

The New Jobs of Sales and Marketing: facilitate the buying before the buyer, by Sharon-Drew Morgen (continued)

The industry presuppositions as to targeting 'buyers' are specious:

- finding the 'right' names of 'probable' buyers (regardless of how marginal);
- offering 'good' content;
- seeking people with a 'need';
- exhibiting concern, likeability, trustworthiness;
- lowering price.

Not only have these assumptions proven unsuccessful, they overlook the real problem: **selling doesn't cause buying**. You're using a model that assumes solution content will enlist people but failing because the focus is wrong, and blaming the people for not doing what you think they should do when you didn't even help them where they needed help!

What would you need to consider differently to first help facilitate change before trying to sell or place solutions?

WE DON'T NEED SOLUTION DETAILS

The last thing anyone needs before they buy is solution details. The first thing is help figuring out all the internal stuff they need to figure out. Indeed, there are [very specific steps](#) people must take before they even consider going outside for a solution.

- enlist all (ALL) stakeholders who helped create the problem and/or will touch the final solution. It's only when all are involved that the real problem and need are understood – and don't forget Joe in Accounting;
- seek workarounds;
- understand the 'cost' of the change to ensure it's equal to or less than the 'cost' of the status quo, regardless of the need or the efficacy of a solution: Systems Congruence (maintaining the cultural norms) is sacrosanct;
- get buy-in from all who will touch the solution.

Before anyone buys anything they have an increasingly complex change management journey. Why not enter and help here? There are soooo many more prospective buyers doing their change work on route to buying, and until they're complete, they can't buy. Why not help? You wait while they do it anyway! Because your solution details have no part to play in their internal, systems-driven activity, you're being ignored.

By connecting where folks really need help, you're overlooking a huge opportunity to become involved earlier as real [Servant Leaders](#) (intention to help others discover their own excellence). And make a whole lot more money.

You're ignoring the differences between the [Buy Side and the Sell Side](#). One is a change management journey, the other is a readiness to make a purchase. One precedes the other. Simple. Yet you've ignored one of them and it has cost you dearly.

Think of the last ten items you purchased.

- How many of them required a salesperson?
- How much of your decision making was supported by research you did online, data that years ago would have been provided by a seller?
- What percentage of your buying decision process involved other people – their input, ideas, experience, feedback?
- Did you *start* by making a purchase?
- How much time did you spent figuring out how to get buy-in/agreement from others, or figuring out how to fix the problem yourself?
- At what point did you begin comparing products or vendors?
- At what point did you begin seeking out marketing materials?

Why hasn't your own buying process informed you? Surely you've never started with a purchase (unless it was a small personal item).

What would you need to understand the recognize that the Buy Side is not focused on making a purchase?

Out of the box thinking

Best I can tell, you're not thinking beyond 'need' and solution placement. But David Sandler did. In 1993, before he died, Sandler called me to try to buy me out.

"Well done, Sharon-Drew! I thought I had gone outside the box with Sandler Sales. But with Buying Facilitation® you really did! I hadn't realized how far 'outside the box' was and how necessary managing change was! Good job!"

Ultimately we couldn't strike a deal (although he had me train [Buying Facilitation®](#) to 7 of his franchises). But he was right. Different thinking was required even then.

What's stopping you from separating the systemic, non-buying, change management portion of the buying decision journey from what you have to sell?

Need is the wrong criteria

Because of the complexity involved when deciding whether, how, when or if to fix a problem, because of the number of people involved who must offer input and agreement, because of the downsides of change and the complexities of relationships, not everyone with a need is in the market to buy anything.

The search for people with a 'need' is a foundational flaw. Do you have a few pounds to shed? Should you be exercising more? Do you need to be better organized? If you answered 'yes' to any of these, you have a need. Why aren't you doing anything about it?

See? Having a need is not a precursor to buying. It might be the wrong time, or the people needed to be involved don't buy in, or the 'cost' of the change might cause too much disruption. **Seeking folks with a 'need' restricts you from finding people on route to becoming, but haven't yet self-identified as, buyers - a much, much larger audience.**

What tools do you need to add non-sales change facilitation to your sales skills?

Sellers aren't necessary to spout features, functions or benefits

A company representative is the last thing needed to make a purchase. Literally the last thing. Not to mention people get their data online these days.

Consider this: Just because someone

- has a need doesn't mean they're ready, willing, or able to buy,
- is ready, willing, or able to buy doesn't mean they'll buy from you – or buy it now.
- is ready to buy now doesn't mean they need a salesperson to complete their purchase.

Both sales and marketing think a buying decision is based on need and features and benefits. And the fact that a **buying decision starts well before people even understand the full extent of their need** aside, your close numbers should have alerted you that maybe your assumptions are flawed. When you discuss your solution before people consider themselves buyers people will be turned off, ignore your data, feel pushed, and you will have missed an opportunity to serve.

What's stopping you from adding change facilitation to your tool kit?

Wasting time on folks who will never buy

Think with me here. You're contacting, following up, calling, emailing, any name that shows up with any sort of 'touch point', closing a tiny fraction, and wasting so much time chasing non-buyers... and then blaming *them* because they aren't closing!

Just because someone does research online doesn't mean they're buyers.

Maybe they had a thought during their internal information gathering. Maybe they had many different thoughts on how to resolve a problem and they were perusing different ideas and options. Maybe a colleague used a solution they hadn't heard of and were checking it out.

But here's a fundamental question: **why don't you know the difference on the first contact who will be a buyer, and spend your time serving them?** Change your focus to first finding folks seeking change; then use your knowledge to help those who WILL be buyers get their ducks in a row!

What concepts do you want to learn to help you find folks on route to buying?

Your questions are biased by your need to sell and don't help buying

You've been taught to ask questions, but your questions are biased by your need to sell and gather partial or inaccurate data; they don't help people become buyers.

I developed a new form of question ([Facilitative Question](#)) that leads action rather than gather data. I **use my knowledge of the obligatory steps all folks must take before becoming buyers, and facilitate their actions:**

"How will you know when you've involved the full complement of stakeholders?"

Leading people to include the necessary people is different from trying to 'find out' for yourself so you can sell, like in

"Who are the decision makers?"

Facilitative Questions help others move through their discovery and change management, effectively speeding up the buying decision/sales cycle (**The time it takes to make the necessary decisions and get buy in for change is the length of the sales cycle.**)

Conventional questions are biased by the seller's needs to pitch or convince, to gather names to sell to. You're overlooking a great opportunity to truly help them get to the unique answers they must discover internally:

How will fixing a problem affect daily jobs? Their relationships? What is the full fact pattern that caused and maintains their problem? Are the right stakeholders included (Don't forget Joe in Accounting!)? Will we need to re-organize? Will the 'cost' of the fix be worth it?

These are questions people must have answers to before they know which route to go to fix it. Notice they have **nothing to do with buying, only problem resolution and congruent change**. Besides, what would you do with this data even if it could be ascertained? Put a name on a spam list to send content (and annoy)? Go around the person you're speaking with? Pitch 'differently'? The odds of encouraging a purchase with your questions are slim to none.

I have a story. Years ago I got a call in January from a man named Jack Moore:

Jack: Hi Sharon-Drew. Jack Moore here from Cancer Treatment Centers. I've been reading your books and thinking about bringing you in to train our people for a long time. I'm calling now because I think we're ready to learn Buying Facilitation®!

SD: Cool. But what stopped you from calling 'yesterday'?

Jack: silence. Oh! Um, can I think about that and call you back?

December:

Jack: Hi Sharon-Drew. Jack Moore from Cancer Treatment Centers. Remember me?

SD: No.

Jack: I called in January. You asked me a question that I couldn't answer but realized I needed to. I put the question on my desk and yelled at you for a month. Then I had to admit the truth: I was the one who stopped me because I wasn't in a position to bring you in, that my team was wrong, our organization was wrong. I spent the next year firing people I should have fired long ago, reorganizing more efficiently. NOW we're ready!

Because I heard a systems problem on his first call, it never occurred to me to pitch my solution; he wasn't ready. **My question helped him do what he needed to do to be ready to buy**. It wasn't about my solution; it was a problem he had to resolve himself. Do you want to sell? Or have someone buy?

Are you willing to use Facilitative Questions to first facilitate change before trying to understand 'need'?

HOW DO YOU BUY?

It begins with awareness. You sort of notice a problem that becomes more apparent as you think about it and ask others, then maybe make some tweaks. Then you bring together some folks and start discussing it more thoroughly, and maybe have someone come in and give you an opinion. Then you begin researching available choices and discuss again with the team. You try possibilities you've used before, or solutions colleagues mention. You might reorganize a bit. You keep meeting with folks to find out if the problem is being resolved, if they can gerryrig anything. You keep reading, trying, asking, trying. Other people, other departments, get involved. They become part of the team.

The process goes on until finally you all agree you can't resolve the issue yourselves. But before you consider buying anything, you must first know the downsides, the disruption, and consider if it's worth it.

If the 'cost' of disruption is greater than the 'cost' of staying the same, you'll continue doing what you've been doing. It's only when the 'cost' is equal to or less than the status quo that you'll consider buying anything.

You don't wake up one day, notice a problem, and buy something. It's a decision process – a change management process - that incorporates the people and change as you attempt to resolve a problem. Unfortunately, neither sales nor marketing address this.

It's time to add a new component to both sales and marketing: facilitate the [buying decision path](#). The decision process all people go through is more time consuming for them than making the actual purchase. **They would love to have help** to decide, and resolve, quicker.

This is where sales and marketing could be truly useful. When you're in the middle of the discovery and confusion, wouldn't you rather that help in your change management than with what you may want to buy?

THE STEPS OF CHANGE

I spent many years unpacking the steps all people take as figure out how, why, if to do something different. Until

- all people connected with the problem share their ideas and concerns,
- everyone agrees the problem can't be fixed with available resources,
- all possible workarounds are tried,
- folks who will touch a new solution are willing to make a change,

- the consequences of change are known and the downsides are deemed workable,

people aren't buyers, regardless of their need or the efficacy of a solution.

Both sellers and marketers ignore the necessary change work. Instead of spending that time trying to convince, persuade, and manipulate, why not help them first manage the change?

Marketing can do this with articles that facilitate change along the change management steps ("Have you tried all possible workarounds?"); sellers can do this on the first call by focusing on change rather than 'need' or solutions; decision technology can do this (I've developed a Decider app for use with deal rooms and ABM). You can develop your own processes.

But start by finding those on route to becoming buyers, then facilitate the internal change work they must do anyway.

A buying decision is a change management issue long before it's a solution choice issue. This is where 80% of real buyers are – but because the sales model overlooks this change management portion, and these folks don't respond to marketing materials or sales calls (They're not buyers yet!), sales spends its time pushing, seeking, manipulating those whose names have come up from searches as 'probable' buyers and overlook the majority of folks they can connect with and truly serve. This is where they actually need you!

WHAT IF

You aren't connecting with a majority of folks who will buy because their process isn't 'need' or 'solution placement' focused and you're not adding any new change management capabilities to serve people on route to becoming buyers.

I've developed [Buying Facilitation®](#) to accomplish this. Even the new 'buyer' focus I've been hearing about is based on what you want to sell rather than how they need to make change decisions! Facilitate the buying before the buyer!

Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- What if we shift the focus from selling to providing what people really need help with – facilitating their confusing change issues so they were ready to become buyers?
- What if you could find folks who are on route to becoming buyers on the first call and facilitate them through their Pre-Sales change? And all you needed to do was add a front end to what you're doing now? Or hire a new group of Change Facilitators to do this part who pass on REAL names of REAL in-market buyers!

- Why hasn't sales added that change management stuff? Oh, I know: because sales thinks that to sell you start by, um, selling.
- What if with a new way of thinking, tools that facilitate the change and non-solution buying path to turn would-be-buyers into actual buyers, you could close 8X more sales?
- What if the complexity of the buying decision is the problem, and folks really you're your help to manage the internal change?
- What if there's no way an outsider could understand the unique complexities of the issues Others must handle before becoming a buyer? What if you could guide the Pre-Sales process then sell?
- What if the real solution is much cheaper and easier than trying to find names who might (less than 5% in person, 00059% online) be buyers and you'll close 8X more?

It's time to change. Facilitate change first, find folks who are on route to buying your solution on the first call, facilitate them through their decision path, then sell. And you'll close 40% of the same group you previously closed <5%. And I won't have to write anymore rants.

Sharon-Drew Morgen is a breakthrough innovator and original thinker, having developed new paradigms in sales (inventor [Buying Facilitation®](#), listening/communication (*What? Did you really say what I think I heard?*), change management ([The How of Change™](#)), coaching, and leadership. She is the author of several books, including the NYTimes Business Bestseller ***Selling with Integrity*** and *Dirty Little Secrets: why buyers can't buy and sellers can't sell*). Sharon-Drew coaches and consults with companies seeking out of the box remedies for congruent, servant-leader-based change in leadership, healthcare, and sales. Her award-winning blog carries original articles with new thinking, weekly. www.sharon-drew.com She can be reached at sharondrew@sharondrewmorgen.com.