

Differentiated Selling

➤ Sales transformation is a must

- **Around 40% of the people in the world are connected to Internet.**

In 2015 there were a little more than 3 billion surfers as compared to 2 billion in 2011, a 50% increase in 4 years, and almost half this number own smartphones. All professions are affected. All habits have changed. Behaviour is no longer what it used to be. So what will be the impact on salespersons?

Should this evolution be a subject of anxiety or joy?

- **Accessibility of information has disrupted buying practices. It gives an illusion of knowledge.**

Just a click and the customer has access to a whole lot of useful information, exact and detailed technical facts, well-documented product comparisons, reviews from satisfied or dissatisfied users.

So the customer thinks he can do everything himself. Customers believe they can get more objective information themselves, making it less important to meet with a sales person. « Why trust a salesperson when I can as well contact other buyers who share their buying experiences with me openly and disinterestedly ». More and more customers feel

they no longer need a salesperson. Even in the most complex B2B markets more and more customers begin by going online and consulting Google. So it is becoming harder and harder for salespersons to meet with customers before the buying decision is taken.

New technologies have revolutionised the customer's buying journey. Since customers have easier access to extensive information, they start forming strong beliefs before they meet with the salesperson. They have become more autonomous when it comes to defining their buying criteria, to searching, comparing, and selecting the solutions they seek. Consequently, they are harder to influence as they have stronger opinions, stronger attitudes and stronger preferences.

What do you do when faced with the unassailable assurance of a customer who knows or thinks he knows everything? What happens to your expertise built up through training and experience? What is the interest in advice that seems interested?

Selling today has undergone a profound transformation, linked to changes in the client's buying behaviour. The change is so radical that traditional sales methods cannot deliver the desired leap in performance.

➤ What changes have happened

In 1912, high jumpers used the scissors technique, one leg followed the other over the bar. The world champion was George Horine. He had already jumped 1.98m. But he bettered his record. He became the first man to cross the two-metre mark thanks to the new Western Roll. Performances stagnated until a young American participated in the 1968 Mexico Olympics. His first attempt surprised the spectators. He jumped with his back turned to the bar. It was absolutely spectacular. He threw himself with his head backwards above the bar. The crowd went mad. The spectators feared he would break his cervical vertebrae. But he landed cushioned by deep foam matting, stood up and let out a whoop of joy. The people cheered. Dick Fosbury won the Gold medal. This technique was adopted by the Cuban athlete Javier Sotomayor in 1993 in Salamanca, Spain, and he jumped 2.45 metres, a world record that still stands unbeaten today.

The change from the scissors to the roll and then the Fosbury flop enabled a performance leap of more than 20%.

Have sales techniques undergone sea changes? Not for 30 years now. Sales methods are fossilized and have not been reviewed in the light of the recent change. “The customer is king”, “A good salesperson must listen twice as much as he talks”, these are outdated beliefs. What must be done in today’s customer’s interactions in order to convince clients who are becoming more and more unpredictable and to succeed with prospects who are getting increasingly difficult to meet?

Can we depend effectively on a single, universal method to face situations as diverse as the customer who makes an urgent purchase because his machine has just broken down (**forced purchase**), the one who asks his supplier a lot of questions with a deliberate acquisition in mind (**premeditated purchase**) or yet another one who is enticed by a novelty into an unplanned purchase (**impulsive purchase**).

➤ Let’s take a closer look at what is happening

- Some customers react very positively to your company offering, they have worked with your company in the past, they trust your products and services. Or they have read favourable customer comments on the net. Some are more resistant while others are perhaps even against you because they prefer another supplier or they do not see any need for a cooperation or they have been influenced by some blogs. We call this first dimension **Preference**: it answers the question “what is the attitude of the customer towards our company offering”?
- Now, amongst the contacts your salespersons are meeting, some are very clear about what they want and are well aware of what they can expect from different suppliers. Some have prepared a very detailed RFP leaving little room for discussion and

they are hard to influence while there are others who are more open to advice. This second dimension we call **Autonomy**: it answers the question “what does the customer expect from our salesperson -high or low added value”?

Do you know what selling situations you are facing today, do you know what are the trends, what will be the most common selling situation tomorrow? Do you know what is the selling power of your sales team in each of them? If not, your results are at risk.

The Differentiated Selling Survey

The tools and methods to be used are very specific to each situation!

1. **In Relational selling** the challenge is not so much to close the deal as to do cross selling or up selling.
2. **In Assertive Selling** the challenge is to change the customer's mind about the solution he wants.
3. **In Consultative selling** the challenge is to reshape the customer's problem and so become a potential adviser.
4. **In Expertise selling** the challenge is to get the solution accepted capitalizing on the existing credibility.

What you expect is of course that your sales guys use the right sales approach in each situation that's the way they can contribute to profitable growth, isn't it? But unfortunately that's not what's happening. They continue doing what they have been taught to

do (asking questions, enhancing, handling objections, closing) supported by their Sales Managers as this made them successful during their days of glory. As in sports, the salesperson can never attain a real performance leap by using obsolete methods. You must think of a drastic change of method to convince those clients whose buying journey has changed. You must put together all the best practices observed over the past decades, combine the art of convincing that is specific to an emotional approach, the power of deductive chains of rational argumentation and the techniques that help strengthen nearness to the contact person. **Sales persons must become chameleon-like, able to master each new sales situation with equal effectiveness, able to become blue, red, green and yellow when required.** But they are not, and neither are their Sales Managers, familiar with these different selling situations. They know some but not all the corresponding sales methods.

➤ Let's take a closer look at what is happening

The Diagnosis that Mercuri International offers is based on an on-line questionnaire (only 40 questions) sent to your entire sales team. It is adapted to your business and sales ambition thanks to a very focused workshop beforehand.

For your key sales strategy Differentiated Selling Survey™

- Visualises the selling situations your company meets in customer/prospect contacts
- Analyses the % of time your sales team spends in each selling situation
- Identifies the predominant selling situation of

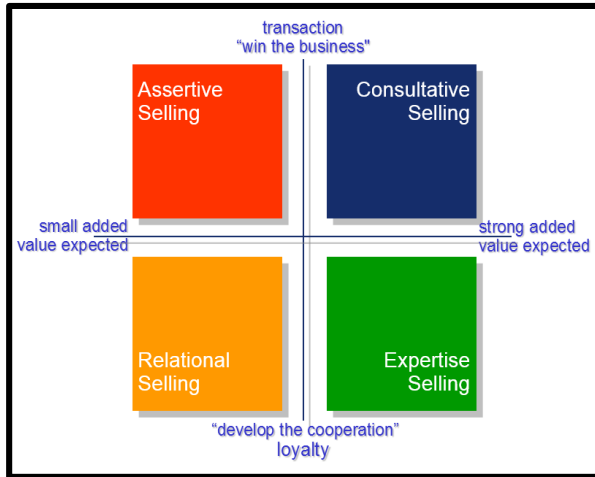
tomorrow

- Measures the sales power of your sales team in those different situations
 - In which your sales guys are efficient
 - In which your sales guys do not have enough impact.
- Allows you to find out your areas of progress.

Communicating the results to your sales team will create a better alignment with your sales strategy and a strong awareness of the change needed in practices for increasing sales performance.

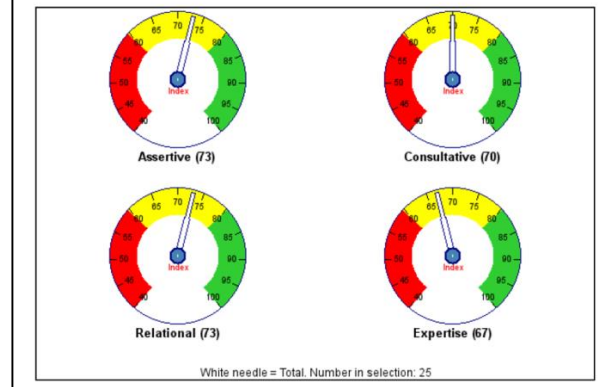
The prerequisite to implementing the change that will create a new dynamic of success in your company is a diagnosis of your selling situations and the sales skills of your sales guys related to those situations.

➤ The Essential Tools



Differentiated selling conceptualises the selling situations a sales team is facing.

3. Our Sales Practice KPI's



It measures the sales power of the company's sales team in those different situations

- In which the sales team is efficient
- In which the sales team is lacking impact



DSS analyses and visualises the selling situations a company meets in its customer/prospect contacts.