



Your Sales Organization Is Your Key Differentiator

Dave Brock, Partners In EXCELLENCE

Dimensions of EXCELLENCE™ is based on the four dimensions of performance and organizational excellence. These are the foundation for our development programs oriented to achieving performance and organizational excellence in sales, marketing, and customer service.

These white papers provide concepts and ideas based on the application of these principles of these programs and our work with our clients. We welcome your comments and observations on these topics.

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Recently, I had a conversation with the Vice President of Marketing for a large company. We were talking about challenges they faced in growing their business, particularly with their current customers. A key differentiator, highlighted in all their materials was their “cradle to grave” relationship management system.

This company claimed a significant part of their value was the long term relationships they built and their commitment to their customers' success. They had invested significantly in building this process and in communicating it in all their marketing materials. Their top executives commonly used this relationship management process in their public comments.

Naturally, I was impressed and started probing. “How is it working? What results are you creating?”

The response shocked me. “Well, the results of our customer satisfaction surveys show they are upset because they never hear from our sales people after we get the order. They say the sales people disappear and hand everything off to headquarters.”

Later in the conversation, she mentioned, “One of our largest customers refuses to see the sales person assigned to their account. They just want to deal with our headquarters organization.” And then she mentioned, “We are great in acquiring new customers, but we have a lot of trouble getting additional sales and growing the relationship.”

No wonder this company was having trouble growing its sales! They were not delivering on their key value proposition. If they could not deliver on this fundamental commitment to their customers, why should anyone buy their services? Fortunately, this executive knew this was a problem and was seeking solutions.

While this story may seem outrageous, unfortunately, it is not far off the mark for many organizations. The sales organizations for many companies simply do not create long term value in their relationships with their customers.

Building a value proposition based strictly on product superiority is a thing of the past. Short product life cycles, commoditization of products, global competition, high quality alternatives, and many other factors make product based competition and differentiation unsustainable for most organizations.

If you can't differentiate your company based on product superiority, how do you win? How do you get customers to invest in your company's offerings and not your competitors'?

The relationships you establish with your customers, both in the buying process and after the sale can become the key differentiators and critical to success. The value you create when the customer is making their decision and, subsequently, when they are implementing the solution can set you apart from your competition.

Your sales organization¹ is your face to your customers. The value they create with the customer, *over the term of the relationship*, is the only sustainable differentiation you can create.

Value is created in the manner in which your sales people build relationships with your customers.

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- Do they facilitate the customer in their buying process?
 - Are they helping the customer improve their own businesses?
 - Are they focusing on what is important to the customer?
 - Are they helping the customer reduce the cost of procuring and implementing solutions to their business problems?
 - Do they make it easy for your customer to work with your company, both in buying the products and in post sales support and activities?
 - Are they fulfilling your company's commitments to the customer?
 - Do they make the customer want to do business with your company?

Companies and sales organizations that execute these consistently, with enthusiasm, and with a true commitment to improving their customers business will be the winners in differentiating themselves from their competitors and will earn the right to a long term, profitable relationship with their customers.

If your sales organization is not doing this, then you need to change it! If they are not doing this, they are only creating cost to your own company, and probably losing revenue. Analyze your complete sales delivery process, including your channels. Make sure that every part of the channel is creating value.

Invest in building your sales organization as the key differentiator to your customers.

Partners In EXCELLENCE supports its clients in achieving performance and organizational excellence. We help our clients develop and implement high performance marketing, sales, distribution, and customer service strategies, maximizing their impact in achieving the desired business goals. Much of this work begins with the Sales or Channel Audit. For more information about this audit or for other information on developing and implementing your sales channel strategies, please contact us at info@excellenc.com, or by phone at (949)305-7146.

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¹ I include pre and post sales support organizations as part of the sales organization.