



SALES IN THE 3RD MILLENNIUM

WHY THE SALESMEN AND WOMEN OF THE 3RD MILLENNIUM WILL BE “CHARISMATIC TECHNOPHILES”

A Mercuri International White Paper

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Sales in the 3rd millennium

If there's one area in which the impact of the technological revolution we've witnessed over the last ten years has been underestimated, it's surely in sales.

In the minds of many sales representatives and managers the key moment in a sale remains the face-to-face meeting. And that's understandable. For hundreds, even thousands of years the influence process has, after all, been concentrated into the physical meeting between seller and buyer.

For a long time this moment of contact presented the most important, not to say the only opportunity to ascertain certain information: what the buyer expected from a purchase and what exactly the seller was offering; how far they were willing to give and take; details of rivals, the level of investment required and what concessions might be made, for example.

In addition to this exchange of information, the face-to-face meeting was also the salesman or woman's chance to show off his or her powers of persuasion.

Using a wide variety of techniques ranging from artful seduction to the “heavy sell”, they pitted themselves alone against the customer, earning either the glory of victory or the ignominy of failure.

But that was the past...

By facilitating access to information, the new technologies currently at our disposal have reversed the roles of sales staff and customer. Buyers can now get the information they want alone as well as exchange information with other users and compare the items and prices on offer with much greater ease. They have become far more independent.

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That's why engaging with the customer has become the culmination of a buying process rather than the clinching of a sale.

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Why the salesmen and women of the 3rd millennium will be “charismatic technophiles”.
CONT.

The sale is dead; long live purchase support!

So, how have salesmen and women changed the way they operate to adapt to these developments? The answer, to be honest, is hardly at all. And therein lies the problem. Like a couple in an ailing marriage, they're starting to realise that they've grown apart without really understanding why.

Give me some space!

That's just the cry of frustration you might hear from a rebellious customer in search of freedom. Gaining in independence by the day, buyers – whether professional or private – are more confident than ever of their ability to complete the buying process alone.

Better to live on your own, they think, than with someone you don't get on with, especially if that someone is a sales representative!

In terms of objectivity, after all, they hardly enjoy an exemplary reputation, and the added value they are supposed to provide is becoming less and less apparent.

So, these face-to-face meetings are becoming both rarer and less rewarding for both parties. The ties are weakening, divorce is in the offing...

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If they want to build bridges before it's too late, salesmen and women are going to have to make some

big changes in the way they do business, notably getting to grips with new technology, if they are to succeed in:

- influencing the “purchasing path” of potential customers and obtaining the same level of information – or disinformation – as they have
- identifying potential customers in “buying mode” in order to increase productivity
- being better organised thanks to intelligent, non-restrictive CRM
- reducing sales costs and increasing commercial pressure through remote selling tools
- boosting their face-to-face impact by using a range of materials including video, economic simulators and remote connections.

Salesmen and woman must reinvent themselves

This influence process requires the use of new resources. Once seen as something of a “one man band”, salesmen and women must now reinvent themselves as the conductor of an orchestra, coaxing the various resources at their disposal into play at the right time, at the right tempo, to create a piece of music they will have rarely composed but which they must interpret. Exactly the area in which they excel.