



# SALES IS HARD. MARKETING IS HARD.

Most people will agree with those statements.

Typically, a seller goes into a prospective customer discussion blind. There is a great deal of information they don't know. Common practice for some businesses is to start sales outreach with a qualification call. The seller peppers the prospect with questions, oftentimes giving the prospect little opportunity to control the conversation or get the information that they are seeking. This can leave the prospective buyer with an unsatisfactory feeling.

## THE EVOLVING BUYER'S JOURNEY

Over the last 10 years, the buying process has changed significantly. Buyers are educating themselves, gathering a plethora of information on the products and services they are considering before engaging with a sales rep.

That is why marketing is more important now than ever before. Content is king, and marketing is leveraging it now to direct the buyer's journey, producing everything from quick data sheets to in-depth product guides.

Buyers are now getting educated to the point where the initial "qualification call" seems outdated and oftentimes unwanted. A buyer seeking information can easily find it on their own.

Let's look at the car buying process as an example. When purchasing a car, people usually start with looking for the models with some must-have features. They want an SUV with sunroof, leather interior, and specific mileage. At first, they will find dozens of cars to choose from that meet these requirements. This high-level information

is easily accessible via the internet, where they are spending 2-10 minutes researching these cars before they even go to a dealer.

At first glance, the buyer may find 15 cars that fit their needs. As their evaluation continues, they realize heated seats, 4-wheel drive and other features are important to them as well and can be purchased within their budget.

Continuing their research, they will narrow their options down to around 8 cars based on the updated criteria. As they progress through the buyer's journey, their educational needs change as well. They are no longer searching for features, and obtaining only "snackable content" is no longer enough. They are now looking for performance and safety data, industry and expert analyses, and peer reviews. They will spend 30 minutes to an hour on this stage of evaluation, finally arriving at 3-5 cars to test drive.

## THE SELLER'S CONUNDRUM...

Marketing is tasked with the job of creating valuable content at every step of the buying process, from 2-minute snackable content to 45-minute in-depth product guides. The buyer comes to the table with so much information, yet the seller still has nothing from the potential buyer. They may know the buyer has shown intent signals, frequented their website, and downloaded a piece or two of content, but little more than that is known at this point and the potential buyer has already disqualified 50% of the potential vendors.

## ...AND THE SOLUTION

This is why research-based selling is crucial. This stage in the buyer's journey is the perfect time to survey. The potential buyer is interested, they're doing research and open to discussions. Surveying the buyer gives sales the ability to learn where to help and how to provide value. If, for some reason, your product or service missed the cut from the 8 they were initially researching to the 3-5 they plan on evaluating, surveying gives sales the ability to have a conversation they may not have had otherwise and to educate the buyer on your product's benefits that they may have missed.

After spending a few hours on detailed research, the buyer is ready to engage and go for the test drive. This can be the most uncomfortable time as a buyer because they've now shown their cards and indicated significant interest

to the seller. Some salespeople become very pushy at this stage. With so little or no information from the buyer, they will start with a deep qualifying call that may not be what the buyer wants. In software sales, some of these calls are made by SDRs whose sole job is to ask 10 qualifying questions and then schedule another call with an Account Executive when all the buyer wants is an information-gathering call.

Research-based selling eliminates the need for unpleasant discovery calls to determine where the buyer is in his/her journey. The survey results act as the roadmap for the salesperson. Before hopping on the prospect call, the salesperson understands the buyer's pain, challenges, initiatives, etc. and gives them the ability to guide the conversation.

Using the research-based selling model, the salesperson doesn't need to be pushy when the potential buyer goes for the test drive. They know how and at what point to provide value and information and they understand what challenges the buyer is looking to overcome. At the end of the day, the buyer is going to purchase the vehicle/product that is right for them, but by utilizing the research-based selling model, the seller increases their chances of getting to the final stage.

If executed correctly, the research-based selling model creates a better buying journey for everyone involved. Sales is hard and marketing is hard, but when both sides work together, everyone benefits.

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