
THE ROI OF SALES MESSAGING: BEST PRACTICES OF AN AUDIBLE-READY SALES FORCE



Today's buyers are more digitally engaged than ever before. They're not only more informed, they're leveraging social networks and online sites to find solutions to their problems and vendors who can deliver.

Shifts in B2B buying behavior create an incredible growth opportunity for sales organizations that embrace a 24/7, multi-channel, data-driven, customer-centric approach. Gone are the days when strong relationships with one or two decision-makers, or simply nailing the RFP process, held the keys to success. Purchasing involves more decision-makers, more touch points, and more communication channels.



This connected B2B buying environment presents an unprecedented opportunity for organizations to meet their prospects, clients and customers “where they are,” and work to connect and add value through a variety of distribution and engagement channels.



Remember, there's as much differentiation in *how* you sell as there is in *what* you sell.

The rise of the connected buyer demands an organization have a granular focus into how it's engaging with customers, both digitally and in person-to-person conversations. Potential customers can access a wealth of knowledge on any product offering—yours and those of your competitors—from vendor websites, blogs and social/business networking sites, allowing them to draw their own conclusions about the value your solution provides. Your prospects could be “spot on” in their research, but could further benefit from a salesperson conversation to determine requirements and define success measures.

A sales messaging framework can give your sales team the ability to articulate value and differentiation for your solution and lead successful sales conversations that link customers' high-priority needs to your business solutions.

A sales messaging framework can help your team to:

- ✓ Uncover customer needs and articulate value
- ✓ Increase sales productivity
- ✓ Improve deal margins

**UNCOVER CUSTOMER NEEDS AND
ARTICULATE VALUE**

As competition builds and customers become more selective, best-in-class companies base their long-term sales strategies on a consistent messaging framework that focuses on:

- 1 Uncovering customer needs
- 2 Articulating value in a way that resonates with those needs

A consistent messaging framework allows these companies to adopt what is called an audible-ready mindset, where salespeople become attuned to asking the right questions, listening for customer problems and guiding the customer conversation in a way that solves the admitted problems.

Audible-ready sales teams can define their solutions to customers' problems in ways that differentiate them from the competition and allow them to charge a premium for their products and services. They know how to engage with a prospect no matter where he or she is in the buying process – through digital communication, on the phone or in person.

They know how to ask insightful, two-sided discovery questions early and often throughout the sales process to gain a clear picture of what is important to the customer. The prospect may be considering an entry-level or basic solution, but asking the right questions can open up larger opportunities. These questions allow you to gain an understanding of your prospect's business. The answers can then be used to frame the customer conversation in a way that leverages the five key components of every successful sale.

FIVE KEY COMPONENTS TO A SUCCESSFUL SALE:



1. Show Your Potential Buyer You Understand Their Pain

To demonstrate you understand their pain fully, you must first listen to your prospect, then establish a direct correlation between your product or service and their best business solution. A buyer who believes their pain is clearly understood will be more willing to share critical information throughout the buying process. If they know you are “hearing them” they will, in turn, work harder to understand the solution being presented. Listen carefully. Restate their pain points back to them. Nothing will show that you understand (or are listening) more than your prospect hearing their points reinforced.



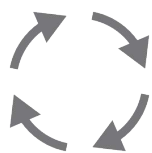
2. Connect Your Solution to the Organization's Biggest Problems

Making your prospect feel understood opens the doors to conversations about the organization's other problems. Start by making certain you understand how your prospect's pain is directly related to needs higher in the organization. A good grasp of the big picture will expand your sphere of influence in that company to the economic buyers who control discretionary funding, increasing your base of support for the proposed solution. The more you uncover how the problem is tied to other challenges in the organization, the more access you will get to other decision makers.



3. Communicate from the Buyer's Perspective

No one wants to hear about features that aren't relevant to a particular situation. Looking at a long list of features can skew any prospect's perception of your solution and leave the impression that because you have more than what is needed, you will be more expensive. Buyers today are focused on solutions to their problems. Articulate the value of your product or service in a way that resonates with customer goals, needs and problems. Price is of much less consequence if your prospect sees great value in your offering.



4. Introduce Relevant Competitive Differences Early in the Sales Cycle

A full understanding of your prospect's pain—early in the sales cycle—gives you the ability to differentiate your solution from your competitors'. Paint a clear and concise picture of your differences so they don't assume all solutions are similar in value. If you miss this opportunity to influence the buying criteria, it will reduce the decision to the lowest common denominator—price.



5. Articulate the Value You Provide Clearly and Consistently

You know your company's solution will eliminate your prospect's pain. But does your prospect? You must come prepared with the knowledge of how your company's offering delivers superior value and the best solution. Know your offering very well and be able to articulate it to your prospect. Otherwise, you risk sales cycle inefficiencies, customer confusion and brand dilution.

BEST-IN-CLASS CASE STUDY #1

The following success story outlines how Ping Identity, the leader in Identity Defined Security for the borderless enterprise, used Command of the Message® solutions to create sustainable sales growth and cross-functional alignment.



BUSINESS CHALLENGES

Ping Identity saw opportunity in its marketplace to transform from selling one primary capability, Single Sign-On, to selling multiple enterprise solutions. Historically, the sales organization primarily executed a land-and-expand sales strategy, but they wanted to move to a strategy where they came in with larger opportunities.

SOLUTIONS

Ping Identity worked with Force Management to:

- ✓ Build cross-functional alignment around the message it was sending to its customers
- ✓ Enable their sales team to articulate the enterprise value of its solutions
- ✓ Improve sales ability to clearly demonstrate competitive differentiation

RESULTS

Ping saw an immediate impact in the way they structured the cadence of their sales meetings and their territory planning. Their sales organization saw measurable results including:

- ✓ **7 out of the 10** largest subscription deals in company history
- ✓ **45% growth of subscription product year over year**
- ✓ Turned around an opportunity where they were ruled out and won the business three months later

INCREASE SALES PRODUCTIVITY

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Best-in-class companies that leverage a consistent messaging framework create the foundation for sustainable competitive advantage. By engaging in value-focused conversations with customers and prospects, sales professionals not only avoid margin-consuming discounting, but also create greater opportunities for cross-selling and up-selling. A consistent messaging framework clarifies marketing messaging and elevates sales conversations beyond the rudiments of feature, function and price. It provides sales professionals with a value-oriented sales language that resonates with customers and motivates them to buy.



The right messaging framework requires companies to do several things differently, including:

- ✓ Providing salespeople with a clear overview of the value propositions critical to the success of their customers
- ✓ Supporting value propositions with concise guidelines on how to understand, relate to and prioritize the challenges clients face
- ✓ Linking customer needs to the right solutions your company provides to help the client achieve gain and remove pain
- ✓ Supplying specific insights that allow reps to have interactive, business-focused customer conversations
- ✓ Providing proof points to back up your claims with examples of how you have helped other companies

In B2B sales, very few deals go uncontested. Even if there isn't a clear competitor, your solution is always being weighed against "Do Nothing" and "Do it Internally." Creating clear competitive differentiation is more critical than ever. Best-in-class sales organizations leverage consistent messages to communicate value, generate better leads, convert leads to customers and realize revenue goals.

BEST-IN-CLASS CASE STUDY #2

The following success story outlines how RSA drove results throughout their sales organization, which improved overall sales productivity.



BUSINESS CHALLENGES

As RSA acquired new companies and new technologies, implementing and maintaining a consistent sales plan and message was a challenge. Recruiters lacked the methodology necessary to identify the right sales representatives. Sales teams were focusing on price rather than value - and, as a result, they weren't selling the whole portfolio of products. RSA suffered from the problem that plagues so many organizations, a misalignment between sales and marketing. Overall, they needed a consistent message and strong people to deliver that message.

RESULTS

After implementing a Value Framework throughout its sales organization, RSA gave its sales teams the tools they needed to articulate value and differentiation, no matter the buyer. Its front-line managers were also equipped with an effective and practical tool to coach and reinforce the new methodology.

Forty-five days after their first engagement, RSA applied the tools, language, and the inspection process they learned in training and closed a deal that was more than \$3.5 million dollars.

- ✓ Multiple-product deals doubled
- ✓ Deals from \$250,000 to \$500,000 were up 30% in the first quarter after implementation
- ✓ Closed more \$1M+ deals in the first quarter after implementation than they ever had before

TRANSFORMING THE SALES ORGANIZATION

One of the greatest challenges for any sales organization is providing consistent tools and materials that give salespeople the ability to speak with confidence about how their products/services can truly transform a customer's business. When sales has that ability, and their message is aligned with marketing efforts, an organization can truly transform into a growth engine.

BEST-IN-CLASS CASE STUDY #3

This case study demonstrates how athenahealth used a Value Framework to drive overall organizational growth.



CHALLENGES

As a leader in the health-technology space, athenahealth, Inc. provides cloud-based services for electronic health records, practice management and care coordination. As a rapidly growing company, athenahealth suffered from the inconsistencies that plague many fast-growing organizations, especially in the areas of sales messaging, planning and talent management. Before engaging in a sales messaging initiative, sellers were giving valid information to their customers, but it wasn't consistent. These varying messages made it difficult to ramp up new hires and effectively articulate value consistently to their wide-ranging customer base.

Managers had difficulty coaching their reps to build pipeline because they didn't have a repeatable way to inspect accounts, opportunities and territories. Since sales leaders were charged with a 30% growth mandate, they wanted a repeatable process around hiring and retaining top sales talent. Managers needed a way to find successful sellers and a mechanism to help them become productive quickly.

RESULTS

A strong focus on adoption and reinforcement helped athenahealth find the repeatable and measurable success it needed to truly drive sales transformation. Sales leaders at athenahealth saw results in almost every part of their sales organization:

- ✓ 30% Increase in Lead Generation
- ✓ Multi-Service Deals Doubled
- ✓ Increase in Conversion Rates, Close Rates and Active Pipeline
- ✓ 54% Increase in "Meeting-to-Win" Ratio
- ✓ Record-Breaking Number of Sales Executives over Quota

WHAT NOW?

By re-aligning and keeping their messaging consistent around a common language, these successful sales organizations were able to:

- ✓ Uncover customer needs and determine which customers actually needed what they were selling.
- ✓ Articulate and justify business value by focusing on eliminating the customer's pain.
- ✓ Differentiate from the competition to prove that their solution was the best solution.
- ✓ Map solutions to customer problems because customers don't want products, they want their problems to go away.
- ✓ Provide proof through real-world examples that showcased their solutions.

As the examples show, each company has seen one or more of the following positive business outcomes:

- ✓ Higher competitive win rates
- ✓ Higher average deal size
- ✓ Greater deal margins

How will your company change its sales messaging to improve your sales team's ability to connect to a more informed buyer?

Without a focus on consistent problem/pain/solution messaging, you may find your sales team experiencing lower sales volumes and reduced margins, as well as struggling to meet their goals. But when you change your sales message into one that is consistent and solution driven, you can change bottom line results.

DRIVE PREDICTABLE REVENUE GROWTH. IMPROVE SALES PRODUCTIVITY. LET'S GET STARTED.

Let us help you create a more efficient and effective sales force
that creates bottom-line impact.

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