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JULY 2022

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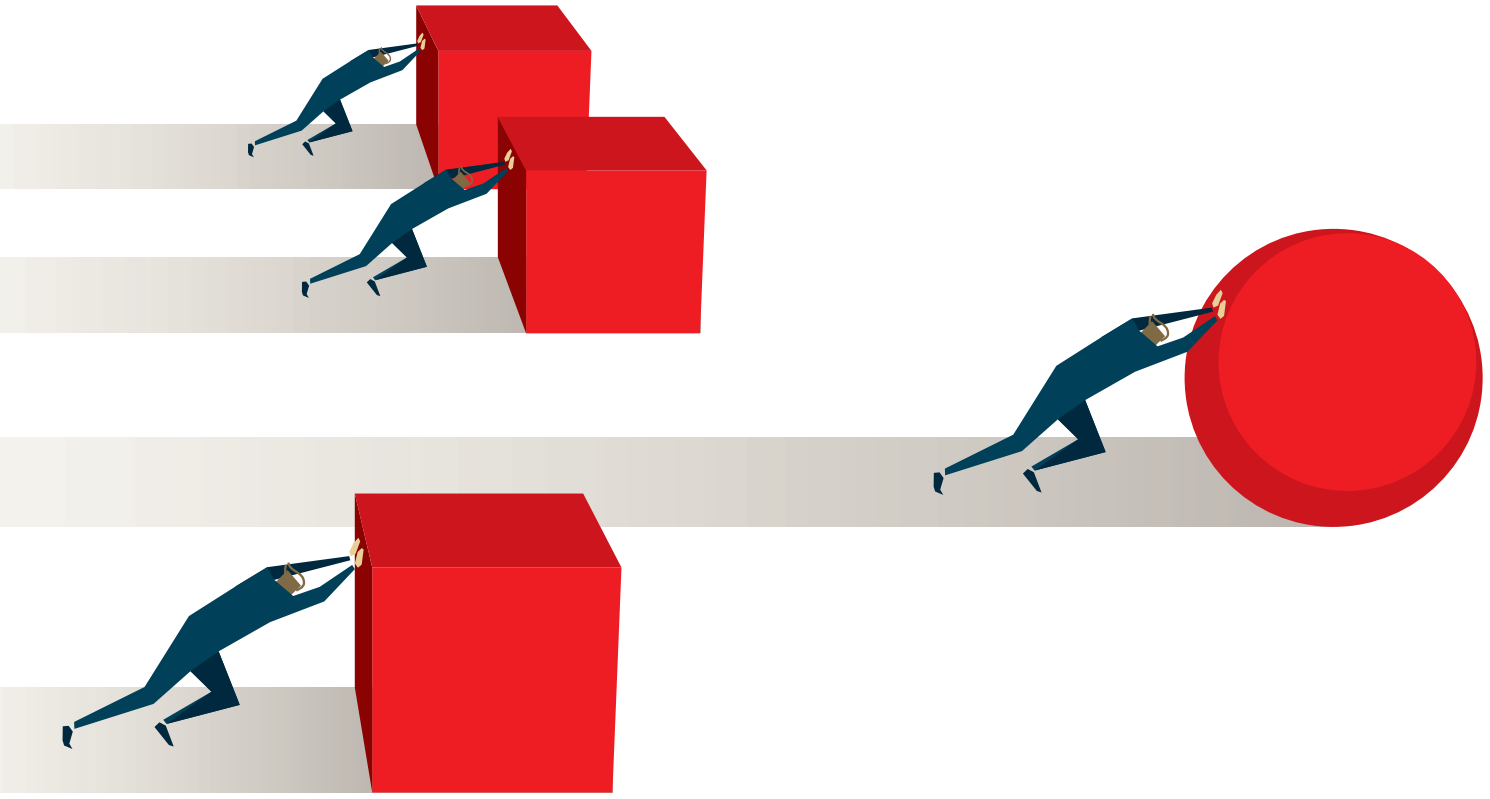

Discussing Disengagement Can Be the Fix 2

Sales Automation and Self-Driven Cars 5

Guided Selling Tools Are a B2B Game-Changer 11

Discussing Disengagement Can Be Part of the Fix

BY PAUL NOLAN

Lack of motivation becomes a bigger problem when employees feel they can't talk about it

Happy workers are the most productive workers. Research published by the Journal of Happiness Studies (and covered in MIT Sloan Management Review) reported that Army soldiers who were in the highest quartile regarding happiness and optimism earned four times as many awards as those who were unhappiest initially.

"Happiness—and, to a somewhat lesser extent, optimism—were better predictors of awards than any demographic factor we examined," the authors stated. "Our military research, along with other behavioral science research spanning the past 40 years, highlights the competitive advantage that employee happiness offers businesses. There are some things about employee happiness that every business leader should know and be able to apply."

This means that gauging worker happiness is one of the most important aspects of managing teams. Yet too often, managers check in quickly and even insincerely on their employees' level of job satisfaction.

Talk About Work Disengagement

Allison Gabriel, Professor of management and organizations at Eller College of Management at the University of Arizona, says too many managers underestimate how important it is to meet people's three main needs at work: "They want to feel autonomous; they want to feel competent at what they do; and they want to feel socially connected to other people," Gabriel recently told Tess Vigeland, host of The Wall Street Journal podcast "As We Work."

"The first solution people think of is, 'Let's just throw money at the problem.' That's usually not what the issue is. If we do that, it puts a Band-Aid on the situation," Gabriel said. "People are looking for the intrinsic motivators."

On the same podcast episode, Marissa Dacay, who held a senior marketing position at Adobe, explained that she assessed her career last year and realized that, as she approached her 10-year anniversary at the computer software company, she no longer enjoyed her job responsibilities. Dacay said she felt her options were to continue along her current

career path at Adobe, look for similar work at another company or make a career shift. She chose the latter, and because she liked working at Adobe, she had a frank conversation with Mark Lipscomb, vice president of employee experience at Adobe.

"When I was thinking about the work I was doing, I had reached a place where I had the most broad and complex scope I had ever had, but I was also in a place where I'd never felt less connected to the work. It wasn't really exciting to me anymore or motivating to me anymore," Dacay said.

That's not something many workers would feel comfortable sharing with a supervisor, but Lipscomb was glad she did and wishes more conversations like the ones he had with Dacay would occur between managers and their team members.

"At the beginning it was just listening and asking probing questions back. 'You're so good at what you do. What's missing?'" Lipscomb said.

When Dacay made a list of what she liked about her current role, she realized that most of it involved developing future leaders and assisting with people development. That allowed Lipscomb to look at other openings within the company and recommend that Dacay apply for a more people-focused position that was being filled. Her title now is director of Business Partnering.

Lipscomb said Adobe encourages managers to regularly have conversations about career paths and how [employees] are truly feeling. One-on-ones can't only be about business topics.

Adobe retained a valuable employee and that employee became engaged once again with her job.

In her new role, Dacay said she was "waking up reinvigorated by the feeling that I may have challenges that day that I won't know how to solve. That was exciting," Dacay said. "I was scared again in my job in a good way."

The big takeaway, Dacay and Lipscomb said, is that she trusted her employer enough that she could be candid about losing interest in her current role. She recognized that she had transferable skills that could help her not get locked into an undesired progression in her marketing role.

"Knowing that you can continue a career that isn't anything like the one you were dreaming of or the path that you're supposed to be following—it's a scary thing to do, but when you open yourself up in that completely different way, lots of doors can open."

Come With Solutions

If you can identify the problem and at least part of the solution, like Dacay was able to do, it makes good sense to have the talk with a supervisor, said journalist Nell McShane Wulfhart in an article written for The Muse. If you don't bring solutions to the discussion, it's just a complaint.

Companies should arm managers with the power to resolve this type of issue whenever possible while recognizing that a solution that allows for retaining every employee will not be possible. Lipscomb said it was fortunate that Dacay's likes in terms of job responsibilities matched an opening that was being filled at the company. In some situations, a person may have to find work at another company to resolve the problem.

Creating a personal development plan for an employee shows that you are invested in their success. Identify growth potential and new skills they would like to acquire. Ask them to recommend training or other development steps they would like to complete.

Taking a "don't ask, don't tell" approach to employee disengagement hurts both the employee and the employer. Better to have candid conversations that address the issues and determine if a win-win solution can be reached. SMM

How to Broach a Lack of Engagement

Telling a supervisor that you are not engaged with your work is a risky proposition. Employers need to make it less so by making it clear from the start that they want every worker to derive as much meaning and satisfaction from their job as possible.

Writing for Harvard Business Review, Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic and Lewis Garrad offer these steps to making a conversation about workplace disengagement more comfortable and productive:

Address a worker's full potential. Disengagement drags on performance. Employees want to reach their full potential. Addressing what's possible when a worker is fully engaged reinforces the fact there is a clear ROI on engagement.

Address new challenges. Workers of all generations, but particularly those in their 20s and 30s, want to continually attain new skills to advance their careers. A job that can be completed on autopilot usually quickly leads to dissatisfaction. Challenges are what lead to motivation.

Discuss proper fit. Workers need to come to the conversation with specific examples of what they like and don't like about their current job. Employers should be open to the possibility that job responsibilities could be adjusted to retain a talented worker and improve performance. It won't work all the time, but it's worth assessing.

Talk about burnout. Feeling overwhelmed is a common cause of disengagement and frustration. It is a manager's job to help employees avoid draining and demotivating work situations in which exhausting barriers outweigh exciting challenges.

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When Self-Driving Cars Drive Your Sales Process

Increased productivity in sales is indelibly linked to automation

BY JOHN WINNER

Intelligent automation and big data are the next frontiers in the corporate world's continuous drive toward greater efficiency and competitive advantage. According to Accenture, companies which have leveraged intelligent operations to become "future-ready" to the greatest extent possible are about three times more profitable and twice more efficient than the field.

This trend will be just as transformative for the sales industry as for any other. But what will it look like on the ground for the average sales team?

Just as cars have different levels of autonomous driving capabilities, which they have achieved or will achieve over the coming years, so too do sales processes—ranging from primitive CRMs to complex intelligent assistants which will revolutionize how you sell.

Let's use the Society of Automotive Engineers' six tiers of autonomous vehicles as a framework.

Level 0: No Assistance

The vast majority of driving is still fully manual, with the driver controlling all the car's basic functions. The same is true in the sales industry, where many salespeople still use the Notes app on their iPhones (or even a real notebook!) to manually track clients' key requirements, birthdays or a log of past interactions. These functions could and should be automated.

Level 1: Basic Assistance

At Level 1, the machine helps by taking over a constant basic task, such as maintaining a level speed. Chrysler first introduced cruise control to the masses in 1958.

The sales analogues here are the first rudimentary tracking systems, digital Rolodexes and CRMs like Siebel Systems. Introduced in the early 1990s, these stored key dates, requirements, a ledger of past interactions, a calendar for upcoming interactions and more.

Level 2: Partial Automation

Level 2 describes rules-based automation, in which the machine can reliably execute simple tasks based on constant rules. This would include adaptive cruise control, a now-common feature.

Many salespeople employ this level of automation to some degree already to set reminders, make predetermined calculations based on certain inputs, or schedule meetings based on pre-set parameters.

Level 2 represents the lowest-hanging fruit of automated assistance, saving salespeople a few extra hours a week and preventing important basic details from falling through the cracks.

Level 3: Conditional Automation

Whereas Level 2 cars use simple rules and small data sets, cars at Level 3 use complex rules and large data sets to drive autonomously *with supervision*. Functioning like a real intelligent co-pilot, they can accelerate, brake, stay in their lane and even take more sophisticated actions like turns.

An intelligent co-pilot in sales might highlight select items to follow up on, recommend certain callbacks, score leads and prioritize items in the pipeline. Like the Level 3 car, the Level 3 sales assistant will inevitably have its recommendations overruled at times by the human salesperson. There will also be plenty of instances in which the assistant doesn't offer a recommendation, because the situation is outside of its operating scope.

So while the tasks performed are complex and helpful—saving a salesperson five to 10 hours per week—they are still at their core rules-based and subject to the salesperson's approval. There remains a great deal of potential for growth at this level within the sales industry.

Level 4: High Automation

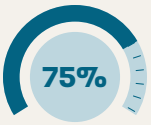
A Level 4 intelligent assistant performs data analysis, which a human driver or data scientist may have performed, and is thus trusted to a high degree. Functionally, Level 4 cars can perform fully autonomously, with the human napping in the back seat, but only in prescribed areas and times. There remain certain tasks which a human driver can do—driving through a heavy storm, for example—that a Level 4 car might not attempt.

Critically, Level 4 systems are no longer strictly rules-based, but are instead self-learning, taking every shred of data into account to notice patterns and improve their own models and performance. They are not dependent on any narrow original set of rules.

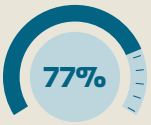
The sales intelligent assistant will offer novel, unexpected and helpful suggestions which the salesperson might not have discovered. Like the self-driven car, a Level 4 sales assistant can understand the salesperson's desired outcomes and can be trusted to craft its own strategies to reach them.

It might show, for instance, that you achieve higher success selling to certain demographics at certain times of day, or that you close more deals when certain members of a buying team are involved. By generating helpful insights and acting on them at a basic level, the intelligent assistant is also building an irreplaceable spot for itself in your workflow.

Automation by the Numbers



of companies that already use at least one kind of marketing automation tool, according to Social Media Today's 2019 State of Marketing Automation Survey.



of business owners reported an increase in conversions after using marketing automation software, according to Sales Fusion. Additionally, marketing automation reduced marketing overhead by 12.2%, while the sales pipeline rate of B2B marketers using marketing automation increased by an average of 10%.

of sales activities can be automated, according to McKinsey, including pipeline management, scheduling appointments and other general administrative duties.

Level 5: Full Automation

Level 5 cars might not have a steering wheel, because there's nothing a driver ordinarily does that a Level 5 driving assistant can't do.

Until Level 5, salespeople and drivers were still responsible for some executive oversight and a certain degree of vetting. At Level 5, however, a sales assistant is determining best actions, structuring the salesperson's day and handling a portion of the work. Nothing is slipping through the cracks, and customers are enjoying an even greater experience.

This level of automation could increase a salesperson's productivity by 2x or 3x, enabling them to work less (25-hour work week, anyone?). The lion's share of their time at work would be devoted to the truly creative, inspirational and direction-setting tasks, which computers will never be capable of, while their time outside work would be enriched.

To successfully make it to Level 5, however, high-quality integrated data is a must. That's why several car manufacturers and tech companies in the autonomous vehicle space have been collecting this data aggressively for years to train their models.

For businesses, consulting with data specialists that understand the sales industry will ensure that the data you're collecting will be usable for the advanced automations and intelligent assistants coming online and speed your implementation. Unifying your data platforms into a single, cohesive system with Level 5 automation will require investments of time and money. The companies that stay the course will be set up to win big—and change the world. SMM

John Winner is the founder and CEO of Kizen, the maker of an intelligent business assistant named Zoe, which enables smarter work, faster growth and more prosperity for everyone.

How Modern Sales Leaders Empower Their Teams for Greater Impact

You can't maximize productivity until you have the right people in place

BY MARK EBERT

Call it the Great Resignation, call it a COVID-era talent shortage, call it what you will: The fact is the hiring market is tougher than we've ever seen it. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. employers are currently trying to hire for 11.5 million jobs. Meanwhile, 4.5 million people are quitting their jobs each month, either to leave the workforce or to look for something new.

In other words, if you want to improve or merely retain your team in the current job environment, you're in stiff competition with countless other employers. Many employees and potential hires have multiple job opportunities to choose from. To attract and retain the best talent, you need to be able to differentiate your opportunity from all the others.

For sellers, a key differentiator is how well they're set up for success. Sellers want to know that they can meet or exceed quota and that their managers will provide them with the tools and resources they need to do it.

Sales leaders need to show sellers that they are taking these three important steps to help their sellers start hitting their goals as quickly and efficiently as possible:

Give Them the Best Accounts

It all starts with how territories are determined and the data behind those decisions. Nothing frustrates a seller faster than working a list of accounts that have absolutely no intention of buying. Unfortunately, that's the reality in a lot of organizations that are relying on outdated approaches.

Old-school territory design and account assignments are based on unscientific hunches and best guesses. Sellers might get a list of 500 or more leads to work, based on geography, industry or other general information. Or they might get hand-overs from the marketing department, which argues that because a person downloaded an ebook, they are a hot lead.

We know, however, that these methods of qualification are unreliable. They lead to frustration, wasted time and spinning wheels.

Sales leaders can prevent that by providing their business development reps and AEs with a healthy mix of accounts that are maximized for revenue potential. The goal is that each year, your territory design should be constructed to ensure that your team never misses a revenue opportunity. And that can be accomplished with data and artificial intelligence (AI) that select the best accounts based on two things:

- **Profile Fit –** Companies that fit your ideal customer profile (ICP) firmographically and technographically, and that are similar to companies you've had success with in the past are more likely to buy from you. Providing your reps with good profile fit accounts makes it less likely that your reps will waste their time on accounts that simply aren't going to buy what you're offering.
- **Buying Stage –** Accounts that are getting ready to make a decision or a purchase are more likely to convert fast. Arming your sales team with real-time insights into an account's buying stage means they'll reach out just at the right time—when they're most likely to open or progress an opportunity.

One advanced strategy that works well is a dynamic territory design model that ensures that if any unassigned account spikes

in their buying stage during the year (again, based on their behavioral signals), it gets assigned and worked systematically. We never want to miss out on a revenue moment and leave money on the table. Modern predictive scoring gives us the tools to make sure we don't.

AEs love dynamic territory design, because it keeps their list fresh, and it means they get accounts assigned to them that have an eight to 10 times higher likelihood of converting to an open opportunity (based on 6sense customer data).

When sellers can reach out to the accounts at the right time, they have a higher likelihood of getting better results, faster. But they also need to be set up to reach out in the most effective way, which brings me to my next point.

Help Sellers Get to Know Their Accounts

If sellers don't know about their accounts, they can't make meaningful connections with them. That means their outreach will often go ignored, even if it's to an in-market account that's a great fit for your organization. Buyers today expect sellers to understand them and what they're interested in, and they don't want to have to do the work to provide that understanding.

Sales leaders who can provide their sellers with insights into the accounts on their roster give their team a competitive advantage. Outreach is significantly more relevant (and more likely to convert) if sellers know things like:

- What topics accounts are researching
- What their current tech stack looks like
- When they're up for renewal on competitive products
- Whether they're hiring in positions related to what you sell

Whether outreach takes the form of an email, a LinkedIn message, a phone call, or, ideally, all of the above, it's essential that it's pertinent and timely. Sellers look to their sales leaders to provide them with the tools to make that kind of outreach possible.

Of course, relevant outreach doesn't do much good unless it makes it to its intended audience. And that brings me to point number three.

Make It Easy to Contact the Right People

B2B buying teams often include 10 or more individuals. Knowing that a company is a good fit for what you offer and is in an ideal buying stage is great, but it's not very useful if you can't connect with the actual humans involved in the decision.

Sales leaders can make their sellers' efforts more efficient by making it easy for them to get contact data for *all* the personas involved in the purchase decision. That way, sellers can multithread from the start—without having to wade through piles of bounced emails and wrong numbers. And we know that the more members of the buying team we can engage, the more likely we are to open an opportunity. Also, the less time reps have to spend tracking down contact information, the more time they have to spend on high-impact activities that help them meet their sales goals.

Winning Reps Are Happy Reps

As sales leaders, it's essential that we show our sellers that we value their most prized asset—their time. We need to make sure there are opportunities for them to win, and then give them the proper tools to make the most of those opportunities.

Giving them the data and insights they need to navigate day-to-day decisions like which accounts to prioritize, what message to deliver and how to reach the right contacts shortens the distance between your reps and their quotas.

This is what makes for happy, enthusiastic and loyal sellers. And that makes the job of hiring and retaining top talent much easier, especially in a tight job market, where the best sellers have their choice of places to work. SMM

Mark Ebert is vice president of sales for 6sense, a software platform that helps B2B organizations generate predictable revenue.

The 3 Es of a More Humanized Workplace

The COVID pandemic fueled a humanization of work, which in turn has driven a humanization of the notion of productivity. A Deloitte report on rethinking the ways we measure productivity in a work-from-anywhere world calls for focusing on outcomes rather than outputs. It calls for humanizing workforce productivity through the lens of the "three Es" – work effectiveness, work efficiency and workforce empowerment.

Work effectiveness – "Shifting to measuring accomplishments and outcomes over activities and labor hours allows organizations to cultivate a work environment of high-performing and productive teams. Focusing on outcomes in this way, in addition to trusting employees to achieve them, will lead to increased work effectiveness," the report states.

Work efficiency – Significant investments have been made in digital collaboration tools in the past two years, yet a Microsoft work trend study of the post-pandemic work environment showed that time in meetings more than doubled in the pandemic and more than 40 billion more emails were delivered in February 2021 than in February 2020.

Empowerment – Forward-thinking companies are adapting to the hybrid work world by eliminating presenteeism and allowing for more flexible work schedules. "At the human level, organizations that integrate well-being into the design of work build a sustainable future where empowered workers can feel and perform at their best," the report states.

Enhancing Productivity with AI-Driven Speech Coaching

BY DEBRA CANCRO, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF DATA PRODUCTS AT BIGTINCAN

Amid the rise of digital-centric selling, the blueprint for effective buyer engagement has changed. Those prepackaged PowerPoint decks and static presentations that customer-facing sales teams used to rely on are no longer enough to develop meaningful relationships with prospects in virtual selling environments.

Sales reps today must understand how to deliver the right messaging in the right ways—and not just from a product value proposition standpoint. More than ever, their tone of voice, articulation and overall vibe during buyer conversations can make or break the outcome of a sale.

This is where the role of productive sales coaching and training is paramount. According to McKinsey & Company, outperforming sales organizations commit to nearly 80% more coaching and are 57% more likely to tailor their training programs for personalization compared to industry peers. Yet with the fast-paced nature of sales coupled with the widespread adoption of remote work structures, managers have less and less opportunities to provide personalized in-person coaching for their teams.

However, the power of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning have opened new pathways to productivity to help bridge that guidance gap. The integrated use of conversation intelligence, like Bigtincan's VoiceVibes product, enables organizations to streamline the often-elongated process of developing buyer-ready sales teams with AI-driven speech coaching and rehearsing.

Automated Speech Coaching Insights

A sales enablement solution equipped with conversation intelligence technology can automate the analysis of sales pitch audio recordings and, in turn, generate actionable insights on the seller's tone of voice, vocal clarity, pace and filler word usage. VoiceVibes, for example, generates objective feedback and personalized scoring metrics that indicate how a sales rep was perceived by their audience. The scoring is based on extensive proprietary data sets and machine learning analysis of audience engagement levels throughout the interaction.

If a particular message was delivered in a way that is likely to generate a positive response from the listener—such as, "Oh, wow! I didn't know that. How awesome!"—the solution will identify the positive "vibe" in that rep's voice and report it on a digital dashboard. That way, the seller knows to keep leveraging the message as a key driver of future prospect interactions. This extensive level of insight simply isn't attainable through in-person coaching alone. An integrated approach that blends peer-to-peer engagement with AI-driven conversational intelligence maximizes the productivity of the manager-rep coaching dynamic.

Personalized AI-Driven Rehearsing

Given the competitive nature of the sales environment, enhancing seller productivity also requires personalized guidance before buyer interactions take place. This is why the role of AI-driven speech coaching technology extends beyond solely analyzing pitches after the fact. It also enables customer-facing reps to master their communication skills prior to a product pitch, prospect meeting or cold call, ensuring that their messaging techniques are polished and ready for the first interaction. You never get a second chance to make a first impression.

With the right conversation intelligence solution, sales teams can rehearse several versions of the same pitch and then assess which version would be most effective in a real-world setting. This self-learning capability allows them to adopt a proactive approach to their own professional development and enter any sales conversation with confidence to close the deal. SMM

Debra Cancro is senior vice president of Data Products at Bigtincan, providers of a sales enablement platform that helps the world's leading brands facilitate the buying experience of the future. Visit www.bigtincan.com for more information.

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Guided Selling Tools Are a B2B Game-Changer

BY CHRIS SHUTTS

Unless companies are regularly crushing their sales goals, they usually focus on ways to boost selling productivity and efficiency. With talented salespeople already on board, optimizing performance in the modern business climate means seeking more out of sales technology.

It's a valid route to take, one that's crucial for improving the firm's sales performance by making the team's jobs more straightforward. When sales reps have to leave their regular workflow to address repetitive, manual tasks — or perform complex software procedures — they become buried in processes rather than being liberated to go out and sell.

In today's rapidly changing landscape, companies need an upgrade from their traditional configure-price-quote technology.

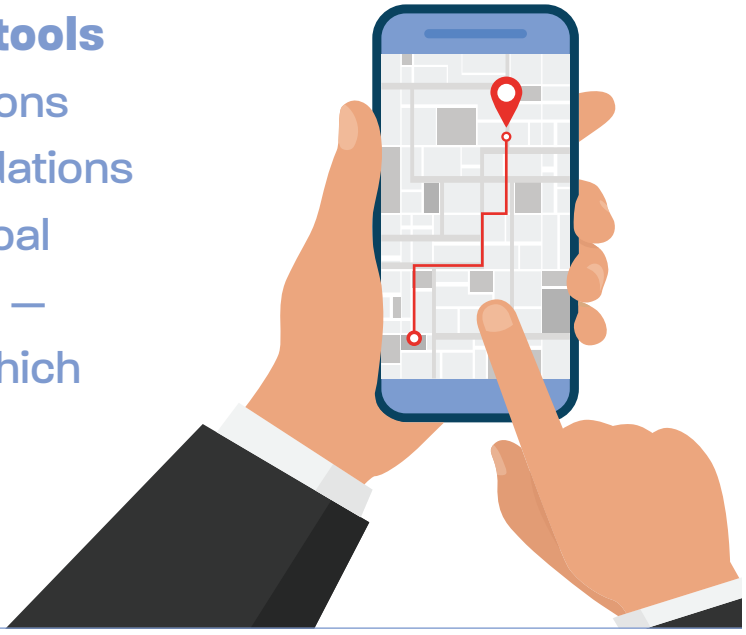
While conventional CPQ solutions struggle to manage long product lists and the vast number of features and options on those products, CLE streamlines this workflow. It reduces or removes lengthy and repetitive manual interventions that sales teams usually deal with just to bring products to market. It simplifies complicated procedures like managing parts, product updates, functions, custom options, availability and pricing. The same advancements benefit B2B customers even more.

Enhanced, Guided Buying

CLE connects customer requirements to the seller's best solutions using artificial intelligence to gather information and understand buyers' needs. This process vastly improves the online buying experience. Rather than rifle through a catalog of product options to determine what they need, whether it fits, how it will work, and what it costs, the CLE transforms buyers' search. It guides customers intuitively and answers these recurring questions by presenting product solutions that each buyer needs.

Such efficiency eliminates customers having to connect with a salesperson to be led by hand. This improvement doesn't replace sales staff — it increases their effectiveness and boosts companies' customer experience. By eliminating the need to answer multiple customer questions, sales reps can address specific service requests on unique customer inquiries instead.

Like a GPS, **guided selling tools** provide step-by-step directions and warnings or recommendations for getting to the intended goal rather than relying on a map — or traditional tech tools — which can easily cause confusion and increase getting lost.



Simplifying E-selling

Two-thirds of salespeople deal with administrative and other tasks that steal their time and energy from selling. Current CPQ software pushes tech burdens onto sales teams rather than addressing their needs to reduce or eliminate responsibilities that aren't actually selling.

Companies' chosen sales technology should make buying and selling easier across the board. Guided selling tools like a commerce logic engine (CLE) perform this way.

CLE technology handles the complexities that business-to-business sales teams face, and buyers want to be simplified.

This means that sales become a value-added service for buyers instead of a mandatory problem-solving burden to buyers and sellers alike. It also means outdated systems that take buyers partway through a sale before turning them over to a salesperson are now a thing of the past.

Modern businesspeople want self-service buying and are increasingly comfortable making big-ticket purchases this way. By removing manual intervention from ordinary buying-and-selling processes, CLE immediately makes dynamic B2B enterprise e-commerce a reality, highly efficient and a 24/7 option.

B2B E-commerce for the Future

The days of catalog buying and selling, cross-referencing parts with prices, and asking repetitive questions to learn what a customer wants must all move to the dust heap. Buyers in the B2B world demand it. They view dealing with salespeople regarding basic requests as a burden, not a help. Modern buyers want online self-service to purchase big-ticket items, any time, day or night, and they want it omnichannel.

Likewise, sellers want to improve sales efficiency and streamline workflows. They shouldn't need to become a tech wiz to accomplish this. Sales reps' time is used best when selling and meeting rising customer expectations. Their greatest tool will scale as product lines expand, data sets increase and the business grows to meet evolving customer demands.

Guided selling technology performs these roles to modernize traditional CPQ tools. It gathers buyer inputs and connects with sales solutions in real time. Tools like CLE handle buying from product introduction, through options and pricing, then processes payments. With CLE at their disposal, salespeople serve their buyers in value-added and customer satisfaction roles rather than everyday problem-solving—all this helps fuel repeat business.

Traditional CPQ technology still meets many business-to-consumer needs, but the B2B business quickly moves on. Buyers working in this environment want simple e-commerce benefits in their complex business buying. Commerce logic engine technology delivers that convenience, guiding buyers to the right product solution and elevating customer experience and satisfaction while streamlining sales processes along the way.

New technologies in guided selling like CLE are not only meeting customers' increasingly self-service expectations today, but will be driving B2B e-commerce solutions well beyond the next decade.

Chris Shutts is co-founder and chief executive officer of Logik.io. He also co-founded CPQ pioneer BigMachines and sold it to Oracle. Previously, Shutts was business unit manager for Case New Holland.

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