



**Buying 2.0:
Traditional Selling is Passé
You must Optimize Online and Human Buying/Selling Interaction**

By Ron Snyder

Buying 2.0™ shifts the focus from trying to push a rope (to make a sale) to helping the buyer pull the rope across the goal line.

Eighty percent of the decision makers in business to business technology-related purchases identify who they will buy from- vs. being found by the seller- according to Marketing Sherpa Business Products Buyers Survey March, 2007. This is a huge change from even a few years ago. Yet, many sellers have not changed the way they interact with their buyers sufficiently for today's empowered buyer. And they will pay the price- in lost sales, profits and market share!

Today's empowered buyer expects to find a wealth of information when they visit a website. Too many companies miss the opportunity to guide the buyer through the buying process.

Web 2.0 technology enables website visitors to interact more effectively with the website. In addition, it enables social media in which people can interact with each other and share information more easily (such as pictures, videos, text and even collaborate on projects).

Sales 2.0 describes the way many companies have harnessed web 2.0 technology to make sales and marketing more effective. We believe that the real benefit of Sales 2.0 is that it can make it easier for today's buyer to get the information they need when they want it to make the buying process easier.

We call this Buying 2.0™.



Buying 2.0™ uses the latest (Sales 2.0) technology and best practices to accelerate sales results by making it easier to buy.

In the complex, business-to-business sale, you need to optimize both online and human interactions to speed the sales process and capture buyers that might have been lost. Sales and marketing teams are often more comfortable at one end of the online/human interaction spectrum. Adding components on the other end can make a huge difference in the pace and cost of new sales generation.



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Human touch is more important where there is more complexity, higher investment, more impact on the business- both in people and dollars. Are your efforts designed to put the prospect and salesperson together at the moment the prospect wants that interaction?

The web provides greater reach and lower cost per interaction. It, also allows the buyer to get information on their own terms, timeframe and location. Most buyers prefer to remain anonymous until they have identified a compelling event/need to act now to solve a problem. Then their need to engage with a sales person can arise quickly and you must be prepared to respond (i.e. via click-to-call, chat or online meeting). Beware of when “self-service” becomes “no service.” At that moment, an opportunity can be lost- and you won’t even know it!

It is important to have a clear target market and make your content very relevant for them. For example, what early adopters are looking for is very different than what will resonate with people in the early or late majority. Your website is your front door. Is it inviting and credible with your audience?

Making the right tools easily accessible is critical. These include self-driven ROI or configuration tools, competitive comparisons, industry expert comparisons, user ratings and feedback.

Marketing Sherpa’s and CMP TechWeb’s March 2008 survey indicates that online user communities are the source of information that had the most influence on technology purchasing decisions. In the new world, it is critical that you join the conversation and are willing to invest in free education (no strings attached) up front.

Finally, you want to leverage the full range of online media? Video is very hot because it engages the viewer’s emotions and imagination. Podcasts, Blogs, articles, etc. provide a great way to demonstrate your thought-leadership, which is an increasingly important element of the marketing mix. This will build your credibility and keep you on top of the rapid changes in your marketplace.

Quick Assessment

- Are you generating enough leads to make your sales goals?
- How well do you execute integrated campaigns- for example, direct mail, e-mail and telemarketing that sales force is ready to jump on?
- How well is your web presence optimized for your target market to get information they need in a way they trust? Does your online/offline style resonate with them?
- How well do your human and online sales interactions/tools assist buyers in moving through each stage of the buying/sales process?
- How many “touches” does it take to close a sale? How many touches could you eliminate or automate with an optimized human/online approach?

The next step is to identify the critical gaps to fill- to accelerate your sales results!



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What can you do?

It is critical that you respond quickly and effectively. Here is what you can do.

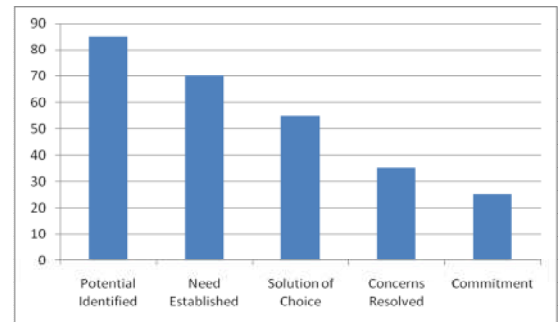
1. Ruthlessly pursue your “sweet spot.”

It is critical to have a clear target market that product development, marketing, sales and support actively pursue and are prepared to win in. Using this to build all processes and product plans around greatly improves efficiency and effectiveness. Though it is tempting to pursue deals opportunistically, this usually requires significant effort to do special things to win the business. It is important that these decisions be made consciously- carefully selecting new market segments to pursue- to avoid de-priming the pump for the new deal of the week.

2. Assess your current sales and marketing approach.

This will enable you to identify the best place to invest your time and money. One way to do this is to create three graphs:

- Number of opportunities at each stage
- Dollar value of opportunities by stage
- Average time in each stage



Looking at these graphs will reveal where the process is weakest. These will show that you need more leads, need to convert more leads to opportunities or more opportunities to sales. You will need to investigate what is causing the weakness indicated in the graphs... is it a problem with how well your product offering, marketing, sales or support processes resonate with your target market.

3. Identify (Sales 2.0) technology and best practices to accelerate the buying.

Investigate the tools available in the specific area of the marketing/sales/buying process identified above- to streamline and improve your buyer’s experience.

Also, look for how people are using these tools and other ways they are interacting with their customers that you can leverage.

4. Integrate the tools and approach into your process.

You can have the best tools in the world, but if they are not set up to support your process and make it easier for the buyer, it will not produce the results that are possible. It is so important that you assess and fine-tune your sales and marketing processes before you automate them. Then you want to make sure the tools are set up to streamline those processes.

5. Develop collateral and selling tools needed to accelerate the process.

Through your review of the sales process, you will find that there are a few selling tools at each stage in the process that your top people use. Take these and make them available to everyone on the team. In addition, there are likely to be a few



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new tools that will accelerate that stage of the process. Develop these tools and train them on how to use these tools most effectively.

6. Work with your team to ensure adoption.

If you want this effort to reap on-going results, you must make sure people adopt the new tools and approaches into their daily/weekly habits. To do this:

- Be sure it is clear that management supports and uses the new tools/methods
- Have a clear plan with roles and responsibilities
- Recognize and reward successes delivered via the new tools/methods

Optimizing your Online and Human Sales Interactions:

- ▶▶ Increases sales, revenue
- ▶▶ Reduces the cost of sales and marketing
- ▶▶ Decreases churn (loss of customers)
- ▶▶ Improves return on sales and marketing efforts

These results are achieved by:

- ▶▶ Improving market awareness
- ▶▶ Generating more qualified leads- enabling the qualification process
- ▶▶ Accelerating the buyers through the process
- ▶▶ Increasing average deal size- increasing perceived value vs. cost
- ▶▶ Helping customers become proficient using the product/service
- ▶▶ Understanding and incorporating buyers' needs into product plans

About Ron Snyder

President of Breakthrough, Inc.

For the past 18 years, Ron has helped companies dramatically improve their sales and marketing results in complex selling environments. Results include:

- Achieving sales goals
- Generating qualified leads
- Improving conversion rates
- Accelerating sales process velocity
- Controlling costs of sales and marketing



He has worked with industry leaders, such as HP, Cisco, Synopsys, Siemens, Philips and rapidly-growing companies such as NetSuite, Zeus Technology, Exodus Communications & Macromedia to achieve dramatic improvements in sales results.

Prior to that, in his 11 years at Hewlett-Packard, Ron was consistently recognized as a top performer in sales, marketing and management roles related to computer, software and medical solutions. He was successful in winning large, complex sales, bringing products to market and managing cross-functional teams.