). The need for ethical standards of practice and other guidelines for the profession were the impetus for the first meeting. As the organization developed, the

focus was to provide education, further the development of ethical sales practices and promote cooperation and the development of uniform practices for convention and group business. The name was changed to Hotel Sales Managers Association a decade later, to Hotel Sales Management Association in 1946, to Hotel Sales & Marketing Association International in 1987 and lastly to the current moniker Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International in 1992. Today, HSMIAI is recognized as the leading association for all hospitality sales, marketing and revenue management professionals.

THE STARTING POINT—HSMIAI ROUNDTABLES

Over the past eight decades, HSMIAI has been the one organization addressing the needs of hotel sales professionals by offering training and research, developing and expanding standards of conduct and responding to the reality of the changes within the business of hotels by recognizing the need for greater specialization and for broader competencies. Since 1997, the Hospitality Sales and Marketing International Association (HSMIAI) has organized roundtables to explore specific issues facing sales and marketing executives in the global hospitality industry. As the industry became more specialized, the roundtables trans-

formed and were organized by position (i.e., Chief Marketing Officer, Chief Sales Officer, Chief Revenue Officer), allowing executives from brands as well as independent hotel companies a forum for delving into discipline-specific issues. One additional roundtable for hotel management company sales and marketing executives developed in recognition of the increasing sophistication and expanding organizational change within the industry. This roundtable crosses disciplines to feature issues relevant to the challenges of directing multiple and competing hard and soft brands.

A review of the transcripts of more than a dozen roundtables held between early 2010 and mid-2014 demonstrates, that regardless of the specific discipline or organizational structure, hospitality executives have and are grappling with the challenges of the changing consumer, a dearth of talent, a greater need for training, and the impact of the rapid and continuous expansion of technology.

Over the four year period, the roundtables, representing the sales, marketing and revenue management disciplines, provide a collective input of ideas, concerns and trends from more than 125 senior executives with the titles senior vice president and vice president the most prevalent within the groups. Among the common points of discussion over the years and throughout the groups are sourcing and maintaining quality talent; investing in research that is timely and blends numbers with psychographic data to create insight that leads to actual innovation; the power shift between buyers and sellers fueled by technology forcing different thinking about the entire buying process. It is the recurrent dialogue among the roundtables on the buyer-seller power shift that underlies the focus of this report. The discussions have drilled down to consider how this changing dynamic in

sales has created a greater need for training that goes beyond process; changing how the company and/or property communicates so there is less “selling”, more listening; and understanding the impact of technology advances on the availability of information and the expansion of consumers’ ability to manage their purchases more effectively.

Within the Chief Sales Officer Roundtables (CSO), a central focus has been on the very purpose of sales within organizations. Owners, CEO’s, COO’s have ingested the “what have you done for me lately” Kool-Aid creating the query “what is sales doing for the company this moment”. The expectation is for now and this reduction in the shelf life of results is pushing executives to find new means for demonstrating proof of worth in the short- and long-term. The very vocabulary of the participating sales, marketing and revenue management executives represents the evolution of sales and the hotel industry as the discussion flowed from segmentation peak, off-peak, business mix, rate efficiencies, micro-level rate and mix analysis, to ROI of incentives, property NOI, value selling, and behavioral training.

Selling the hotel has become a more complicated process impacting every level of management. At the corporate level, this can mean addressing elements such as intermediaries that erode the value of sales associates at the property-level and identifying and retaining a successful sales force. For sales managers, the participants indicated key hurdles include developing time management skills for themselves and their team; designing a focused plan of action to address the various channels; managing leads effectively as not all are equal; and deciding how to reach the decision-maker when virtual connections are replacing face-to-face. One universal issue,

according to the roundtables, is the dwindling amount of time spent with the next level of sales employees. Whether corporate or property level, this is the result of the diminishment in the number of sales management positions. The ripple effect of the leaner organization is fewer mentors and professionals with more responsibilities hence less time to spend engaging employees.

The participants of the most recent CSO Roundtable were asked to briefly, succinctly describe their organization’s sales process and their most and least effective sales employee. The results provided in the paragraph that follows, while informal, describes in general terms the current situation and provide a basis for further research into the “why and how” aspects of the sales process and teams.

The two sides of sales, art and science, is evident in the executives descriptions of organizations sales process as phrases such as consultative, relationship-driven, user friendly were used to describe the intangible sales values not readily measureable. Prescriptive directives were used to illustrate the science of sales including process driven expectations and outcomes, results-oriented, and the adoption of measureable tools. Similarly, the descriptions of the most effective sales employee combined traits that are not easily taught—emphatic, fun to be around, good listener, passionate, personable, savvy—and practical abilities—analytical, business acumen, results-driven, technologically knowledgeable. Overreliance on one’s ability to create relationships was identified by most as the trait of the least effective sales employee.

The modern sales professional, as described in numerous roundtables, should combine business-minded abilities and knowledge with customer-centric traits. The list of abili-

ties and knowledge include different types of thinking—analytical, innovative, problem solving, strategic and a mix of abilities—understanding of when and why to take a risk, organizational and psychological insight. Customer-centric traits—charismatic, relationship builder, personable—must be supported by a deep knowledge of the client. Advancing beyond transactional selling, today’s sales professional must possess more sophisticated tools from understanding forecasting to developing strategy. This report endeavors to address these issues, to explore the challenges facing sales including the way organizations and individuals think about the sales process, sales management and the sales professional.

THE FUTURE OF THE HOTEL SALES FUNCTION

The reality of a slow growth economy combined with accelerating technological advances is recasting the sales model which brings new meaning to Dylan’s lyrics “you better start swimming or you’ll sink like a stone, for the times they are a-changing”. Traditionally, the sales function has been considered crucial to the continued success of the hotel. But, in this age of extreme cost control, companies are measuring the value of each area differently, veering far from historic assessment methods. The advances of business elements, be it revenue management or information management are predicated on the proof of value and optimization of profit placing greater pressure on sales departments to continuously demonstrate their worth.

The complexity of the sales activity has often been dismissed with the human elements being highlighted while understating the analytical aspects. Traditionally, the sales function has been about relationships whether consumer or business based. Engagement, in-person interaction, or what has morphed into the concept of high-touch, was the foundation

of sales success. To engage a client, one held a face-to-face conversation in any number of settings from the conference room to the golf course. The question now arises whether personal engagement and face-to-face interactions will continue to dominate the process or if there is a vast repositioning of sales and the process within the hotel industry. Will organizations turn away from individual connections to a blended management of lifetime relationships across the organization? Will technology trump the customer-centric approach to 21st century business?

The hotel sales process in recent decades has been universally similar. Whether a large, mid or small brand, there was little variation of actions, expectations, and technology as differences in sales fundamentals were mainly cosmetic. This is no longer the case as size and distribution are game changing structural elements. But, it raises the question whether divergent models are the future reality for the industry and intertwined in this is the manner in which customer engagement is being redefined at all levels. The need to transform the concept of loyalty, to shift engagement with buyers and to fashion a different sense of collaboration are among the greatest challenges at all levels of the sales profession and within corporations and properties. For the hotel industry, this highlights the need to change perspective, to acknowledge realities that require reconsidering traditions as no company, department or function can standstill and survive. Nowhere is this more necessary than in hotel sales.

HOTELS IN AN AGE OF DISRUPTION

In the aftermath of the Great Recession, the hotel industry has grappled with consumer, technological, economic and organizational change—a superfecta of change that is rare and confounding. The recession ushered in a

new period of disruption leading to an exhaustive search for a new normal in demand and revenue forecasting in an effort to understand what strategies and approaches would increase wallet share and ultimately improve profitability.

Disruption can be the result of technological innovation or changing ideas about an established product, service or organization methodology (Christenson). The latter reason, changing ideas, interferes with outdated processes and norms, challenges the status quo and plays havoc with the traditional response, “that is the way we have always done things.” A gap in service or convenience, a change in consumer behavior or the development of a new technology may cause professionals or companies to adopt the wrong tactics—withdrawing when being assertive is needed or covering up when transparency would win the day. When disruption upsets standard operating procedures, a common response is increased discomfort amongst the team, as change does not come easily to most individuals. Questioning established behaviors and assumptions in a highly processed environment causes many to take sides as if there is an enemy to be dispatched.

Disruption can cause chaos within a business or an industry segment but as well it can create opportunity. Not every invention or change requires action but awareness of the situation should generate strategic discussions resulting in a thoughtful, knowledgeable decision. Ignoring disruption can lead to loss of market share, diminishment in revenue, and even make the product or service obsolete.

In times of disruptive innovation, an organization must decide if the change should be addressed, if it is necessary to transform aspects of the business model or if ignoring

the change could result in extinction. A recent example of a company that ignored changes in consumer behavior as a result of technological change is Borders Bookstores. Founded in 1971, the company grew to be the second largest bookseller but did not, perhaps could not believe that the printed book could be displaced and that an electronic device would dramatically alter reading habits. As a result of skepticism and inaction, Borders no longer exists. Organizations that face disruptive innovation and do not withdraw but accept that past and current processes are not necessarily the roadmap of the future are highly capable of embracing the disruption and using it to construct a better future.

The Intel Corporation, long known for transformative products, has recently created the Intel Edison computer, a tiny (size of cell phone sim card) but hugely powerful device that can be used to update older computers, solving the problem of what to do with a CPU that doesn't meet the standards of today's software applications (Intel). But the disruption factor of this product will be seen when other uses beyond updating old computers are discovered that will truly comingle the physical world with the Internet and no longer require human intervention. Such a use is demonstrated by a device called the Mimo Smart Baby Monitor



(Mimo), which brings the promise of wearable computers to reality by using the Edison computer. According to Mimo's website, the company has created a onesie with the ability to measure a sleeping baby's respiration, skin temperature, body position and activity level. Imagining what this could do to the baby monitor business and what other uses the Mimo device could have demonstrates the ripple effect of disruptive innovation.

Consider the approach taken by the hotel industry to innovate and disrupt the traditional use of public spaces. Whether ornate or utilitarian, for most of the twentieth century, lobbies were built as controlled, transient environments with limited revenue opportunities (i.e., newsstand, shoe shine, gift shop). It has taken more than three decades for divergent thinking to flourish, as the industry now embraces lobbies designed for varied and unexpected interactions, allowing guests to live life in public like those witnessed in the Central Perk coffee shop on the 1990's TV show Friends. While Ian Schrager conceived a different type of lobby experience in the mid-80's, it took until the turn of the century for the concept of lobby socializing to go mainstream with the 'W' hotel brand. Today, the lobby serves as an extension of the guest room, the meeting room, bar and restaurant. From luxury to economy brands, lobbies now are multifunction spaces where guests conduct business and then seamlessly morph into evening relaxation. Public spaces now liberate individuals to be whatever, whenever, wherever with the leadership of the property no longer making a concerted effort to control how clients use the space, instead continue to seek out options to captivate the traveler so monies spent outside the hotel in previous stays now is captured on property.

Change in any organization quickly becomes personal no matter whether presented from an organizational, economic, technical or social framework. It comes down to "what does it mean for me" and "how will it impact my reality". Attempting to stem the tide of change and to maintain a status quo that passed some time ago is a worrisome tactic of challenged sales professionals. The insidious nature of being comfortable with how things are or believing that progress or the buying cycle can be controlled causes professionals and organizations to ignore the signs that client expectations have moved beyond the current methods in place. For example, a few years ago some hotel organizations attempted to control a by-product of the Internet: social media, by banning the use of Facebook, Twitter and other community building apps at work. At the root of the issue was the thought that by keeping the new technology at bay, shifting control and change could be forestalled. Rather than consider what the change could mean for their business model, properties and companies frustrated sales professionals who felt handcuffed as competitors and clients found new ways to provide and receive information, altering every aspect of the buying cycle. Embracing change encourages leaders to understand and digest the what, how and why of innovation and to use it as a clarion call to move the sales team and the organization forward at a reasoned and reasonable pace.

CHAPTER 2: THE NEXUS OF CONTROL

Today the buyer decision-making process reflects the appraisal presented centuries ago that only change is permanent. What was a one-directional process controlled by the seller has morphed into a multi-directional, consistently disrupted, buyer directed activity. This increasingly self-directed buyer journey is variously described as having a different footprint or optics, and occurring in a non-sequential, non-structured fashion. Face-to-face interactions are being replaced by visits to the website, Facebook pages, blogs, or webinars where one can obtain information on the price of an item, determine availability, book rooms, seats, space or tickets without any human interaction. This power shift between business and consumers is the result of the aforementioned convergence of societal, economic and technological advances. With the shift in power, the concept of an average buyer has run its course and now keeping up with the Jones includes the Silva's, Li's, Smirnov's and Kumar's, any of which could be continents away rather than down the block. Buyers' aspirations are based on a global experience rather than local norms. Desire transcends income as ideas, design, fashion, and food once described as high class are now available without concern for one's class or station. Reference groups are not defined by the vagaries of one's demographic condition. Each time a buyer engages, the reference group may be different, based on the desired product or experience. The ability to connect, extended awareness, and seemingly endless possibilities have heightened the casual and impromptu aspects of consumer nature in ways that challenge the status quo thinking surrounding buyer behavior reminding the seller control is fleeting.

There is nothing permanent except change.

Heraclitus, 5th century BC Greek philosopher

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES

Since the early 1990's, the world has absorbed technological advances of fundamental, continuous and enormous proportions. Table 2 details technological development since the printing press was invented in the 15th century and the telephone in the 19th century. The progress of communications has overcome the barrier of physical distance allowing individuals inexpensive, immediate, face-to-face interaction and fractured the long-standing control that business had by making information universally and readily available with the tap of keystroke. The decade of the nineties was the inflection point

Table 2: Technological Development

AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION	IMMEDIACY OF CONNECTION
1440: Printing Press	1876: Telephone
1836: Telegraph	1973: Cell Phone
1960's: Mainframes	1980's: Email & Voicemail
Mid 1970's: Fax Machine	2002: Smart Phone
1990: PowerPoint	2003: Linked In
1990's: CRM Solutions	2004: Facebook
1995: Internet	2005: YouTube
1996: Google	2007: iPhone
1999: Salesforce.com	2010: iPad

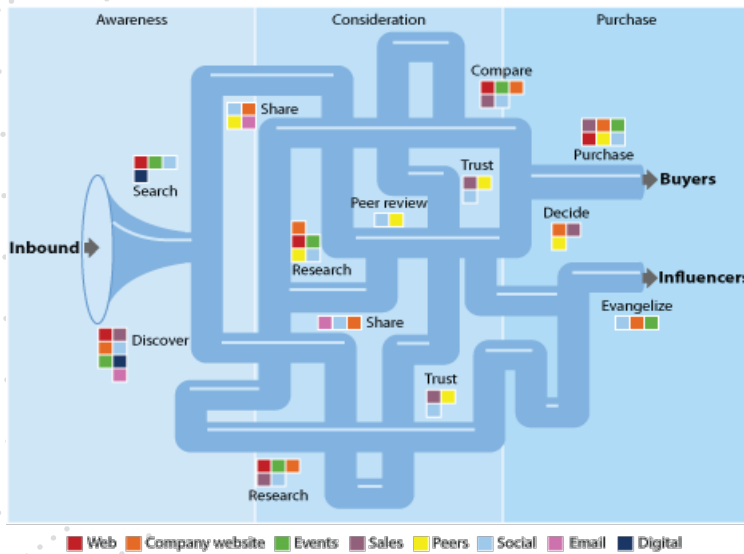
for the availability of information while the surge in immediacy of connectivity transpired in the first decade of this century. Neither the availability of information nor the immediacy of connection has slowed but instead followed Moore’s Law expanding in power, reach and efficiency. Seemingly overnight new or altered social and commercial patterns, associations, definitions, and expressions surfaced and took root. Words such as Internet, applications, social media, and Google gained traction and are now part of normal conversation. Consider the word phone, which had a universal meaning until recently when it morphed based on addition of multiple adjectives—cell, mobile, smart, and the letter ‘T’.

The technological advances of the past 25 years is the nexus between the hospitality industry and the consumer as the ability to access information on most anything, anytime, anywhere has disrupted the buyer-seller cycle.

DISRUPTED BUYING CYCLE

The disrupted buying cycle has the seller coming into play much later in the process. Recent research estimates the new approach to buying, whether related to one’s job or for personal reasons and regardless of price point, finds the consumer nearly three-fifths of the way through the process before seeking to include a sales professional (CEB Marketing Leadership Council and Google). In a blog post, an analyst for Forrester described the change in the buyers cycle as a maze, that at first glance is a puzzling tangle of twists and double backs (Wizdo). The pictorial (see below) depiction of the journey’s increased complexity is broken into three stages—awareness, consideration and purchase—filled with choices informed by ideas and suggestions from at least eight channels. When, how and why a buyer interacts with a channel whether a peer, a search engine or an email occurs throughout the journey but can happen without engaging a sales person. Making one’s own choices to search, share research and evangelize is a manifesto of freedom and of individuality. This transformation, according to the analyst, repositioned the importance and level of interaction of sales and marketing to the last one-third or less of the process, a turn of events which have forever changed the purpose and engagement of sales personnel.

Pictorial 1 Complex Buyers Cycle (Wizdo)



A recent article in *Business Horizons Magazine* described the acceptance of recent technological advances into the mainstream of buyer activity as ushering in a period of four concurrent ages: the age of the Social Collective; Transparency; Criticism; and Parody (Founier). According to the article, the ages illustrate the shift in control with technology as the linchpin empowering buyers on a scale never before imagined or confronted. The age of the social collective is described as the technology-enabled, ongoing coming together of buyers for

positive (Facebook likes) and negative (Twitter call for a boycott) reasons. The social collective has grown markedly according to a study by Mary Meeker, a former analyst with Morgan Stanley and recognized as the guru of Internet trends, as 2010 marked a turning point with more social network users than email users. A distinct threshold was reached in January 2014 when mobile usage topped desktop in the U.S. for the first time (O'Toole).

The distinct flow from one age to another is seen in the transition to the age of transparency, reaching deeply into the buyer's psyche as distinctive attributes of information (accessibility, reliability, timeliness) gain greater meaning since anyone at any time can support or question the actions of a firm. This transparency gives rise to technology that links buyers regardless of their location and advances exponentially the ability to critique service and product with sites such as Yelp and Trip Advisor giving expanded meaning to the age of criticism. The advance from criticism to parody is readily accomplished by those who buy a specific product or service and those who don't as both consumer segments embrace the right to make fun of a company or its products. Parody on a global scale is easy, inexpensive and constant thanks to YouTube where 100 hours of video are uploaded every minute, a staggering amount of production that is populated with buyer spoofs of corporate ads, logos, tag lines, and product introductions (YouTube). The now permanent ability to influence and control is universal, democratic and undeniable.

BUYING TRAVEL

The change in control is fully demonstrated in the travel buying process. Buying any portion of the travel experience is no longer a "stop by" or in-person process, something that now seems rather quaint, as technological advancements have disrupted nearly every

aspect of the travel buying process. In the past, reservations were made in person at the actual business or via mail, telegram, telephone, or by visiting a travel agent. This was the pattern for most of the 20th century but now

the buyer goes online to the business' direct website or a third-party site. This has made waiting "oh so 20th century" as the buyer will not click through multiple pages on a website or wait a relative short period of time for an answer.

Travel has gone from being a very high touch, very low tech, insular industry and experience to a complex exchange of legacy brands and systems and interlopers with new ideas and approaches. Airlines first developed proprietary automated reservations systems in the 1940's but did not grant travel agents access until the mid-70's. Relegated to the status of a back-end solution, technology furthered the desire by business to more fully control the flow of information available to end-users be it travel agents or travelers. Information control was directly related to revenue and protecting access was paramount.

Everything changed in 1996 when Microsoft Corporation established Expedia, an online travel agency (OTA). What is now recognized as the beginning of a new era in travel distribution, the creation of the OTA realigned the



buying process making information readily available to the consumer without human interaction. Comparison-shopping for room type, price, packages, details of all kinds became available anytime, anywhere. While the benefits of OTA's, search, price and book were primarily embraced by the leisure travelers at the start, business travel is now a key revenue component of the OTA's (Hockenson). OTA's gained status and meaning when in a four-year period three new competitors entered the market: Priceline.com founded in 1997 by an Internet entrepreneur Jay S. Walker, created the name your own price phenomenon, Hotwire (jointly founded by four entrepreneurs, six airlines and a private equity firm) in 2000 cemented the idea among buyers that any aspect of travel could be had for a discounted price, and Orbitz launched in 2001 was the partnership of six airlines (American Airlines, Continental Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Northwest Airlines, and United Air Lines) in their continued effort to counter the newcomers and wrest back control (Hockenson). The upstarts were successful from the very start and their success continues today as 13.2 percent of hotel bookings are now made on the OTA's sites (TravelClick).

that created a mindset contributing to the travel industry being caught unaware by the development of content and review sites such as LonelyPlanet.com (1995) and TripAdvisor (2000) (Hockenson).

The belief that companies controlled information was so engrained in the psyche of the hotel business that any notion that information would be available, transparent and immediate was incomprehensible. The very fact that information and connectivity were no longer under of the jurisdiction of business but had moved to the buyer is the very crux of the matter.

The displacement of the sales professional as the controller of information caused an upheaval in conventional thinking and according to some challenges the usefulness of the seven step strategic selling process. It is not only the business to consumer (B2C) realm that has been disrupted as the change in business to business (B2B) buying habits is forcing companies to think differently about sales. A recent article (Gillium) provides four practical perspectives for sales to consider when addressing the changes to buyer habits. While the article's focus was the B2B buyer the advice is applicable to B2C as well. The first recommendation is to know what a buyer costs the company, as it may be best for the bottom-line if the buyer is self-directed. Next, consider that the pace of buyer expectation is ever-increasing which challenges sales ability to keep up. As a result, decisions are needed to determine what responses should be automatic (immediate) and which should be at a measured pace. Third, spend more not less on sales. This may require a change in thinking by leadership, as the sales force must be viewed as the most effective and important communication channel in the firm. If this is the case, sales will be provided every internal

As the social, economic and technological factors changed, one aspect, information, increasingly determines worth for a business. It is the belief that information could be controlled



advantage in terms of the best content, the best intelligence, and the best training. The last suggestion is to adopt the philosophy that it is the human element, not technology that will continue to determine success. This translates into creating human connections that are timely, meaningful and purposeful as buyers are skeptical and at every level demand proof of service, experience, and quality.

Control in 20th century meant shaping how the buyer bought. Information about goods and services was not readily available to the buyer as access was restricted to the seller who determined how and when particulars about the product would be provided firmly establishing the amount, flow and content that could be obtained at any given time. Fast-forward to the current day and the opposite is true. Control is no longer in the seller's court, which has disrupted the sales process and the role of sales in many hotel companies.

This loss of control reverberates throughout the hospitality industry and has upended entrenched traditions and systems far beyond sales. Now neither business nor industry can dominate the discussion about their product or service, the type of interaction, buyer's perception, the reputation of the product or service, the dissemination of information including pricing, and the buying cycle. A power shift occurred as the buyer moved into the driver's seat, the result of social, economic and technological advances and increasing consumer sophistication. For some within the hotel industry, it mimicked a bloodless coup with business caught unaware of the rise of dissatisfied customers taking control of the keys to the kingdom with a keystroke replacing the sword. In the midst of the change, it remains to be seen if sales training and process adapts to the new reality and equips professionals with the necessary skills and abilities.

Service

Customer

trust

In sales process

tion's ability to
should be

CHAPTER 3: PERSPECTIVES ON SALES TRAINING

Until the Industrial Revolution was in full bloom, learning by doing was the method for sales and most every other line of work. Once an organized process was introduced, the outcome of training improved competency, which produced greater efficiency and over time created the profession of sales. The famous proverb that opens this chapter has been translated loosely to read, “the more things change, the more they stay the same”, a reality can be seen in sales training and selling methods that evolved over time. Many of the different selling techniques were variations on an earlier theme. The repackaging and replication that continues can be problematic amidst the changes in the buyers journey.

SALES IN THE MODERN ERA

As the modern era of business evolved, it became apparent that sales as a business activity had to advance as an integral part of the overall company strategy, grow into a respected, valued area of the organization and develop as a profession. Society requires certain proof of respectability for a job to be recognized as a profession. In addition to training and education, it is expected that a body of knowledge develops to define the skills and abilities surrounding the work.

Sales wasn't a career for a respectable member of society, as salesmen were not seen as members of a reputable profession. The valued callings for centuries had been religion, law, and medicine; and the trades or industry were just beginning to find an acceptable place. As society advanced, business was considered respectable but only if one was in a senior or executive position certainly not something as unseemly as sales. Society accorded little status to the activity as credentials were generally based on one's ability to

“Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose.”

Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr 184

obfuscate with often-questionable tactics used to induce a sale.

The need for a defined, organized approach to sales took root as manufacturing methods advanced the quantity and quality of goods available for sale. It had become clear to more progressive companies (e.g., National Cash Register) that the opportunity to sell, whether on a scheduled route with a catalog and samples or through accidental encounters such as two people meeting on the train, was more likely to succeed if the seller had the ability to turn a phrase, use a persuasive tone, or tell a story. As well, if one was selling a product that was unique or new, the scope of the seller's knowledge of its uses improved the prospect of a sale. (Friedman)

As business leaders realized the interrelationship between the quantity of products sold and the quality of the selling process, sales personnel were expected to improve their appearance and their approach in order to successfully deliver the sale. To accomplish this, companies began the search for new methods and approaches to selling that would ensure that the sales force could meet their quotas, diminish the competition and create buyer loyalty to the product or service, organizations turned to sales training as a process for gaining an advantage in the marketplace which was a step in defining the activity as a profession.

SELLING METHODS

From the industrial revolution through the Internet and knowledge revolution, an amalgamation of models and methods has been employed in the modern era of business. Fundamental to the models was the domination by sales of buyer engagement. Various sales techniques emerged over the past 150 years from telling lies and exaggerating claims to following programmed dress and image standards, manipulating buyers emotions and moods, and applying scientific study of behaviors and attitudes (Finkelstein, Friedman). Selling methods are reflective of the driving industrial and technological forces of the time. Certain selling methods have risen to star status by focusing on such concepts as the dif-

ferent aspects of the buyer-seller relationship or by characterizing frequency and constancy as the new and dominant aspects of the time. Perhaps the sales profession’s search for the one true method is the best example of what it means to be searching for the holy grail—that thing that is earnestly and constantly pursued regardless of evidence that it does not exist. A review of the dominant methods of selling (see Table 1) delineates that the search for the ‘best’ method has progressed from unvarnished manipulation in the 1800’s to the current collaboration phase. (Finkelstein)

If there were an actual beginning to the manipulation stage, it would be the 19th century when business was transformed by a series

Table 1: Selling Methods (Adapted from Finkelstein)

	Manipulation	Control	Consultation	Collaboration
<i>Timeframe</i>	1800’s to present	1920’s to present	Late 1960’s to present	Late 1990’s to present
<i>Primary Approach</i>	Make the sale through any means even if premise is unethical, illegal or untrue	Father knows best, knowledge controlled by seller. To create needs.	Identify prospect/ buyer needs; connect to benefits of product/service	Solve problems; provide advice; work together
<i>Power</i>	Seller	Seller	Seller	Buyer
<i>Role of Prospect or Buyer</i>	To believe the impossible was true; to buy on faith	To listen and learn; to imagine what be if they owned/used xxx	To seek advice, greater understanding of what the seller had to offer	To take a broader perspective, find solutions to benefit organization
<i>Relationship</i>	Sporadic occurrences; emotional based	Standardized interactions utilizing phone, conventions, drop-by, scheduled meetings, ads	Salesperson as expert creating win-win situation for individual client.	Complex exchange of advice, solutions, ideas. Mutual benefit. Long-term.
<i>Sales Technique</i>	Bait and switch; Pressure (peer, status)	Product/service is the best way to solve the buyer’s problems. Hunters and gathers.	Some one buyer likes to do business with.	Integrated team approach to solving buyer problems. Planning and analysis.
<i>Descriptors</i>	Snake oil salesman, used car salesman	Schmooze, wine and dine, charisma	Expert advice from a trusted source	Insight, buyer-oriented

of technological advances in power (steam) and mechanized production (cotton gin). The growth in productivity created the need to sell products to a wider and broader market. A network of traveling salesmen spread across the country telling people what they needed to make life easier, what would make them feel better, or how they could become the envy of their neighbors. For the salesmen, only the sale mattered and this was accomplished by whatever means necessary, which often meant manipulating the truth about the qualities of the product and taking every advantage of consumer gullibility. (Finkelstein, Friedman)

In the 1920's, overt manipulation was replaced by a benign condescension described as the "Father knows best" method. The seller had the knowledge and therefore knew what was best for the buyer. Pushing features and benefits, the seller informed potential buyers to listen closely in order to learn. By doing so the buyer would realize how their lives would be better if only they owned the product. Telling buyers what they needed was the dominant tactic as control of information was securely positioned with the seller as buyers were less experienced and knowledgeable and had limited access to published materials. (Finkelstein)

Change was the watchword of the sixties, with consumers wanting more from a purchase so selling advanced by positioning salesmen as someone you could trust, an expert who would be a friend or colleague, someone you liked doing business with. The advice given was designed to help the buyer connect their needs to the right product or service. As a consultant, the seller remained in control and was able to propose a "win-win" situation based on the benefits of the product or service. This technique deepened the en-

gagement of a more sophisticated buyer who had access to greater choices and expanded distribution channels. (Finkelstein)

Today collaboration rules the selling process. The seller works with the buyer for their mutual benefit, asking questions, solving problems, and providing insight. Insight requires consistent business knowledge, a determined effort to understand the environment of the buyer far beyond the 20th century norm. The crucial differentiator is the nexus of control. No longer does information reside primarily with the seller. A more educated buyer employing technological advances has driven a wedge into the monolithic control enjoyed by sales. Buyers fully realize having information and the ability to access knowledge forever shifts the power equation.

Because selling is a layered and nuanced series of actions composed of multiple elements that encompass the full range of human emotions (intimacy, pressure, conquest, exhilaration, and intuition); reasoning (insight, planning, coordination, and measurement); and behavior (professionalism, public comportment, systems and processes), power or control of the sale has become the objective.

SALES TRAINING

In 1883 John H. Patterson, the President of National Cash Register (NCR) is credited with the first attempt to professionalize sales when he created a sales training school within the company (National Cash Register History/Timeline). The professional approach to selling was outlined by NCR to include: 1. Comportment as salesmen were instructed to dress like an executive with white shirt, collars, and a suit the standard uniform, 2. Business education as the sales force was taught accounting so they could talk appropriately to buyers, and 3. Aggressive selling tactics as



each salesman was instructed to offer a pen to sign the order while asking “Do you want delivery this week or next?” The training approach was encapsulated in a guide called the Primer which was given to each salesman and contained advice that even today is considered well-reasoned—“No man likes to feel he is being sold.” NCR understood the value of a trained, organized professional sales force and was among the first companies to establish a global sales force and to teach sales personnel to solve problems for clients. (Friedman, National Cash Register)

As well, NCR developed the pyramid selling method, instructing salesmen to sell the first cash register to the most influential person in town. This tactic diminished barriers as the town leader had great visibility and provided a real connection to the product. Once the leading businessman bought the NCR, his business became the sales room for others in the community to see and hear about the value of owning the product from someone they admired which made the next round of sales easier. This technique was replicated by other businesses (e.g., automobile, clothing) but

perhaps the most successful imitator was the company IBM. As the creator and seller of the Selectric typewriter, a revolutionary secretarial tool for the time, salesmen were instructed to sell to senior executives in the firm thereby establishing a hierarchy of importance. The Selectric was not an ordinary business tool but one meant for those who worked for the best, busiest, and highest ranking executives. It was based on affiliated status...did your boss rate a secretary with a Selectric? (Friedman, National Cash Register, IBM News Room) NCR was the source of other sales training techniques that are still in use today. As a sales manager at NCR, Thomas J. Watson, developed the motto “Think” as a method for overcoming the mistakes made by salesmen who cost the company money by not thinking. He had the word put on signs throughout the corporate offices as part of the sales training to give direction to the sales force. It was not enough to learn how to sell, the salesman had to be responsible for his actions while directly engaging the buyer and for maintaining the relationship. Thinking not rote memorization meant listening and responding to questions, bringing information back from the field so the company could improve the product. It was not enough to just sell, Watson wanted his team to understand the impact that thinking about the sale could have on the company. (National Cash Register History/Timeline).

Watson took this and other ideas from NCR to IBM where he became general manager in 1914. He installed NCR standards (including the think motto) within the IBM sales force and taught the importance of demonstrating how IBM products and technology could solve complex business problems. For decades, the IBM sales force set the standard for sales professionalism and success as they dressed for success, walked the talk and sold directly to the decision-maker. IBM salesmen sold

products that solved business problems in a manner that kept the company in a leadership position for perhaps longer than warranted. (Friedman, IBM News Room)

One of the first public occasions designed to bring the sales profession together to concentrate on increasing professionalism and featuring skill training was the 1916 World's Salesmanship Congress. D.M. Barrett, the publisher of Salesmanship, the first magazine for salesmen, organized the congress. Held in Detroit, Michigan, Barrett designed the Congress to elevate the profession. To accomplish this goal, he invited notable politicians and businessmen to participate at the event including U.S. President Woodrow Wilson and the presidents and sales managers of major U.S. companies including Ford Motor Company and Burroughs Adding Machines. The inclusion of the President of the United States at the convention created legitimacy by association for the event and the profession and jumpstarted the accession of the profession. (Friedman)

But advances were fitful as companies searched for any advantage that would propel sales to new heights. It may be for this reason that the Ford Motor Company adopted one of the most unusual and different tactics in an attempt to give their sales force an edge over all others. In a 1923 company publication sent to all Ford salesmen, an article enthusiastically proclaimed the virtues of the "Science of Selling", a method designated to improve sales based on connecting the size and shape of the buyer's forehead with a specific car model. Salesmen were urged to study buyer's foreheads based on the dimensions and characteristics outlined in the article to determine which models customers were more likely to buy. While this seems ludicrous today, there are any number of sales techniques tried by quite reputable hotel companies that in hind-

sight were too good to be true and today are seldom discussed with the hope that they will remain forgotten. (Friedman)

An early article addressing the sales process was published in the scholarly publication, the Journal of Applied Psychology in 1925 (Strong). Written by E. K. Strong, a professor at Stanford University, the article detailed effective sales strategies and clarified the purpose of selling as two-fold: 1) to secure purchases (orders), and 2) to establish customer satisfaction. His first element is readily quantified as either one "makes" the sale or does not. It is a measure of past and current success but it does not foretell future success. The second element in Strong's definition is far more complex for one must first answer how a salesperson establishes customer satisfaction. Since satisfaction measures expectation, it has a limited shelf life (the what have you done for me lately syndrome) and therefore the salesperson must constantly excel in every aspect of the relationship. Strong provided one of the first clinical analyses of sales as a layered process requiring more thoughtful attention than previously considered.

Today as the hotel business confronts considerable pressures to optimize every exchange, the pursuit of a better sales process remains a foremost challenge. An overview of the training methods of the modern era (Finkelstein, Friedman) suggests much of what we now consider new is built upon ideas and programs of decades past. Salesmen in the 1880's were instructed to identify the decision-maker and to solve problems for clients (NCR) that has echoes in the customer centric selling training introduced in the 1990's. In the 1920's selling the brand was pioneered as a baseline tactic and the good deed technique became popular as bible salesmen went door to door with a two-fold sales pitch: buying the good

book was good for the buyer's soul and kept the salesman's children from starvation. In the 1930's the focus of sales training was to understand the buyer and use psychology to get the buyer to yes. Also, this is when the question "what keeps you awake at night" was first promoted as psychology was added to the salesman toolbox. Buying the product would reduce worry and give the owner a stress-free night's sleep. This was reintroduced some 50 years later in the situational questions posed in the SPIN method—"what business challenges keep you awake at night?" (Rackham)

For the next few decades sales techniques were packaged under acronyms designed as memory aids so the steps of the process would ultimately become automatic actions and expressions of the sales professional during the sale. Among the techniques that gained traction was S.E.L.L. (Show, Explain, Lead to benefit, Let them talk) also known as the tell-sell process with the sales person leading with success stories followed by benefit stories. A.D.A.P.T (Assessment, Discovery, Activation Projection, Transition) was a method of assessing clients business issues so the pitch would be targeted to the benefits best suited to their needs, A.R.C (Ask, Recommend, Cross-sell and Close) was developed for retail sales to increase cross-selling thereby expanding the total spend. A.I.D.A (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) a four-step, formulaic method that was simple to use was positioned as making a mediocre sales staff better. The ongoing attempts to standardize the sales process continues to this day as companies maintain a manufacturing attitude based on the ability to systematically measure output (how many X's can be produced in Y hours). This framework is then attached to the selling process with the expectation that X amount of training should result in Y contracts. (Finkelstein)

Xerox was ground zero for the redesign of sales techniques during the sixties developing PSS (Professional Selling Skills) that morphed into Needs Satisfaction Selling (NSS) training. PSS was developed as Xerox faced the loss of patent protection, which had provided a 100% monopoly of U.S. copier sales. Rather than have sales continue to serve as order takers, it was vital that the sales staff be able to go head to head as competition developed. The mind behind both training programs was Don Hammalian who wanted to infuse a more scientific and customer-included role into the sales process. It was also at Xerox that Solution Selling was incubated before evolving in the eighties as a universally available method. (Sant)

The seventies ushered in strategic selling methods that fused the fixed process approach of previous decades to the 1880's admonition to identify the decision-maker. But, a distinctive element emerged, as it was the first time sales personnel were encouraged to partner with the buyer. This concept was solidified with the broad acceptance of consultative selling techniques in the eighties. Sales personnel were taught to deeply question customers in an effort to better understand their needs and to assist the customer in a journey of self-discovery about what products could do for them either in the workplace or at home. This approach combined thirties psychological selling with the forties SELL method and the sixties needs satisfaction approach. Relationship selling models gained traction in the 1990's as sales personnel were exhorted to build trust to gain buyer commitment. The origins of the concept of trust as a vital portion of the formal sales process can be traced to 1916.

Another sales methodology, Solution Selling developed by Mike Bosworth based on his



experiences at Xerox, proposed an unusual technique; to include the customer to develop mutual understanding of solutions that were the best fit (Bova). This approach broke what had been an undisputable law of sales: control naturally belongs to the seller. The Solution Selling process relinquished some of the control that was at the heart of sales. Some sixty years after Dale Carnegie's noteworthy book, "How to Win Friends and Influence People", was first published, "Solution Selling" and "Customer Centric Selling" methods built upon Carnegie's premise that understanding effective relationship building would lead to success in selling. He seems to have instinctively understood reference connections and relationships as he changed the spelling of his last name from Carnagey to Carnegie to create a link to Andrew Carnegie, one of the most successful American entrepreneurs of his or any time. Carnegie's advice directed scores of sales professionals to speak with assurance,

authority and engagement. (Bosworth, Carnegie)

The latest technique, the Challenger Sales constructed by Matt Dixon and Brent Adamson, asks salespeople to think differently about their clients but in doing so still maintain control. It combines long-standing concepts of service as fundamental to the sale, storytelling with analytics, and the "how" of sales. But the approach is distinguished by presenting interesting traditional concepts comingled with financial and psychological metrics. In sales language this translates into 1. Invest in the client before measuring their ROI, 2. Be forthright about the differences you bring, and 3. Don't ask; tell your client what is best for them. While not the "father knows best" approach, it is provocative and forward thinking as it requires the sales professional to demonstrate divergent thinking, avoiding cut and dried responses while engaging the client with information that speaks to their needs. (Dixon)

In the hard charging world of sales, the driving philosophy is often eat or be eaten to which the acronym ABC (always be closing) is the common tenet. When Alex Baldwin admonishes his sales team in the 1992 movie Glengarry Glen Ross to always be closing, he uses the abbreviation ABC as if it is a readily, easily, consistently achievable activity and if the individuals in the room have the guts (he uses far stronger language), they too can succeed. Be it books, articles, or programs, for more than a century each in turn promoted, promised, and sold a new or different process for improving the salesperson and the level of sales. From the Secrets of Closing the Sale by Zig Ziglar to The Greatest Salesman in the World by Og Mandino to Spin Selling by Neil Rackham to The Little Red Book of Selling by Jeffrey Gitomer, the search continues with

devotees exclaiming that this is the one while critics declare it is simply reconstituted ideas from the past invoking the sense that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

While each subsequent method reflects the changing technological, social and economic mores, success going forward is being determined based on the primacy of the buyer in each phase of engagement with current methods shifting from the sellers perspective to that of the buyer.

CHAPTER 4: THE CHANGING NATURE OF SALES

Difference is a common aim of business as manifested by the continual search for the unique selling proposition of a product or service. Over the past decade, emerging technology and the fractured economy have upended many business norms and the quote that opens this chapter aptly outlines the situation that the hotel business and sales units are facing. While hotel professionals may have accepted the reality that things are different, it does not mean that thinking or the processes or approach to selling has changed to fully reflect or address the difference. Difference, that is not readily explained, is often discounted out of hand, without due consideration of the effects of change on systems and processes.

The traditions of sales are deeply embedded and when managers rely upon the experience of their early years the lessons learned are likely to be of value but the methods used may be out of step with current realities. As an example, general managers (GMs) of the previous century consistently urged their sales staff to be out of the hotel, selling. The prospecting techniques used included making cold calls to businesses throughout the region, scanning the reader boards of competitors and dropping by for unannounced visits with current clients to remind them why their hotel was better than other hotels in the area or to introduce new innovations and benefits such as remodeled rooms, expanded meeting facilities, concierge floors, upgraded menus and the like. It was all about the physical benefits of the hotel, which meant with current clients the goal, was maintaining the relationship, and for prospective clients it was to explain why the guest rooms or meeting rooms were better than the rest. The GMs expectations were for the sales staff to maintain occupancy at a certain level and when numbers for the

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doesn't mean anything has changed.*

Irene Peter, American writer

week or month were not positive, it was the sales staff that was not doing their job, not performing to standards.

Today with the benefit of hindsight it can be recognized that the failure of the sales staff and of the general manager was not in the level of effort but in the process, approach and training of the staff. The expectation was not for the GM or the director of sales (DOS) to devise strategy for the hands on nature of the business governed action. Rarely were the results of the sales staff measured in a layered, complete fashion. It was the era of "any business is good business" and tactics were remixed in an effort to drive more business. Statistics that analyzed success were minimal and business intelligence was limited to the basic and passive action of reading the business and social sections of printed media, talking to colleagues at competing hotels and calling the other properties to ask about rates previously given to a group. The concept of measuring the effectiveness of an approach, the value of a prospect, or the return on investment was simply not a behavior or objective employed by most properties or chain leadership.

Revenue was revenue, the guest room was occupied or it was not, incentives were not costed prior to contracting. Nor was the end result reviewed to determine return on invest-

ment. In reality the hotel industry considered being a host its primary calling. The business acumen of most GMs and DOS resulted from on the job training. Most assuredly money was to be made but it was never considered necessary to utilize advanced measurements or analysis to delineate the effectiveness or efficiency of the process or training and to determine if “money was being left on the table”. Salespeople understood the system could be manipulated and as long as quotas were met, that was enough. Cold calls could be invented, reader boards could be exaggerated, and current clients could be wined and dined with minimal expectations for additional or new business.

Think about Don Draper from the TV show *Mad Men*, although depicting an advertising man; he exhibits the characteristics that embody the physical and intangible elements aligned with 20th century sales professionals. The sales skills most valued and considered to determine success were characterized as “soft skills”: a firm handshake, a strong but modulated voice, neatly dressed and well groomed, and the ability to tell a good story and engage the client. As men dominated the sales profession prior to the 1980’s, it is not surprising that terminology and process are derivatives of military jargon and approach. Business deploys human and financial capital; strategy and tactics form the basis of operations. Times have truly changed as the prevailing school of thought in the hotel industry over the past 5 to 10 years has focused on a more nuanced definition of sales that addresses not only the human and economic elements but firmly anchors both within a value creation context.

Sales as a business discipline is transforming as global brands adopting a macro approach with geographic and/or brand sales offices

replacing the property specific structure while national and regional firms are developing a modified process combining 20th century positives with present day reality. Regardless of the sales approach, it is all about revenue—finding, managing, building, and valuing—taking actionable, dynamic and measurable steps. Leadership demands that sales embrace revenue management and refine sales strategy and selling techniques so that revenue is continually optimized. Revenue is now seen as having 50 shades of black and is analyzed using progressive analytics to develop integrated sales strategies with marketing, IT, operations, and revenue management.

APPRAISING THE SALES DEPARTMENT

Hotel organizations are increasing the pressure on sales leadership to demonstrate the value of sales activities to the long-term health of the business. For some in sales, this reinforces the belief that the cost-cutting mentality now dominates C-suite thinking. Others view it as a response to new buying patterns better served by technology than humans. A third line of thinking aligns the idea that sales must prove its worth as the rise of revenue management has forever altered the sales function. Whichever is the underlying reason, an absence of forthright analysis fuels speculation by non-sales leadership.

To understand what value sales has begun by appraising the current status. Taking a measured approach will provide reliable information that can be used to demonstrate the worth of the sales activity as well as the loss that would follow if the sales department were to be dissolved. Perhaps most importantly, it should provide insight into the direction the department should take to better meet the needs and expectations of clients and leaders.

The sales department should be appraised on a regular basis to ensure that the area is moving in the manner and the direction that is optimal. The appraisal is a tool that provides benchmarking, measurement to demonstrate the quality of your department, and the value creation of your area. The appraisal must be both quantitative and qualitative providing analysis of dollars and engagement. Among the areas and information that form the basis of the appraisal are:

Organization: First consider, what does excelling or being the best mean in the organization. Then in specific and realistic terms (not we wish, hope, or want to be) indicate what your area is the best at. Whatever statistic is meaningful to the organization must be directly stated: We are the best because... our results are driven by... Xxx is our 'best' sales person because best to us is determined by \$\$ or ###. A statement of where the sales team excels must be clearly and succinctly presented to leadership, reminding them of the value and significance that the function has within the organization. Develop a profile of the best sales person listing their qualities and the consistent level of results they produce.

Personnel: Describe the most effective sales employee. What is their title? Describe the least effective sales employee. What is their title? Why is the individual still a part of the team? What the three abilities are present across the board in the sales team? What are the three abilities are lacking in the sales team?

Situation: This is both a market assessment and an internal review. What situations did not exist 3, 5, 7, 10 years ago? What has

changed economically, technically, socially, and organizationally? How have policies and expectations changed to meet the altered reality? What has been protected under the guise of tradition? How have workflow, standards, and behaviors been adjusted to reflect the changed reality? How is the sales organization and approach altered to meet the 'new' demands of clients? Think of your company as a collaborative sales organization. To accelerate the entire sales experience, what actions, policies, traditions, practices should be: stopped, started, and continued?

Competitors: Being second best is not always a bad thing. The point being that sales leadership must decide where to spend time, money, and human capital. The era of stealing business is good business is over. Not all business is equal, not all business is worth it, and not all business should be your business. Where are you second best and does it matter? Is it good enough? What do your competitors do better than your company? How much on average does each salesperson cost? What is the ROI for each salesperson? What clients would diminish their spend without the current sales effort and why?

The complexity of selling requires sales and non-sales leadership reassess the value of an effective and modern sales structure. Perhaps the questions that have been asked are not on target. Rather than asking if the function necessary, the question may be is the area functioning as needed to achieve the goals of the corporation. Sales areas provide the greatest opportunity for connecting the organization to the client, for differentiating in a sea of similarity, and for ensuring that loyalty is more than a program.



CONSIDERING CHANGE: THE DOS

When considering the position of the director of sales, it is first and foremost a managerial role. In the context of the sales unit, this position requires an individual with the ability to be a leader-coach, not a star sales performer, not an extension of the sales force, but a professional who understands what a team needs to succeed.

Among the most confounding and long-standing practices in sales is the promotion of an individual who excels at selling into a managerial and leadership position. This practice embodies Albert Einstein's definition of insanity "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results". The skill and knowledge it takes to succeed in selling does not automatically translate into the abilities needed to successfully manage and lead a team of sales associates. Yet, the

practice continues to happen when an individual who is fulfilled in their current role and recognized by peers as a great sales person is "rewarded" by the hotel leadership and promoted to Director of Sales, a role for which they have little or no training, interest, or skill. Following the status quo, the successful sales associate is taken from the job at which they excel and when the promoted professional fails or is less than successful, the leadership of the hotel is surprised at the outcome. The conversation with the star should begin with the type of career path available to them for the goal is to keep them as a productive, successful member of the team. If the choice is to continue being the star, any offerings of advancement or training should relate to the chosen path. If there is an interest in managing, a process of discovery and learning should be undertaken before any repositioning to DOS occurs. The time and support provide in advance of the change will benefit the individual and the organization.

Without a plan to establish or advance management skills, the star sales associate who becomes the DOS is likely to be a deal manager rather than a sales manager. Among the characteristics of the deal manager are: an excellent closer, loves to discuss the big deal, adept at strategizing a customer situation, and understands what is needed to achieve the goals of the department or the individual. A deal manager is busiest at the end of the month helping to close deals. (Higgins)

Focusing beyond what is next runs counter-intuitive to key skills found in the deal manager or the high achieving sales associate. When closing in on a deal, one's focus narrows to the micro aspects of how the company defines success (generally a short-term, highly specific revenue target). Tactical, expeditious activities and responses matter and demands that the salesperson focus their energy and thought

to accomplish the task. When this focused approach is brought to managing others it ignores the need for qualities such as coaching for team contribution and methods for ensuring the long-term health of the deal pipeline. (Higgins)

Another type of DOS is designated as a sales manager whose job is to create sales people not sales. This notion at first seems practical and straight-forward but developing the skills and abilities of others, creating a team effort, being able to devise and implement plans requires the ability to strategize, to see the long view and build to team success. Such capabilities are rare.



The crux of the issue is seen most clearly when considering the overall approach of the two types of sales managers: 1) the sales director is responsible for the team and its success, and 2) the deal director is

a reconstituted sales star, focused on their clients, goals and bonus. It is likely that a sales manager will teach that speed is not always the best tactic, that not all clients are “right” for the organization and that a loss of a sale creates new opportunity. The deal manager is wired to make the sale and likely views speed as a desirable quality as it denotes movement in line with the mantra “always be closing”. The types exhibit two very different skill sets that are generally mutually exclusive with one positioned for goal achievement and one for individual sales success. It is likely the sales manager type is best for the new reality of buyer control yet the deal manager dominates in many organizations. (Higgins)

Another long-standing but unproductive practice in sales management concerns the Director of Sales who spend the majority of their time with low performers, assuming the top performers don’t need assistance. One of the most American beliefs is that with time, assistance and effort a low achiever can be turned into an average-achiever or better. Perhaps, this extends from the parental advice given to children—with additional effort the “C” in math could become a “B”. The parental focus was on what was NOT achieved rather than on what WAS achieved i.e., the child may have gotten A’s in English and history but the focus was on the lower grade. It is not surprising this philosophy exists as well in the workplace. After being courted and hired because of one’s ability, the star or above average performer is no longer the focus of the DOS as it is assumed that the individual will naturally continue being better or best. It is assumed the star, left to their own devices, will, with just a word of praise here or there and an annual bonus, continue to ascend. This practice does not generally achieve the expected results and to change it will require a profound alteration in the thinking

about what it takes to build a team. A modern viewpoint has stars receiving as much or more attention than others on the team and mediocre performers moved off the team making a strong statement about what leadership values and supports. The change in focus from the marginal performer to the star salesperson will ultimately result in exponential returns.

By providing intangible support, the top performer will sense greater connectivity and loyalty that will inspire and strengthen their determination to excel. The DOS functions as a leader-coach assisting exceptional sales associates in creating a well-reasoned strategic plan furnishing the tangible direction needed to determine a game plan for success.

CHAPTER 5: THE MODERN HOTEL SALES SKILL SET

Selling is a complex series of inter-related activities—pre-sale, sale and post-sale—that determine individual and organizational success. Recent societal, economic, and technological change has resulted in acknowledgement that each activity requires extensive preparation and practice, specific knowledge and information, dedicated resources, advanced measurement techniques and constant leadership. For most of the 20th century, a charismatic personality combined with a killer instinct backed by an unlimited expense account were the tools of the star sales persona. A hard-charging, hale, hearty good fella who could wine and dine, schmooze a client and learn about personal milestones (birthdays and anniversaries) was in constant demand throughout the industry. Today, the skills and abilities of a professional sales associate are far more extensive, requiring independent and divergent thinking, strategic collaboration, insight, analytical reasoning (the ability to discover and interpret patterns in data and behavior) and financial and revenue acumen. A college degree is now the first element in the formal training of a sales professional. Training is no longer a one-off or crisis activity as learning is now accepted as a life-long activity to maintain and improve relevant skills.

SALES AND HIGHER EDUCATION

One aspect of sales training that must be given greater attention is the relationship between sales and higher education. As hotel sales continues to evolve as a discipline, a profession and a functional area of the organization, a collaboration of industry and faculty is needed to create the coursework defining a sales concentration for an undergraduate degree in hospitality or general business. An expanded partnership should result in the development of courses integrating the advanced knowledge and skills that reflect the

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Irene Peter, American writer

changing elements of selling and buying. The first hotel sales course at an American University was developed and taught in 1940 by the future President of Hotel Sales Managers Association (today HSMIA) Adrian W. Phillips. Fifty-four juniors and seniors from the Cornell University Hotel Department (today the School of Hotel Administration) attended the course on hotel sales promotion (Dorf). It was considered a turning point for the profession, the association and the industry.

Considering the first course was established 75 years ago, it would be reasonable to conclude the discipline would be firmly established amongst the leading hospitality undergraduate programs. Yet, during discussions at HSMIA Board Meetings and Roundtables, alumnus of various hospitality programs indicated there was not a sales course at their alma mater. Uncertain whether the point of view was localized or widespread among hotel programs, a review of the websites of ten undergraduate hotel programs was conducted. The ten programs were chosen from a list published in 2009 of the top 100 global hotel programs (Severt). The curriculum information provided on the website for each undergraduate degree (Table x) was reviewed to determine if a required, elective or concentration course with the word "sales" in the title was currently part of the program of study. The review revealed few courses specifically addressing sales and none of the ten pro-

grams required a sales course as part of the undergraduate degree in hospitality or hotel management (Table xx).

Seven of the ten programs offered an elective course, of which four were focused on sales



Table x Top 10 Hospitality and Tourism Programs (based on study by Severt)

1. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (hotelschool.shtm.polyu.edu.hk/eng/academic/programs_overview.jsp?ID=23&SA=posthk&Tag=1&Program=bsc&SubProg=hm)
2. Cornell University (www.hotelschool.cornell.edu/academics/ugrad/requirements/index.html)
3. University of Nevada at Las Vegas (www.unlv.edu/hotel)
4. Pennsylvania State University (www.hhdev.psu.edu/syllabus/Default.aspx?Dept=HRIM&type=u)
5. University of Surrey (www.surrey.ac.uk/shtm/study/index.htm)
6. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (www.htm.pamplin.vt.edu/index.html)
7. Purdue University (www.purdue.edu/hhs/htm/undergraduate/index.php)
8. Oklahoma State University (humansciences.okstate.edu/hrad/content/view/22/41/)
9. Michigan State University (hospitalitybusiness.broad.msu.edu/files/2013/03/hbcurriculumguide.pdf)
10. University of Central Florida (hospitality.ucf.edu/academics/undergraduate-programs/)

basics (based on course description), one was specific to resort sales, and two included sales with another topic (e.g. service). Three programs included a sales course in a concentration area. The scope of the courses reflected the concentration area—conventions, foodservice or events.

Admittedly the research had a small sample, given the 100's of undergraduate programs in hospitality management throughout the globe,

Table xx: Hospitality Courses with Sales in the Title

Elective Course	Concentration Course
Understanding and Managing Hospitality Sales	Convention Sales and Service (not required)
Hospitality Sales (2 programs)	Event Sales
Hospitality & Tourism Sales & Service	Foodservice Marketing, Sales, and Distribution
Hospitality Sales and Catering	
Hospitality Sales Process	
Resort Sales Tactics and Strategies	

however, the programs listed as the top 10 in 2009 are still recognized as leading programs and are held in esteem by the industry. The fact that these programs do not require a course specific to sales to earn a degree is likely indicative of other programs and of the issues surrounding sales within the industry. Further research on this would be relevant and useful elements of an industry-higher education partnership. As well, it could serve as the basis for the creation of defined curriculum that addresses the skills and abilities necessary for a career in hospitality sales would highlight the importance of the discipline.

UPDATED SALES ABILITIES

Addressing change and responding to difference requires different thinking on the part of the sales professional. In order to think differently, the preparation and training for sales must expand and encompass expanded sales attributes. Soft skills remain as a portion of the knowledge and abilities needed to succeed in sales but no longer in a dominating position. Hard skills such as divergent thinking, strategic collaboration, insight, analysis, financial and revenue acumen, are necessary if the sales professional is to meet and exceed expectations.

DIVERGENT THINKING

It may seem unusual that a form of thinking is included in the modern sales professional skill set yet with the variety of issues, changes and disruption that must be considered it is a necessary component. The terms were first defined in the late sixties by J.P. Guilford, a psychologist renown for the Structure of Intellect (SI) theory. Divergent thinking allows one to see multiple possibilities and opportunities and be willing to take a risk by shifting perspective. The counterpart of divergent thinking is convergent thinking. Convergent thinkers function on the premise that there

are a limited number of solutions to solve a problem, seeking to work within established confines to find the "right" or established answer. Hence, a convergent thinker is most comfortable with standards and SOPs, with tradition and status quo. Convergent thinkers can run the plays they have practiced while divergent thinkers can run the plays and see the court/field/arena so as play develops they can adjust. It the best answer versus options. Possessing the capability to apply divergent thinking (e.g., looking for more options) to an issue and then taking the various options identified and switching to convergent thinking (e.g., finding the "best" option) should be the goal.

Some individuals are naturally divergent thinkers (e.g., Albert Einstein, Thomas Edison) while others must develop the ability. Expanding one's style of thinking is an achievable goal using websites such as luminosity.com and the Noah test and reverse thinking techniques to add an additional layer to your thinking. The Noah test and reverse thinking are detailed later in this section.

As examples of the thinking styles consider two opportunities in the hospitality industry: selling to travelers under the age of 35 and providing a blended experience to business travelers. The first opportunity, selling to travelers under the age of 35, there are any number of ways to approach this situation and depending on the dominant thinking style in sales leadership, the response of a convergent thinker could be to target one aspect of the under 35 behavior, use of technology since it is often presented as the key to this market. There is nothing wrong with this choice but it does indicate the desire to find a right approach. A divergent sales leader would conduct a session to describe the needs and wants of the under 35 traveler, making certain



to include sales personnel of that age. Among the ideas that could surface would be that this group no longer views travel as a benefit to be experienced occasionally but see it as

a basic human right and therefore a regular lifetime activity. They are far better educated and include travel as a part of a normal budget. Since they have experienced greater accessibility and lower costs of transportation all their lives, they see it as a natural aspect of life. While there are far more points to be considered, the process used by the divergent thinker provides a series of possibilities to build a strategy around and it is likely that technology will be part of the strategy.

The second opportunity has mutated over the past two decades. The clarity attached to the purpose of travel has blurred and the line dividing business travel from leisure travel has diminished as people experience multipurpose lives. Today, business travelers are perfect customers for quick, convenient services previously marketed and sold to leisure travelers. In hotels lead by either convergent or divergent thinkers, massages, facials, exercise, and visits to museums have been refashioned to meet a variety of timeframes from a 5-minute break to a two-hour vacation for business travelers. But the divergent thinking is demonstrated when the same hotel looks for similar opportunity with leisure travelers. While on vacation, the leisure segment expect certain business amenities and services including Wi-Fi (for enter-

tainment and to maintain connection to business) and public spaces that readily support informal business exchange. It is being able to see beyond the one solution and consider how alike and different the two segments really are when it comes to design of rooms, the offering of services, hours of operations, and develop different approaches to sales, marketing, and communication.

There is a quality to professionals who seamlessly engage the fullness of their intellect. Better thinkers embrace difference, seek time to think, and are not concerned about ideas that are unusual. Perhaps the concept of working consciously to develop analytical, divergent thinking skills is the greatest delineation between what was expected of sales professionals from the past and those going forward.

When hiring or reviewing a DOS for promotion, more emphasis should be placed on the candidate's ability to think, to struggle with an idea, no matter how uncomfortable. It takes boldness to shift thinking. It requires an internal mental strength and clarity of thought to move people to think differently, to assist them in realizing the real challenge. Think differently is necessary for sales organizations to respond to the changing business environment.

Think Differently

The phrase think outside the box (TOTB) has gained catch-phrase status in the business world. Sales professionals are continuously urged to think outside the box to sell more, to increase revenues, and to grow the bottom line. But seldom are these same professionals given the tools to adjust the process they use to confront an issue and so the clarion call of TOTB echoes through corridors when the same actions produce the same results. It

rolls off the tongue with conviction but if the organization is structured to avoid risk and individuals are discouraged from viewing issues from a different lens, should thinking will never happen. To actually think differently, the organization must allow professionals to see, hear, and interact in a contrasting fashion to their norm. Leadership must engage in risk and innovation that challenges the status quo and establishes expectations for thinking differently.

To think differently requires professionals to see what really is, not what they have been programmed to see or want to see. To think outside the norm means that it is okay not to accept something at face value, instead to deeply listen, ask questions and consider a different approach. It means that rather than dismiss an idea or concept because it is different or difficult, that one be brave enough to consider that which is not the norm. Among the most crucial of abilities going forward is being able to struggle with an idea, or to question conventional wisdom.

The Noah Test

For many professionals and organizations, determining the actual issue or problem can be the greatest challenge. Different techniques can be used to break away from one-dimensional thinking. One technique, called the Noah test, is based on determining and understanding the actual challenge facing the area or in this case the biblical character Noah. The creator of this test remains unknown and at its root the 'test' encourages creative, divergent thinking. To determine the actual issue for Noah consider what it was he had to do to be deemed successful: was it to build an ark, or to predict when the rain would fall, or to get all life forms on board? To answer this one must see beyond the first or easiest response—to build an ark, as the ark is the vehicle to meet

his challenge. The question to ask is why he had to build the ark. It would not matter if he built an ark that was the best, biggest, and the fastest as such attributes would not meet the challenge. Thankfully, he wasn't asked to predict the rain, as he didn't have any way of knowing when it would begin (a similar issue facing professional weather forecasters even today). Nor would anyone remember his prediction was correct for all would be lost if he focused on the wrong problem. Which leaves the third possibility, to get two of every species on board which for Noah was his only challenge. This exercise embodies what thinking outside the box is really about—understanding the true challenge or issue facing the discipline or the organization.

Reverse Thinking

Pushing a product or selling a service is so last century! The changing mindset of customers and employees requires sales professionals who are bold and brave...creative and thoughtful...agile and assertive. Sales leadership should be able to redirect the energy of the team and assist them in addressing long-standing issues. To accomplish this, leadership must be willing to adjust their own thinking and try different methods. One straightforward approach is a form of reverse thinking allowing the team to break out of self-imposed restraints and imagine unconventional outcomes.

An exercise that can be utilized to accomplish this is a technique known as reverse thinking. Often challenges are a variation on an old theme so solutions are stale and in the end do not address the problem. When faced with a challenge that reappears on a regular basis rather than rehash ideas that didn't work, ask the sales team to address the opposite problem. This breaks the staid mindset surrounding the issues and stimulates new thinking.

Start off with a challenge that does not relate to the situation and will demonstrate for the group what is being asked of them. Explain that this is a brainstorming activity and the more creative they are the better. Give them an easy example to set the stage: Ask the group to think of three viable ways to eat MORE (the issue of course is how to eat less but most people get caught up in the angst of diets). You want creative but realistic ideas. Next, ask them to think about an issue that is related to the industry, an issue that needs to be addressed because clients expect a different experience and technology exists that can reenergize an old process. This should be one process addressed repeatedly with varying levels of success (or failure). Have the team to think boldly and creatively to identify three ways to check a guest in WITHOUT requiring a stop at the front desk. The goal is to gain group engagement with no one holding back or being overly concerned with getting the right answer but instead giving real thought to the concern. Finally, when the team is into thinking differently you should ask a question about a long-term problem that diminishes team success. It can be an organizational, structural, or individual situation such as “identify one work custom or routine the team or you WILL NOT continue.” This type of question may take more time to think about as it requires a concerted effort but the approach should still be lighter so thinking is not curtailed. With practice the team will embrace the new approach to solving old problems. It requires focus, desire and a leader who understands that thinking differently takes time.

Time to Think

A major problem of modern business life is the limited amount of time most professionals have to actually think. Meetings, emails, phone calls and text messages dominate daily work life crowding out time needed to

consider, review and plan. Add the prevailing expectation of instant decisions and responses by employees, bosses, and clients, it is no wonder that decisions appear haphazard and off target.

Technology has muddled the ebb and flow of communication, placing instantaneous response ahead of thinking. While it may seem as if this is just the ‘cost’ of being a professional, it can be different but it requires action, dedication and even courage to carve out time to think. To assist in making the change to more thinking and less reacting consider a simple exercise that if adopted can produce enormous results. Be forewarned, the exercise requires substantial discipline and effort and could be viewed by others as unusual or an inappropriate use of time. There is no better demonstration of what a company values than for a professional to visibly indicate one need’s to set aside time to think.

Change Exercise: *Most professionals have little time to actually think, to plan, to review. To change adopt the following plan:*

1. Schedule three 20-minute thinking sessions per week on your calendar.
2. At the time of your thinking session, put a note on your door that reads ‘disturb only in an emergency’, shut your door, turn off every device (do not answer the phone or read an email or text message), set a timer for 20 minutes, and then begin to think about an issue.
3. Select one issue or problem confronting you or your team. Focus only on that. Ask yourself, what do you know for certain, is the concern adequately defined, is it the correct issue, what information is missing, are the proper people involved in addressing the concern?

4. *Do not attempt to solve the issue, rather think about one aspect you identified giving it your full attention. At the end of the 20 minutes determine if that aspect requires further consideration. Keep track of what you discovered and where you should begin in your next session (this should not take more than five minutes).*

At first you may be overwhelmed about where to start, a bit anxious trying to figure out what to do but if you keep at it, if you do not accept interruptions, you will begin to effectively use the time. Just like physical exercise you must exercise or discipline your brain. After three weeks, you will look forward to the activity as you and be able to more effectively utilize the time. Ultimately you will make better decisions; you will be more fully prepared to find creative solutions and innovative ideas. And you will be able to focus your thinking in-group settings demonstrating greater clarity and offering better solutions.

STRATEGIC COLLABORATOR

The sales professional must move far beyond being a helper, an assistant, a satisfier, or a controller to that of a strategic collaborator. Strategic collaboration is the ability to develop the support of an integrated internal team in order to successfully source meaningful extensions of current demand, to source and value potential clients, and to extend connections with current clients. To work beyond traditional boundaries requires that sales professionals think differently about teamwork, negotiating agreement among unlikely colleagues, and promoting expansion of cross-departmental teams.

An integrated team has members from each of the functional areas of the hotel—IT, Revenue Management, Finance, and Marketing—and the operational areas (Rooms Division, F&B,

Catering and Meetings, Entertainment). The purpose of the team is to provide better business intelligence for sales. The integrated team becomes a source of reliable business intelligence (BI) for the sales professional. The outcome of useful BI arms the sales professional with ideas and plans to produce meaningful extensions of current demand, extend their connections with current clients, source and value potential clients, and identify the decision maker. Sales professionals must be able to effectively manage demand to create value for the client and the hotel company. To do this, sales personnel must develop broad-based financial management knowledge.

INSIGHT

Insight combines art and science, hard and soft skill and combines the conscious and unconscious, instinct and knowledge, experience and analysis. Connecting the dots, seeing the big picture are phrases used to categorize the ability of gaining or seeking insight. Such a definition focuses on the “art” of insight, which combines informal learning techniques such as observation and intuition, qualities that many salespeople utilize on a constant basis.

But, the segment of insight that requires “science”, a systematic approach to understanding the client and the organization is not a common skill for salespeople. In contrast to the art of insight, the science side is based on knowledge gathered from applying statistical and financial acumen to hard data to produce useful analysis. Scientifically, insight is the ability to research information, to synthesize what is found and turn it into competitive advantage. Being able to piece together disparate information and develop responses and strategies that create value is a rare and valuable skill. The ability to turn information into useful analysis relates to conceptual and divergent thinking abilities. Developing this

skill requires a concerted effort and is a crucial sales tool going forward.

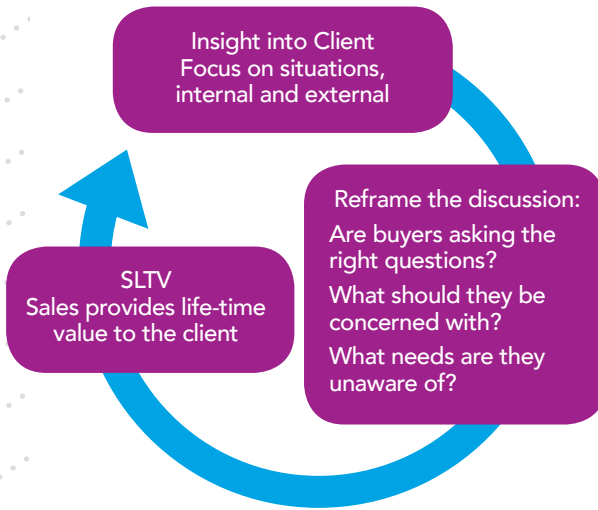
The layers of reasoning necessary to formulate comprehension and application of information demands the sales associate think on a creative and divergent scale, take thoughtful risks, work in a collaborative manner and shift communication styles based on the needs of the client (see Graphic x). The emphasis on communication must be centered on what is best for the client. Just as time and funds are spent managing the on-line content so an equal effort must be given to in-person content delivery.

Graphic x: The Science of Insight Requires...

- Ability to consistently think differently. Perspective matters. Are the right questions being asked?
- Ability to take a well-reasoned risk. Imagine beyond. Are the ideas novel or recycled? Are what ifs proposed and answered?
- Ability to work in a collaborative manner. Complexity of the sale is behind the scenes. Is what the client sees and hears straightforward, useful and timely?
- Ability to communicate in the style best for the client. Content delivery matters. Technology is a tool not the focus. Are listening deeply and thoughtfully a common practice? Is the form of communication based on client needs?

Insight that combines art and science enables the salesperson to address internal and external situations that ultimately impact the client. Understanding in greater detail what the client is facing from competitors, their consumers and within their own organization means that the salesperson can reframe the discussion ensuring that the client is asking the right questions, focusing on areas of concern and gain greater awareness of unmet needs.

An insightful sales associate will produce distinct value to the buyer. To accomplish this, one element that must advance is the measure utilized to determine client value. The conventional revenue measure that hotels use to determine the value of the buyer over time and to decide the appropriate levels of service is customer lifetime value (LTV). As buyer control has been altered so should the procedures employed to determine value in the buying process. LTV is a one-directional, business-focused measurement that while useful ignores the demand of buyers to be "first among equals". By reframing the discussion and finding ways to demonstrate the uniqueness and importance of an individual client, the sales associate offers distinctive sales lifetime value or SLTV, an approach offering different connections. By providing clients with an understanding that insight offered by the salesperson can provide of a lifetime of value, the hotel establishes a revised virtuous sales cycle (see Graphic x). The benefits for the client are accentuated when the salesperson provides information and suggestions far beyond the tactical needs of one occasion. The redefined relationship recognizes the need for constant two-way interchanges of promises and delivery and reveals to the client a depth of value encompassing both sides of the relationship.

Graphic x: The Virtuous Sales Cycle

The virtuous sales cycle positions the sales professional as a source of reliable analysis for the clients. By providing timely, useful, and creative information—ideas, trends, and facts—the sales professional encourages clients to step beyond their comfort zone, to consider solutions that are more strategic and creative. Many sales organizations offer similar solutions regardless of the situation. This has become the blight of the sales profession. Rather than consider what the real issue is, often sales personnel are ill advised to respond to any and all RFP's. Cookie cutter responses have a high fail rate while innovative analysis; the product of adroit and resourceful teams will effectively create reliable value for the client and ultimately for the company.

ANALYSIS: FINDING MEANINGFUL PATTERNS

Understanding the needs and wants of clients reflects the art and science aspect of sales. The art portion combines intuition with charm, graciousness with sincerity to put the client at ease, to establish rapport. For many this became the essence of sales. But today, the sales professional must be as capable of incorporating a scientific or analytical understanding of buyer behavior. Finding meaningful patterns in trends and practice, being able to analyze what is occurring in society and using it effectively is the key to a successful sales strategy.

One method for turning trends and realities into meaningful information incorporates a three-step process of inquiry: what is known about the current state, what does it convey and what are the implications for sales. The first step, what is known, combines trends and realities about one aspect of the buyer, be it social, technological, economic or a combination of the elements. Whether the particulars are gathered from articles, blogs, conversations, etc., it is the facts and figures or statements that are the focus of this step; as it is about bringing together the information that describes the consumer. The second step, what does it convey, extracts the meaning of what is gathered and provides the basis for why the trend matters. It is not enough to identify trends so the second step is the most crucial as it turns statistics into analysis. The third step, what are the implications for sales, presents an analysis based upon the rational from step two. This step must paint a picture so that others can understand and utilize the logic and analysis.



Two examples are provided to demonstrate the method. In the examples the implications are presented as a specific individual, a format that distills the data in a fashion that speaks to a mixed audience. While, the implications presented are a broad interpretation when doing this for a property, region or brand, this step would also include more focused, targeted consequences.

Example 1
What is known about the current state:

The United Nations goal of universal primary education by 2015 is being achieved as the enrollment rates in developing regions is rapidly improving with 90 percent of all children enrolled in grade school in 2010 (United Nations). In the U.S. women are 47 percent of the labor force, compared to 38 percent in 1970 (Eleven Facts). Younger women (age 25 to 34) are 20 percent more likely to have a bachelor's degree than men of the same age (Eleven Facts). In the U.S., the average marrying age for women is 26.9, for men it's 29.8, according to a 2011 report by Pew Research Center (Wang). Today, just 20% of adults ages 18 to 29 are married, compared with 59% in 1960. Over the course of the past 50 years, the median age at first marriage has risen by about six years for both men (from 22.8 to 28.7) and women (20.3 to 26.5) (Wang).

What does it convey:

Monumental societal progress transpired in the past half century from the availability of education throughout society, which has translated into broader experiences at all life stages, extended reference groups, increased mobility, later first marriage for heterosexual couples, and diminishment of gender-defined roles. Children in western countries, especially those in America and West Europe, now have more and varied experiences at a younger age. Many activities (air travel, living in a foreign country) and decisions (significant purchases, joining virtual communities) previously experienced for the first time as an adult are now the norm for children. Life is far more comprehensive with unlimited scope regardless of age, income, status or location.

What does it mean for sales:

Alex grew up in an American middle class family in a small mid-west town and is 25 years old. She has lived in Australia twice, once during college and once after college, and traveled throughout Europe with her boyfriend for three months. Neither of her parents has traveled outside the U.S. She works freelance for sports events companies, is writing a book on her picky eating quirks, manages an apartment complex in exchange for rent, and does not own a car. As a freelancer she travels to mega-sporting events all over the U.S. where she handles star players, drives the latest vehicles of the car companies who sponsor the events while staying in 2-star hotels. She is not ready to marry but lives with her boyfriend who works for a minor league baseball team: he is on the road six months of the year. At her age, her parents were married, building a house and planning to start a family. She cannot imagine settling down for at least 3 more years if then as she is determined to start a business and continue to find her way in life. She has plans and goals but is not

following the patterns of the previous generations in her family. As a buyer, she wants to be recognized as successful, knowledgeable and a desirable client. She does not expect that her age or gender will be part of the buying equation. She believes she has earned the right to be taken seriously. She will be in decision-making positions earlier in her career than previous generations.

Example 2

What is known about the current state:

Today, movement through life happens at a varying pace and direction, much of which can be attributed to the influence of the boomer generation. Perhaps, the greatest change for teen and young adult boomers was the expansion of choice for women in society. For most of the first half of the 20th century the great majority (72%) of adults over 18 were married (Wang), the introduction in 1960 of the contraceptive known simply as the Pill freed women from long-standing strictures and allowed them to move beyond the singular wife/mother role and venture into aspects of business, politics and society traditionally thought of as male dominated. Boomers, male and female, by and far left home at the age of 18. While many went to college (likely the first to do so in their family) just as many went to work or were drafted into the military and served in the Vietnam war. Boomers rebelled against the formality and homogeneity of their parent's life by growing long hair (men), wearing blue jeans, listening to rock 'n roll on a transistor radio and embracing the freedom that came with the ownership of a car. Divorce is now accepted in society and a recent study indicates divorce rates among boomers have doubled since 1990 (Roberts).

What does it convey:

One of the more extreme social changes is the rejection and reduction of a linear life as seen in the lives of boomers. Since the start of the Industrial Revolution there was a similarity in how most Americans lived, generally following a script that was handed down from generation to generation. While one's life may have been "easier" than their ancestors due to progress, there was uniformity to life's rhythm with milestones replicated in subsequent generations: one was born, went to school (progressively for longer periods), went to work outside the home if male (primarily in trades positions until the mid-20th century), got married, had children, bought a house, joined a social or fraternal group (e.g., Elks, Odd Fellows), took an annual one or two-week vacation (driving to a national park or a visit to the home of a loved one), became a grandparent, retired after years in the job, and died. While there was some variation, it was limited and if one dared to divorce or was able to move beyond their station it was clearly not the norm. There was a rhythm, a linear or sequential unfolding of life. In the last quarter of the 20th century variation began to creep into the sequential nature of existence with the rise of divorce, buying on credit, increasing levels of education, and greater awareness that life in other locales was different.

What are the implications for sales:

Sherrie is a baby boomer born in 1947; she owns a home, is divorced, lives with her long-time male partner, and golfs every week. She was the first in her family to graduate from college. Her mother rarely worked outside the home, never learned to drive a car and relied upon her husband as the sole supporter of the family. Early in Sherrie's career she earned her master's degree in order to secure her position as a primary school administrator. For years she worked a full- and part-time job in order to live the life she wanted following her divorce. She retired in 2007 and went back to work full-time in 2009 when the recession substantially reduced her retirement funds. Ask her now when she will retire and her answer is evasive, as she can't quite admit to herself that life has thrown her a curve. After 40 years as a schoolteacher she was supposed to be able to kick back and enjoy life with her husband but that hasn't gone as expected and planned. She will not be counted out and expects that the travel industry continue to court her, to value her and to treat her with respect. She will judge whether products are designed to meet her needs as she changes and whether employees view her differently as she ages. She will not be devalued simply because she is getting older. Today boomers are demonstrating age is not the determining factor for lifestyle choices as witnessed by the desire of 60-something's to avoid the stigma of retirement. The rising trend of leaving one's career to take a position that feeds one's soul or contributes to the betterment of humankind has redefined the expectations and choices of a once narrowly defined stage of life. Freed from the traditional demands but wanting to stay vital now extends well into the eight decade of life.

FINANCIAL AND REVENUE ACUMEN

Understanding the principles and language of accounting, statistics and revenue management is a basic expectation for any hotel sales associate. In order to work with colleagues throughout the hotel and to adequately serve clients, sales personnel must be comfortable talking about revenue realities, demand forecasts, ROI or cost analysis. To underscore the changing requirements for success, going forward it is expected that a sales professional is able to organize and analyze data and turn it into useful analysis for both the client and the firm. This will provide assurance internally and externally that sales is as much science as it is art. Value is a layered, complex measure and to appropriately demonstrate value, sales leadership must:

- Adroitly address diminishing operating margins
- Confront a low growth environment in developed markets
- Identify new competitors from outside the industry who are not as easily understood
- Develop methods to counter the fact that competition moves at an exponential pace.

CHAPTER 6: MOVING FORWARD

The art and science of sales requires a life-long approach to education that features both the soft and hard skills to ensure a fully credentialed professional capable of leading a 21st century sales organization. The science of sales demands the sales professional demonstrate expertise in a significant number of areas from personal engagement to financial management, from strategic thinking to indefatigable energy, from joie de vivre to negotiations and consensus building.

In response to how buyers have shifted to other sources for information and advice, some hotel organizations are questioning the viability of the sales function. This reaction relegates the issue of the value of sales to that of a downsizing or cost cutting action when the real concern should be how to reinterpret the position of sales in overall customer strategy. Often when faced with unusual circumstances, leadership seeks a quick and easy fix, and since most hotels are now far leaner organizations than prior to the recession, the usual targets are already pared to the bone and any area that has not redefined itself in terms reflective of return on investment or value optimization is likely devalued by leadership. Sales has been slow to retool and often sales leadership has poorly communicated their value in terms that demonstrate comprehension and alignment with organizational strategic goals.

If the profession and the professionals in sales do not evolve, it is likely organizations will continue to look for ways to downsize or right size the area through the expanded

*To everything—turn, turn, turn
There is a season—turn, turn, turn
And a time to every purpose
under heaven*

Written by Pete Seeger in late 1950's. The lyrics are based on a biblical passage from the book of Ecclesiastes.

use of technology and third party organizations. Organizations will continue to question the appropriateness of the sales expenditure until sales redefines training and development of sales associates as a priority. Training is necessary to create sales associates who are capable of divergent thinking, strategic collaboration, insight, and financial and revenue acumen. Training must be consistent, focused and blended. Consistent refers to the fact that training should be a dynamic, progressive constant in the life of a sales professional. If grounded in the core values of the organization, training will not become the process or technique du jour as aligning training with core values ensures the department and individuals are building talents and knowledge that will support the vision and goals of the company. Focused training takes in to account the knowledge and experience (or lack thereof) of the individual, reinforces previous training and provides the tools needed to confront a changed landscape. Training that blends art and science recognizes that sales professionals must be as capable at measurement as they are at establishing connections.

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