

How to dismantle the sales machine

Is your sales management still leading by structured procedure? Does it work or are you experiencing business nightmares?

Most of us have set sales as a structured process in order to be more efficient, particularly when managing a wide number of sales reps or to get under control and make predictable the most unpredictable stage of the business. All of us have set KPI criteria and metrics to foresee ahead and make our forecasts more reliable.

As *Zygmunt Bauman* has correctly pointed out, we are living in a “**Liquid Modernity**” and it affects many of our habits. We need to shift many process and structured procedures to create a new approach in a changed era.



Brent Adamson, Matthew Dixon and Nicholas Toman figured out very well on Harvard Business Review (Nov. 2013) the real meaning of overpassing the sales process to embrace flexibility, judgment and focusing on results which are the main skills who works today's in sales. The idea is that a structured sales process has the effect to leave to salesmen a small room to exercise judgement and take choices, but it leave them to compete on price. Instead, the new environment offers to creative people to imagine new way to challenge customers with disruptive insight into their business. Customer awareness about possible solutions is much deeper than ever before; this is almost a new phenomenon as until recently clients were looking for guidance on the purchasing process. Sales reps were thoroughly informed about available solutions on the market as well as being trained in understanding every customer's needs. Today's needs are so “personal” that possible solutions must be created “on site”, so that the new environment tends to favour creative sellers who can challenge clients with disruptive insight about their business. The solution is developed after full comprehension of what a client has already concluded about its needs, and what the full perceived value of the solutions is. Offering disruptive insights and unexpected solutions requires salespeople to go through a mindset shift, and adhering to “how-to” rules doesn't work because the most effective approach often varies radically from deal to deal. Therefore the rules based culture is over.

A company's culture may support the creative approach when the management focuses on climate more than structured knowledge, when the company allows people and teams to create and share know-how and when the effort is to support organisational learning. Companies have to develop their structures in a Learning Organisation style, one which supports Human Resources on creating new know-how in a troubled era. High skilled knowledge Workers are the next sales reps who can deal with the changed environment using their self-judgment instead of rules.

How Reps Use Judgment				
Here are some of the ways reps use judgment at each step in the sales process.				
DEFINE THE OPPORTUNITY	ASSESS THE CUSTOMER'S RECEIPTIVITY TO INSIGHT	CHALLENGE THE CUSTOMER'S THINKING	BUILD CONSENSUS	CLOSE THE DEAL
Determine if the opportunity is worth the investment of time	Make informed assumptions about the customer and its needs	Judge when best to engage key decision makers and other stakeholders	Tailor responses to stakeholders' highly varied objections and reactions	Assess the buying group's understanding of what differentiates the solution from the alternatives
Hypothesize about new ways to engage the customer	Identify atypical sources of information about the customer and its assumptions	Adapt the approach in order to generate buy-in	Creatively determine ways to revise stalled deals	Know when to stand firm or acquiesce in negotiation
Infer the scope of the opportunity on the basis of limited information about the customer	Exercise patience in order to allow an opportunity to develop	Assess the worthiness of the pursuit by the basis of the customer's reaction	Encourage and arm key stakeholders to influence detractors	Identify negotiation points beyond terms and conditions

And a judgement oriented climate requires organisations to set their norms over different values and with opposite procedures: managers serve as coaches rather than operation control, the focus is on collaboration, rather than on competition and teams are evaluated on long term results rather than quarterly sales goals.

People are more likely to succeed when they are supported rather than directed. In terms of skills, the core ones come back at the top rate instead emotional intelligence, although still salient, isn't enough anymore.