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## ENLARGE YOUR SALES TEAM WITHOUT INCREASING HEADCOUNT

*Cilly Cider Company has a manufacturing and packaging facility in the middle of an apple orchard in the middle of apple country. Like all cider companies, they have two types of workers: pickers, who pick apples and pressers who press apples into cider. Currently they are struggling due to a lack of apples being brought in for the pressers. When asked, the pickers tell management that the orchards do not have as many apples as they once did, some of the apples are harder to pick and many of the apples are smaller. Fewer, harder to reach and smaller apples inevitably leads to less cider to sell.*

*Across the road is Sharp Cider Company. They're having a good year. It is not their best year ever, but it's a good year.*

*What makes the difference?*

*At Cilly, the pressers stand around moaning about having no apples to press, saying, "We have no apples; I have nothing to do." What they are really saying is that no one is picking apples and they have nothing to do. What's wrong with this picture?*

*Across the street, when the pressers have nothing to press, they become pickers. They tend to say, "When I don't have apples to press, I go pick apples." Pressers are not seasoned or experienced pickers. They cannot be expected to retrieve the difficult, hard to reach fruit. But they can pick the low-hanging fruit. They can help complete the harvesting once the seasoned pickers have brought down their fruit by carrying out the final steps.*

**O**ver the past two years I have heard too many people saying that their production people have nothing to do. The CEO of an engineering firm bemoans the fact that he has architects sitting around with no projects. Manufacturers complain that their highly-skilled machine operators are sweeping floors. Service providers are watching their technicians come in late and leave early due to a lack of work.

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To address this issue, we build on Chuckism #12: “There are two types of people in the world: those who know they’re in sales and those who don’t.”

Selling in a down economy like we are in right now is different from selling in a boom economy.

- Customers make slower, more deliberate decisions
- Customers are more likely to choose the “do nothing” option
- Customers will want or need stronger analytics to justify the decision to buy
- More contacts will be needed before and after the sale
- Better or different contacts will be needed

Here’s a closer look at each of these:

### CUSTOMERS MAKE SLOWER, MORE DELIBERATE DECISIONS

When you hear your plumber working under your sink say, “oops!” you are concerned, but not worried. When you hear your surgeon say, “oops!” it’s a different story. It is the difference in importance or magnitude.

In a robust economy, we can afford and can survive minor mistakes. In a down market, every mistake has the potential to be significant. As a result, even seemingly smaller, less important decisions are given greater scrutiny. As a result, buyers are making more deliberate and studious decisions.

*When in doubt, do nothing.”*

*“Forgiveness is easier than permission” –  
except in a down market.*

More studying of more decisions means that actions are going to be postponed. Some actions will not be initiated until they must be. As the deliberations mount, your customer’s decision to buy your product may slip down the list of priorities and the probability of sale declines sharply.

Your offering is not considered as often, may not be considered important and may make its way off the list completely.

We keep ourselves on the upper end of the “Decisions We Must Make Eventually” list by using more frequent contacts. The customer must see our contacts as valuable, not intrusive or repetitive. It is better if they are contacted by more than one person in your organization (it shows depth and greater interest in their business). However, it must be clear to the customer that they are not having to say the same things twice. Improved internal communication may be necessary.

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### EXAMPLE

**RIGHT:** “Mr. Customer, this is Tom from Acme Widgets, I’m in technical services. Ann Sellers, your rep, was telling me this morning that you’re running your machines using the new Johnson Controls MM system, is that correct? Many of our customers have just learned that there is an output feature that allows you to reduce energy consumption when running our widgets with the MM system. Would you like to see how this works?” *[Anyone who does not have a sales title is usually considered to be less of a “threat”; it’s obvious that Tom, Ann and Acme are interested in the customer’s business; the information sounds current and up to date; the call to action – or close – is a simple one and, again, non-threatening; there is a perceived benefit for the customer.]*

**WRONG:** “Mr. Customer, this is William Winchester, Senior Vice President at Acme Widgets. I’m interested in seeing how we might be able to help you increase your bottom line; what are the top three goals you’ve set for this year and where do you stand right now?” *[The sales professional has already asked these questions; it appears there is little internal communication at Acme; the customers are not as impressed with executive-level calls as they might have been.]*

### CUSTOMERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO CHOOSE THE “DO NOTHING” OPTION

The line in the country music song was, “I’d rather be sorry for something I’ve done than for something that I didn’t do.”

Not in a down economy.

Doing nothing becomes the option of choice as times harden. The bunker mentality takes over and people are reluctant to be seen as responsible for causing a problem or a loss.

What the customer needs to learn is the cost associated with the inaction. Not deciding is making the decision to not decide – remind your customer of that. How do the upside and downside of this decision compare? What is the cost of doing nothing versus the cost of moving forward?

Sales analytics can be very helpful here.

### EXAMPLE

**RIGHT:** “Mr. Customer, almost every company I work with now is hesitant to spend money. And that’s prudent. Once we’ve cut all the costs we can, however, it is time to invest in making the business stronger or even helping the business grow. Isn’t this something that would benefit your company in reversing the decline you’re experiencing?” *[The key words here are “prudent,” “invest,” “helping,” and “benefit”. We have avoided any reference to doing nothing being a bad thing. If we attempt to*

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*raise the issue of the cost of not moving, many clients in this situation will shift their thinking to merely defending their decision to not decide. Keep it positive.]*

**WRONG:** “Mr. Customer, if you continue to cut and cut, won’t your business simply continue to decline? At some point you are going to need to begin moving forward; isn’t sooner better than later?” *[The salesperson here is not saying anything that the customer does not already know. Challenging the decision they have made after all of their deliberations and discussions will only cause the customer to hunker down even more.]*

## CUSTOMERS NEED STRONGER ANALYTICS

Sales professionals who already know how to use sales analytics are in an advantageous position right now. Buyers are scrutinizing their options more than ever because, in most cases, they are having their decisions scrutinized more closely.

Few major buying decisions will be made based on “gut feel”, intuition, image or ego. Even peer/competitive pressure is diminishing as a buying motivator. When resources are limited, every expenditure must bring a return. The greater the return, the higher the likelihood the customer will buy.

More and more of my clients are building tools their salespeople can use to clearly quantify their value to their customers. Calculators, such as an ROI or TCO calculator can help the customer see their quantified benefits and the time frame for the benefits. It is even more effective when the customer can operate the tool and run “what-if” scenarios.

Teach your customer-facing people the principles of quantifying your value and put tools in the hands of your customers and sales professionals.

### EXAMPLE

**RIGHT:** “Mr. Customer, using this spreadsheet, if you will enter some basic data about your company you will be able to see the real value this implementation will bring your organization. How do those results look to you?” *[The key words here are “basic,” (you’re not asking for proprietary information); “your company,” (this is not a generic calculation); “value,” (not price/cost); “implementation,” (assumptive close). The closing question is open-ended requiring a response from the customer.]*

**WRONG:** “Mr. Customer, buying from us right now will give you the best-in-class product, will improve your efficiencies and will significantly enhance your image in the marketplace. Will this give you a competitive edge?” *[This approach has no tangible or measurable value to the customer. In fact, being best-in-class may be perceived as a negative.]*

### MORE CONTACTS WILL BE NEEDED

You're not being ignored.

If you want to sell a popular product right now, sell “back burners”! More and more decisions are being pushed to the proverbial back burner. Crisis du jour is the order of the day. As soon as you end your customer touch, something else will come up on their plate. After a few “something else” intrusions, your story is lost in the crowd.

We're not talking about going back into the customer's office and moving our catalog to the top of the stack. We need meaningful sequential contacts (or touches) to solidify the value of our offering and, whenever possible, its value to the customer.

Never go back with the same story twice. There is no value to the customer in that. Each touch must have its own flavor.

But wait, our salespeople are already busier than ever and working twice as hard for half the results. Where are we going to find the sales man-hours to increase the number of customer touches?

This is where the “everybody sells” approach comes in. Combined with the section below, new, unique and better contacts with your clients and prospects can keep you off of the back burner (and leave room there for your competitors!).

#### EXAMPLE

**RIGHT:** “Mr. Customer, one of our clients in a business similar to yours came up with a great idea. They are integrating their accounting system with our widget and finding new ways to reduce their costs. Could I send you a short write-up on what they're doing?” *[This touch could be made by anyone. Obviously the salesperson could make it but the customer service, technology or executive level could make it as well. This actually serves as a third-party endorsement and word-of-mouth advertising is the best. ]*

**WRONG:** “Mr. Customer, I'm just following up to see if you've made any progress in choosing a vendor and to answer any questions you may have.” *[First of all, the customer has already received this call from the other vendors, so there's no differentiation here. Further, there is no value or potential value for the customer. In the future, the customer is likely to avoid contacts with this person. ]*

BETTER OR DIFFERENT CONTACTS ARE NEEDED

How would your customers define “better contact”?

Answer that question and you’re well on the way to increasing your sales.

Customers must see value in every encounter with every vendor. If there is no perceived value, or WIIFM, there is no need to invest time with the vendor.

It is probably fair to say that your salespeople are making the best contacts they can. They have about maxed out on the process, even with continuous quality improvement (CQI) in sales. Incremental improvements will be small and, perhaps, indiscernible to the customer.

Begin letting your customer service people and technologists make customer contacts. **How can everyone or anyone in your organization make effective customer touches?**

Just don’t call it “sales”.

Your customer service people and your technologists are in those positions because that’s where they want to be. If they wanted a sales career, they’d be in sales. As they begin making customer touches, they will gain confidence and begin making better and better contacts. Using CQI will create visibly improved touches, ones your customers can see and appreciate.

Just don’t call it “sales”.

Too many people have too many misperceptions about what sales is and isn’t. (For a comprehensive tutorial and mind changer, have them view Module One “What Is Sales” at [www.SaleSSuiteS.com](http://www.SaleSSuiteS.com) > Online Training.) As a result, they resist selling, based on their current perception of selling.

Selling is helping and teaching.

Why do people choose customer service as a career? To help!

Why do people choose technology as a career? To teach! (They enjoy sharing ideas.)

**CUSTOMER SERVICE** employees are nurturers. Ask them to help nurture the relationships with your existing accounts. This will give your customers more touches and different touches while freeing your salespeople to do the heavy lifting in sales.

**TECHNOLOGISTS** are all about finding better ways to use technology. Let’s turn them loose with our customers and see what ideas they can find for using our capabilities to make customers more successful.

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For consistency and to insure the most professional contacts are being made, use the following roadmap.

### **SALES > TECH/CUSTOMER SERVICE > CUSTOMER > SALES > CUSTOMER**

- Sales drives the process and owns the relationship with the customer. Sales initiates the process by delegating some elements of selling to a technologist or a customer service person.
- The technologist or customer service person contacts the customer using the process outlined by the salesperson and using the basic sales training they have been given.
- The technologist or customer service person then discusses their customer touch with the salesperson and a follow-up action plan is initiated. The technologist may recommend an enhancement; the customer service person may have identified another need.
- The customer is touched again by the person best able to implement the findings.

Using this model, the salesperson remains the primary contact on the account and insures that the messages being delivered are consistent and in sync with the account plan.

Give your customers more touches, different touches and better touches by deploying your other employees into the sales arena. Just don't call it "sales".

### EXAMPLE

**RIGHT:** "Mr. Customer, this is Megan from Acme Widgets Customer Service. You are one of my choice/preferred accounts and I want to make sure we are doing all we can for you right now. Are there any issues you are having with our product or in your business that we can help you with?" "Mr. Customer, I'm in technical services at Acme Widgets, my name is Mike. My job is to make sure your organization getting full utilization from our product/service. There is no charge for this, of course, who should I contact about providing you with additional training or support?" *[Both of these contacts are asking for specific opportunities to serve and prompting the customer to think. Avoid the "if you ever need anything let me know" approach.]*

**WRONG:** "Mr. Customer, this is Megan in Customer Service at Acme Widgets. I'll be your customer service contact, please let me know if there is ever anything I can do to help." "Mr. Customer, this is Mike in Technical Support at Acme Widgets. Is everything running okay over there?" *[These are both vague, unqualified and may be seen as obligatory. Just a little pre-call planning could dramatically change them.]*

Can your people do this today? Probably not. It will take some training and coaching – probably less of each than you might think. But it will still take some coaching and

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training. The good news is that your people already know your products; they only need sales skills training.

There are several ways you can deliver the training.

- You can have one of your salespeople conduct the training session. Upside: they know the turf. Downside: they may not know how to train and their preparation and delivery time can be costly.
- Online training; of course I recommend [www.SaleSSuiteS.com](http://www.SaleSSuiteS.com)
- Bring in a trainer. There are plenty of sales trainers around. My “Everyone Sells” program includes a half day with everyone who will be making customer touches. I get them all on the same page in the same book with a training program tailored just for you. This brings consistency to the sales process, something your customers will appreciate. The second half of that day is devoted to training and coaching your seasoned salespeople on how to utilize the other members of the team, how to sell in this new environment, how to create sales tools and how to develop the New Normal in sales for your organization. Again, this second half-day is tailored for your specific needs.

### SUMMARY

If you need more sales manpower and you have underutilized manpower in other areas, connect the dots. This is one of those outside the box opportunities.

Some of your people will be better at selling than you think – and better than they think. Some may choose to stay in sales once the tough times are over. Meanwhile, more customer touches, improved customer touches and better allocation of resources can impact your top and your bottom lines simultaneously.

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