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16A Journey, Suite 200
Aliso Viejo, CA 92656-3317

toll-free 877-626-2776
local calls 949-859-4040
fax 949-855-2973

MANAonline.org

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maximizing sales in the

communication age.

Business Trends Every Salesperson Should Know



EDITORIAL | DANIEL BURRUS

Successful salespeople know that in order to stay on top, they need to keep abreast of trends and changes in their industry. Only then can they stand out and be a true solutions provider for their prospects and customers. Therefore, the more you understand and adapt to today's current business trends, the better your sales will be — today and in the future.



DANIEL BURRUS

Daniel Burrus, author of six books including *Technotrends*, is a leading technology forecaster and business strategist who has established a worldwide reputation for predicting technology driven trends and their impact on the world of business. For more information on his services and products, visit burrus.com or call 262-367-0949.

Every industry and profession goes through changes, and the sales profession is no different. Just because a certain sales technique or mindset worked in the past doesn't mean it'll work today. To be a top-performing salesperson today and in the future, you need to continually adapt to both market and social conditions. With that in mind, there are six new business trends taking place — all of which affect salespeople in every industry. **Understand what the trends are and how to maximize them so you can reap the rewards of a successful sales career.**

Your past success will increasingly hold you back.

(Past success is the enemy.) People who are in sales long-term tend to be successful. Realize, though, that success is your worst enemy. When you're at the top and doing well, you're really just trying to keep up and meet demand. Having so many sales knocking at your door lulls you into a false sense of security. As such, you're not looking at enough future opportunities because you're too busy reaping the rewards of the current opportunities. You're not sowing the seeds of future success, and that's setting you up for a fall. An old saying goes, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." In today's world we need to rework that statement to be: "If it works, it's obsolete." For example, if you just bought the latest laptop, is the next newer and better version already in existence and about to be released to the public? You bet! Remember that rapid obsolescence isn't just about products. It's about how we do our business too.

Technology-driven change will dramatically accelerate.

(Rapid change is your best friend.) It's human nature to protect and defend the status quo. However, you have to understand that technology is changing the future, your customers' behavior, and your company's reality. That means if you don't change, you'll be soon out of a job. As a salesperson, you need to embrace change and make it your best friend rather than fight it and hold tight to the way things were. So how do you make rapid change your best friend? You spend some time thinking about where the changes that are impacting you and your customers are going. Remember that change causes uncertainty in customers' minds. You can bring certainty to your customers when you are confident in where change is going. You can lead your customers through the change, causing them to view you as more than just a salesperson, but as a solutions provider and trusted advisor.

Time is increasing in value. (Time is the currency of the 21st Century.) Increasingly time is becoming more and more important to people. Why? We have an aging demographic in the United States, with 78 million Baby Boomers. And time gets more valuable as you get older because you have less of it. Additionally, the world has become more complex with much more for people to do with their time. Today we have iPods, cell phones, the Internet and a host of other technologies that didn't exist when the Baby Boomers were babies. There's so much more going on and we're connected in so many more ways that everyone is increasingly strapped for time. With that in mind, the last thing you want to do in sales is seem like you're taking someone's time. Instead, you want to be giving them time. You want your customers to feel that talking to you is actually saving them time. Think about all the time wasters your customers might experience: long wait times for service, long hold times on the phone, long delivery times for products. The list is virtually endless. Such time wasters hurt your sales and profits. Therefore, make sure you have the processes in place that will keep customers from wasting time. When you can prove that you're a time saver, people will choose you over the competition every time.

We are shifting from the Information Age to the Communication Age.

(Communicating is more valuable than informing.) Many salespeople rely on such marketing tools as a company web site, flyers, and sales letters. But all these things are static, meaning they are merely informing people. You hope your sales messages will entice the prospect to call, but it's still a one-way interface. A better way is to have your sales messages create action. One way to do that is to engage prospects with your sales and marketing efforts. For example, you could

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have a contest that encourages people to go to your site and enter. So instead of just saying that you want people to buy your snack product, for instance, you can tell customers that they can go online and create or vote for the next new flavor. Now you get them involved in your product. The key is to generate communication, engagement, and involvement through your sales and marketing efforts. If you call someone and just talk to them and aren't creating dynamic dialog, then you're really just giving information. You want to give people consultative advice. You want to listen and speak and create dialog. Only then do you truly capture your prospects' interest and convert them into paying clients.

Solutions to present problems become obsolete faster. (Be pre-active to future known events.) Almost every salesperson has been told to be proactive, which means to be taking positive action. How do you know if a certain action is positive? You wait and see. That sounds like a crapshoot with bad odds. Therefore, you need to be pre-active to future known events. To determine pre-known events, you need to look at your customer segment and identify what types of events you are certain they will be experiencing soon. You then focus your actions on what will be happening rather than on what is happening. Being pre-active also means that you change the way people think. For example, if you put out a new product or service and hope it catches on, you'll quickly learn that it can take a long time because you're not actively changing the way people think about how the product can be used or how it might change their life. Therefore, constantly educate your customers on the value you and your products and/or services offer so they begin to rethink the results they can achieve and the value you provide.

The value you bring today is forgotten faster. (Sell the future benefit of what you do.) Most salespeople sell the current benefits of what they do. But your customers already know the current benefit you offer. One of the reasons customers leave you for a competitor is that you haven't cemented the future benefit you can bring them. Your goal as a salesperson should be to establish a long-term, problem-solving relationship with customers rather than a short-term transaction. Your most profitable customer is a repeat customer. Therefore, you want customers to see the benefit you can give them over time, not just in the present. You want to show how the products and services you offer are going to be evolving with their needs. In other words, you want to sell the evolution of your products or services. Unfortunately, most salespeople don't know their future benefit. Therefore, you need to sit down with your fellow salespeople and create a list of future benefits that you have for your customers. Also, talk to the people developing the products and services and get an idea of where they're taking them. Realize that you're more likely to deliver future benefits if you think of them ahead of time. As a side benefit, this kind of dialog will also help internal communications within the company.

More Sales in Your Future

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