

SALES IS BROKEN

Surviving & thriving through the
tectonic shift in the Age of Acceleration

An eBook by Bryan Gray and the RPG Team

Introduction.

Ask any CEO what causes them to sweat on any given day. More than likely, they're experiencing a great level of anxiety about simply keeping up - let alone excelling - in a rapidly changing world.

In today's environment, described as the Age of Acceleration by author Thomas Friedman, that rate of change is unprecedented. And, at the same time, the speed of change is accelerating with no signs of slowing down.

In *Thank You for Being Late: An Optimist's Guide to Thriving in the Age of Accelerations*, Friedman notes the rate of change is coming from all directions — technology, the environment and the marketplace. Without evolving, companies are at risk of becoming irrelevant. Within a matter of months, they can face the prospect of being digitally dislocated if their environments are being altered so quickly that everyone starts to feel they can't keep up.

It's troubling. While CEOs always have had to ensure their institutions were evolving more quickly and strategically than their competitors, that pressure has reached an entirely different level. No one is immune. The ability to adapt quickly has become a matter of survival for companies of all sizes and all industries.





The reign of the “sales guy” is over.

Shifts break things. Some are big and some are so big they change the very fabric of our world. Everybody knows technology has profoundly impacted the way we do business and the way we live our lives. While most organizations have found ways to evolve their marketing efforts by investing heavily in tactics like digital marketing and CRMs, few have stopped to ask “how does our sales team fit into today’s buyers’ journey?” What is their function, and how can they win in the modern world?

This shift from the “sales guy” era to the Age of Acceleration has created three deadly C’s to revenue growth that are plaguing your teams. Compressed selling time, Commoditization and Consensus decision-making all require a complete overhaul to how you differentiate, present and close on business. Those who actively attack these changes will create outsized gains while those who stay passive, consider yourself forewarned...

**Digital is the main reason just
over half of the companies
on the Fortune 500 have
disappeared since the year 2000.**

Pierre Nanterme
CEO, Accenture

Participant in the World Economic
Forum's Annual Meeting



“How did you go bankrupt? Two ways... gradually, then suddenly.”

Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*

This seems to summarize, all too well, the shift in sales over the past few years. The first signs of the Age of Acceleration may have seemed trivial by today's standards; they didn't cause much pain or loss. Signs like the buyer who had printed out some web pages of your competitors, or the committee of sudden experts who took control of your presentation to grill you about value.

Over time, you might have realized there was something going on, once the losses were stacking up. What you didn't know is that your prospects had gradually been cutting you out of large parts of the sales process, making shortlists on their own, using information that they found on their own, without you.



THE TOP CHALLENGES FACING TODAY'S SALES ORGANIZATIONS

- It's become harder to stand out, and you're frustrated at continually being cast as the same as your competitors.
- It's getting harder to get attention at higher levels within an organization.
- Your sales team is losing too many close deals... ones they should have nailed.
- Delayed decision-making is happening more than ever.
- Your team keeps asking for price concessions.



Today, up to 70% of the sales process is done before a sales rep enters the picture. It will hit the 80% mark by 2020.

The research, information gathering and shortlisting in the early part of a sale used to require a sales rep. Now, it's done online and the place where your crew used to shine doesn't exist anymore. You lost your access and in turn have lost your time to influence and build relationships. Your charm doesn't get you through the early stages of a sale anymore.

Before digital dislocation, you made contact with your prospects early, while they were forming shortlists. You were the gatekeeper of most—or even all—of the information about your products and services that your prospects collected and considered.

You could communicate the reasons why you should make their next shortlist, every cut, and convince them to let you pitch.

Today, there could easily be 2.5 million results for what you sell, including every competitor, available in half a second or less.

By no means does this imply your sales team is less important or has less impact on revenue growth. What it does mean is their role has changed in a big way. They have to accomplish so much more in a fraction of the time that they used to. This shift has given birth to the 3 Deadly C's that have redefined today's selling landscape.

The 3C's

The “3 C’s”—compressed selling time, commoditization and consensus decision-making – have created a trifecta of angst that puts pressure on your revenue growth. On their own, they’re tough to deal with. Together, they stop your sales teams from closing deals they should win.



1

Compressed Selling Time

You’ve lost 70% of your selling time, mainly relationship and influence building. You have to fight off more competitors in less time, leaving you no room for error.

2

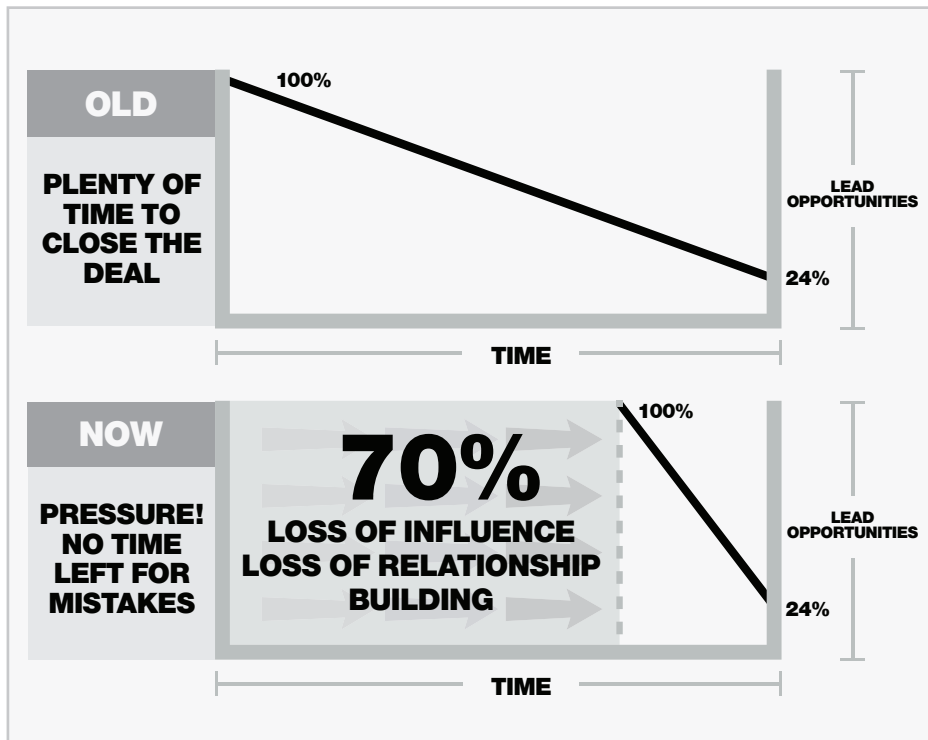
Commoditization

When prospects look for you online, they find everyone else! With everyone looking and sounding the same, it’s no wonder price has become a bigger factor.

3

Consensus Decision-Making

With two to three times the number of decision makers than before, you’re continually fighting to maintain prioritization and eliminate delay; and we all know what time does to deals.



You need tools to help fight today's steep slope.

If your pitch didn't hit the mark right away and make a major impact, you've just dropped way down to the bottom of the prospect's list. Why? Once you've entered the ring, they're already very far down the buying path, 70% of the way along! This steep slope can mean fast failure, with no room for error when working to gain additional access.

Even more bad news: even if your rivals don't stand out, you're still not getting called back. Your prospects just lose interest and move on to some other pain to solve. Since no one was able to demonstrate that the relief was greater than the cost, the prospect is willing to continue dealing with the pain.

No decision? No big deal to your prospect, but no deal at all for you. As many as 60% of all leads are lost to nothing at all, the prospect deciding to not buy anything.



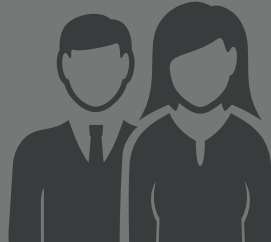
You need tools to overcome “sameness”.

Today, your prospect has complete access to all of your direct competitors right there at their fingertips. Everyone is just a click away. To your prospect, they all look and sound just like you and it's hard to tell the difference between you and another choice.

This is bad for your prospects because they deserve to know the real differences so they can make better buying choices. It's bad for your revenue, because when all options seem the same, price becomes too much of a deciding factor.

When you can't clearly differentiate, you're either forced to play games with your pricing or you're more likely to become part of the 60% of sales that are lost to no decision at all. Either way, it's wreaking havoc on your margins.

Old
School
1-2



Now
School
5+




You need tools to fight today's death by committee.

Remember when you could count on one person to help you steer your deal? Not anymore. Decision-making teams are getting bigger all the time. A Fortune Magazine article from 2016 gives us a strong clue: “The time required for one company to sell something to another, for example, has risen 22% in the past five years, as gaining consensus from one or two buyers has turned into five or more.”

The process is slowing down, with more buyers in the mix—all freshly armed with information they skimmed from the Internet—using this purchase to play out their competing interests. If you aren't engaging enough to make them reach a decision, you're quickly being forgotten and reprioritized. Time kills all deals.

What have we learned so far?



We discussed how selling was different before the Age of Acceleration. The Internet has created what's perceived to be a shorter sale, with more buyers per sale.

Prospects are having a hard time seeing who's different, because they're traveling the first 70% of the purchase alone.

You're not invited to the sale because the shortlisting happens online, without you, and sales training programs developed before the Age of Acceleration aren't equipped to handle it.

The Result:

- Delayed decisions
- Losing to others for the wrong reasons
- No decisions - losing 60% to the prospect not changing

1

What do you need to do about this?

I've shown you how the Age of Acceleration has created a fundamental change in the sales process. Now, we'll talk about why traditional sales approaches are failing you, and how smarter selling relies on brain science driving Age of Acceleration sales decisions so you better understand how to evolve your sales methods.

first



YOU need to understand how your prospect's mind really works. Knowing the process, speed and emotional context to decision-making, you must create pinpoint messaging that is unique to you and presented in the way your prospect's brain wants it.

This lets you do more in less time because you're perfectly in sync with your prospects, not fighting for their attention. Understanding your prospect's decision-making process allows you to overcome compressed sales times.

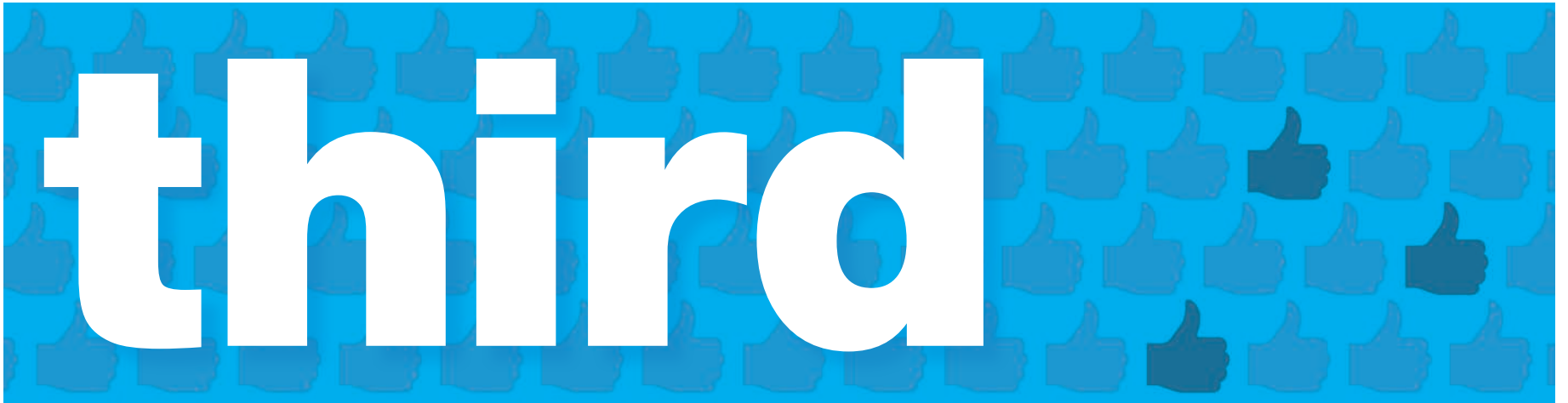




second

YOU want to learn how to win those close deals, no longer losing what should have been yours all along. You need to quickly lock down the answer to “Why you?” with brain-friendly visuals and proofs to drive emotional lift.

Giving your prospects the reasons you’re different allows you to overcome commoditization because they finally get why you’re different—and better.




YOU must understand how to pitch and win over larger and larger decision-making teams. You have just one meeting to convince the entire room you're the right and only choice, to distance yourself from everyone else presenting before and after. Successful pitches unlock really good conversations that lead to closed deals. Unsuccessful ones show up, talk the whole time, and leave not knowing where they stand.

Sales managers spend a lot of time thinking of how to unify their team, but pro sales reps spend their time unifying the prospect's team, allowing you to overcome consensus-building in decision teams.



What have we learned so far?



You can beat commoditization by using messages in line with the order, speed and emotional context your prospect's brain expects. You can overcome compressed selling time by answering "why you?" as quickly as possible. You can make consensus easier by aligning your prospects with one great pitch.

2

Turn the Corner, Crank the Dial.

We've talked about the three C's and the problems they cause sales in the Age of Acceleration. Now we'll discuss real actions you can take to overcome the three C's based on this new knowledge.

Selling in the Age of Acceleration has added three obstacles - commoditization, compressed selling time and consensus decision-making. Let's look at some specific actions you can take to solve them and how the science behind the way we make decisions can help you improve your sales.



OBJECTIVE

A

Create brain-friendly messaging to beat commoditization.

We know that to really stand out to your prospect, you have to answer their question: “Why should I choose you?”

In order to do this the right way, we need a little bit more knowledge of your real prospect’s process, speed and emotion.

Will the real prospect please step forward?

When you're in front of your prospects, who are you selling to? A person? A group of people? A company? It's easy to think in these terms, but you need to see things differently if you're going to really make an impression.

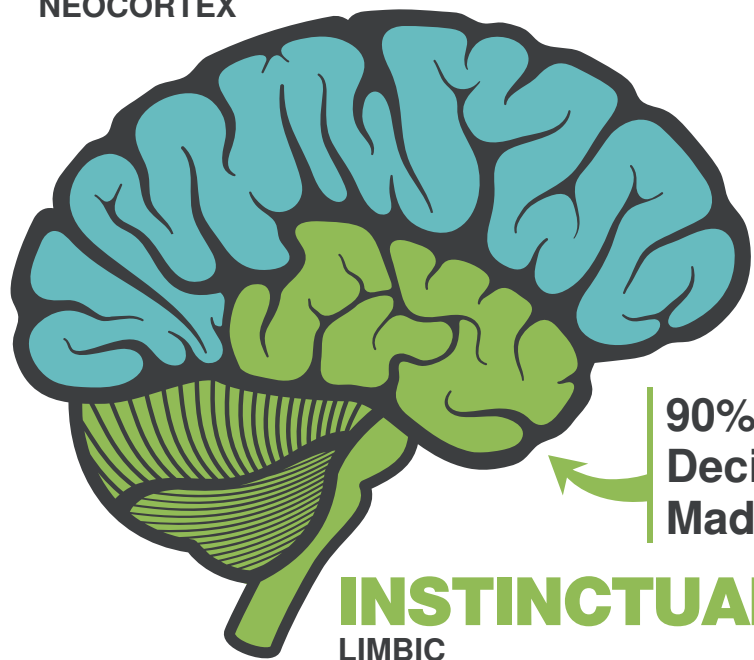
Stop trying to win hearts and souls. You're really just selling to a 3 pound organ called the human brain. This is your real prospect, and as complex and amazing as it is, the process it uses to make a decision is both primitive and predictable.

When it comes to decision-making, there are two basic parts, and they can be categorized as either an influencer or the judge. You might be surprised to learn that neither logic nor emotion are the judge. They're influencers, offering support for really big decisions some of the time.



**“oh,
hello.”**

LOGICAL
NEOCORTEX



**90% of
Decisions are
Made Here**

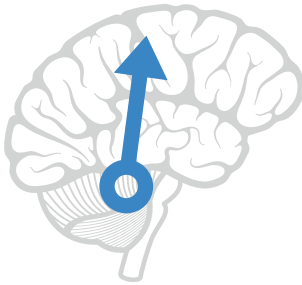
It's not rocket science, it's brain science.

The real judge is the “instinctual” part of the brain, the limbic part. Its everyday job is to eliminate threats, pains and fears.

What's amazing is that about 90% of our daily choices only happen in this part of the brain. They're the sort of things we do all the time, like braking when a light turns red, tying a shoelace that's come undone or avoiding a hornet flying near you.

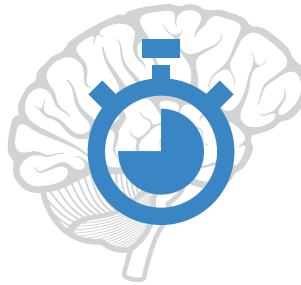
For the other 10%, the limbic part of the brain makes its move first, and then logic and emotion come in as backup support. You can't avoid it, every human decision, including your sale, begins with an assessment of threats, pains and fears.

WHAT WE KNOW



PROCESS

Most present in the exact opposite way than our brain's decision-making process. As hard as it might seem, you need to flip it upside down.



SPEED

With 90% of decisions made on autopilot, you must make it easy and fast for your prospects to say “that’s it!”



EMOTION

You must create emotional lift to spark commitment. Emotions are the triggers to decisions.

What does this mean for your sale?

Age of Acceleration selling teams that consistently hit revenue goals are winning close deals by relentlessly focusing on proving how their product or service relieves their prospects' pain. Anything more is a distraction.

Yet so many presentations lead with facts and figures, trying to win with logic, features or benefits. But your prospect's brain needs to hear how you're solving its pain first. It's so different to how the brain wants its information, that it's no wonder the buyer can't pay attention.

So how do you sell to the brain?



1

Understand the brain's focus - relieving pain at a deep-rooted, base level.

2

Identify the most important pains your prospect's brain wants solved - starting with the social pains facing their corporate role.

3

Articulate your value; connecting these to the pains your prospects want solved.

4

Create your Convincing Advantages™, the compelling reasons why you are the best and only real choice.

DO THIS TODAY

Differentiate your offer through your Convincing Advantages™.

Getting your entire team on the same page is valuable. Getting your prospect's team on the same page is even better!

Find the two or three ways you solve your prospect's pain. Prove them over and over and you create alignment with your prospect's entire team, each member able to remember and recite how you're different and why they should buy. Those two or three reasons answer "Why you?" We call them Convincing Advantages.

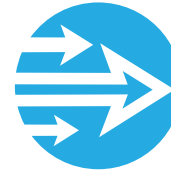
Well-crafted advantages unique to you, focused on your prospect's pain and relentlessly proven, make it easy to communicate, easy to remember, and easy to apply - along every step of the sale.

This construct aligns with the process, matches the speed and activates the emotional triggers of the brain's decision-making process, starting in the right place. That's how your messaging stands out and gets acted on!

The Right Advantages



CREATE
Alignment



GENERATE
Action



BUILT FOR
the Brain

OBJECTIVE

B

BEFORE



AFTER



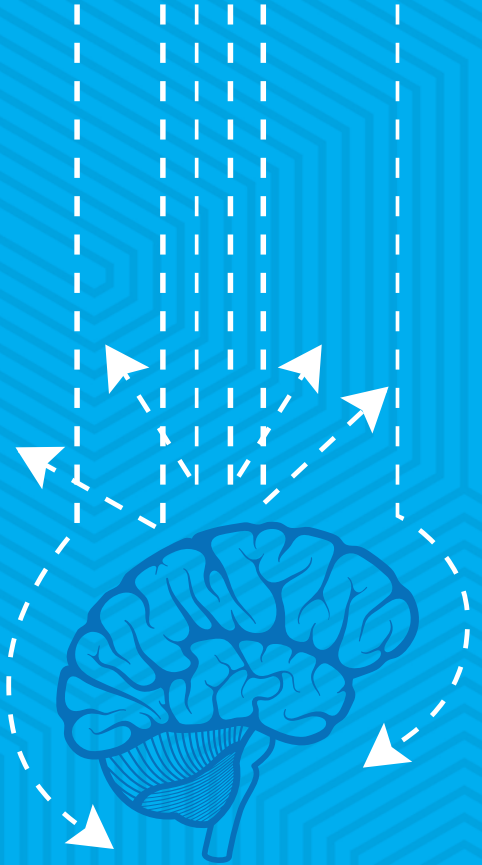
Craft a visual pitch deck to solve commoditization, drive prioritization and create greater access.

In the Age of Acceleration, you have to nail the pitch because you have less time with your prospects than before. Great first pitches become door-openers to better information access and a higher level of decision maker; creating a huge advantage over your competition.

The “Unforced Errors” of Presenting. . .

These are some common ways that you’re taking yourself out of contention during your pitch, based on what we know about how brains make buying choices:

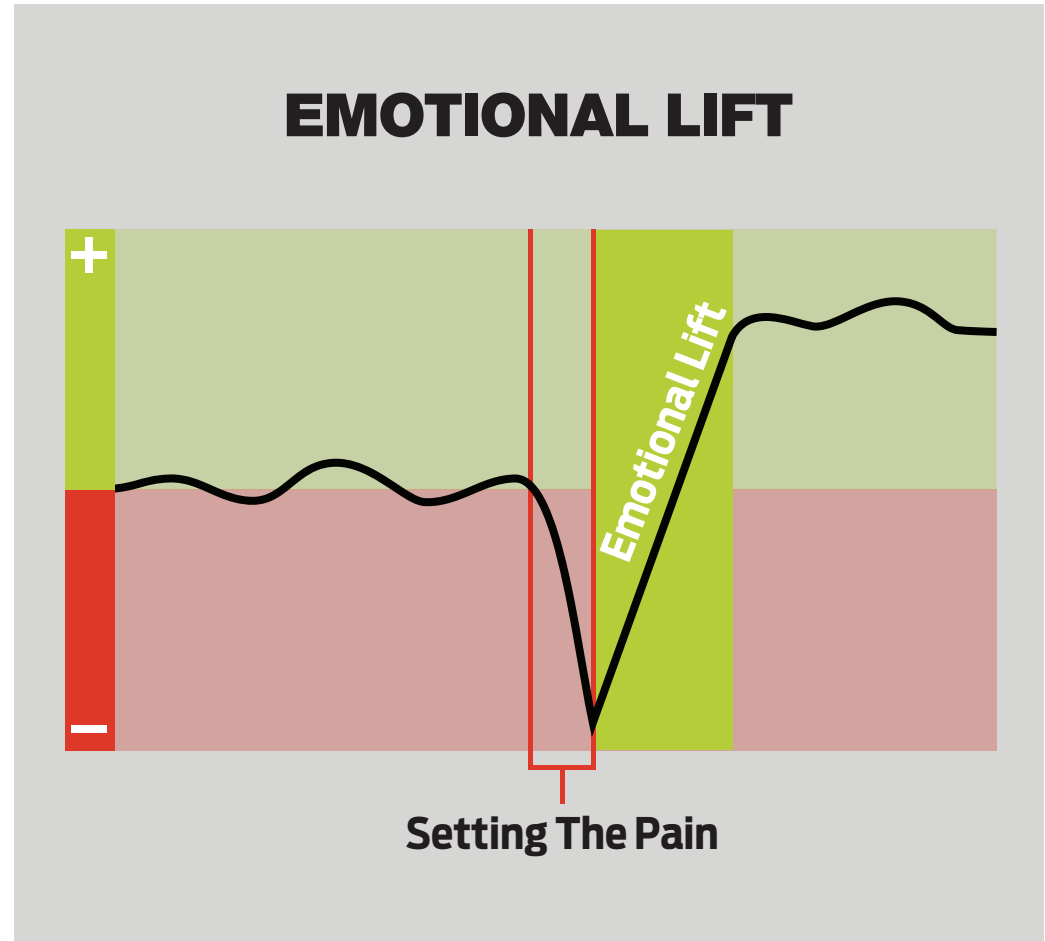
- You’re staying in the “wants and needs” part of the brain by talking about features and benefits. We now know real connection happens below that line, at the subconscious level.
- You’re presenting in the exact opposite way than our brain’s decision-making process.
- You’re simply presenting too much information; putting brains to sleep with non value-added content.



Deliver presentations having your audience on the edge of their seat.

During your presentation, start by setting the pain and showing resolution. This is called driving emotional lift. That last movie or book you enjoyed? It was a great example of setting up a pain or threat and then giving you the same kind of emotional lift through its resolution. Your presentation doesn't need Hollywood special effects, but it can make the pitch better if you follow the formula.

Each pain you address must be quickly countered with its resolution—your product or service. Then, back it up with solid proof. This engages the right part of the brain—the limbic brain—first, then gets the influencers—emotion and logic—to stop by and agree.



Fight The Brain's Desire to Rest.

Keeping your audience's attention for 45 minutes is difficult, but a brain-friendly approach that uses great visuals, good timing and an easy-to-follow structure will make you hard to forget.



**“Huh?
Sorry I was
thinking about
myself again.”**

Here's how you win and keep their attention to close the sale:

Stand out to make them understand “why you?”
When a room of decision-makers demands to know why you're different, you must convince them beyond any reasonable doubt that you're the one to solve their pains.

Let science do the work. From the introduction and every minute after, your approach has to differentiate. Create real emotional lift to raise your prospects up to where you want them: choosing YOU.

Do this right, and your competition—including “no decision”—won't stand a chance.

5

Marks of a Great Pitch

- ✓ Follows the brain's process, speed and emotional context to decision-making
- ✓ Creates a high degree of emotional lift throughout the presentation
Lasts just 12 -15 minutes; leaving up to 75% of your time for conversation
- ✓ Drives deep conversation that builds fast trust
- ✓ Quickly builds enough trust to negate longstanding relationships with competitors
- ✓ Closes on very clear next steps

OBJECTIVE



Convert your sales teams to Pitch Pros.

Your leads are showing up in a lot of different spots today, and once a prospect invites you in, you're already up against two or three competitors. You're thrust in front of a buying "committee" tightly evaluating their choices: why you? and why now? There are so many people, with so many priorities, and all with limited time. It requires a completely different strength and training to accomplish so much in one pitch. It's still your sales team's job to move the prospect across the finish line. There's no room for error.

This wasn't true when most sales training programs were created.

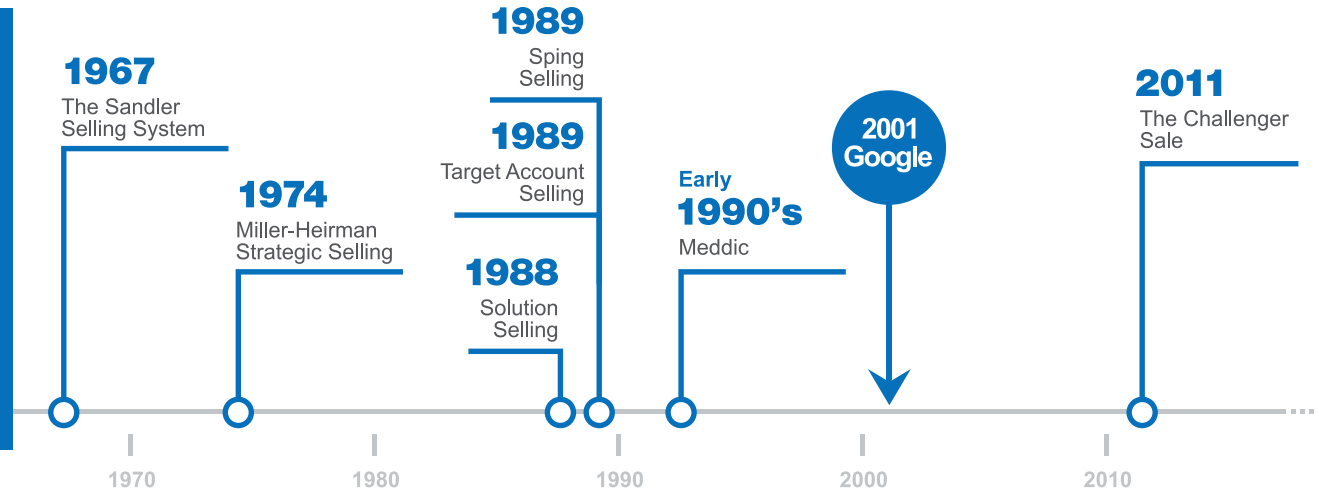
Why other sales techniques are failing you now...

The three C's are Age of Acceleration obstacles. Other sales techniques and sales training courses don't address them because they were all developed before prospect and customer dislocation was an issue.

In fact, a recent article sharing the top 8 sales training programs for complex sales revealed that all but one of them were developed BEFORE the Internet, personal computers or cell phones. These well known, older programs were created when the salesperson influenced 100% of the sales journey, not 30%.

Age of Acceleration prospects are very different. They're relying on the sales reps to help them make sense of the very final part of the sale, show value, comfort them and show how they're different. Often in one hour—sometimes less!

Top 8 Sales Training Techniques



OLD vs NOW

You used to have complete control of the sales process from the start.

Now buyers are 70% through the journey before you're invited in.

You were the lead salesperson generating and nurturing interest.

Your website is now creating and nurturing leads, you're now focused on the final 30% of the sale.

You used to be able to leverage relationship and influence - to get that ol' B&R time in.

Now you train to pitch and persuade to gain additional insight and access.


You used to walk one or two buyers through deep discovery and analysis.

You're now having to pitch a room full of buyers evaluating you.

You used to train for a sales journey with many potential options.

Now you train for a sales sprint, with hurdles.

Final Thoughts



Salespeople will continue to be valuable and critical to your revenue growth. They just need more attention and companies must stop continually putting them in harm's way!

It is during the sales part where you're losing 60% of your opportunities to no decision. The time is now to begin allocating more energy and resources to this area.

Consider the investments you've made to marketing and automation, yet these don't close deals!

By starting where it matters most, persuading a board room "why you" and "why now" with messaging, brain-friendly approaches and training to close the room, you will see immediate impact on revenue, margin growth, and organizational confidence.

NOW WHAT?

Let's Talk!

In an environment where standing out, driving differentiation and persuading teams of decision-makers is harder than ever, Revenue Path Group helps simplify, persuade and close business faster and more convincingly.

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**ATTRACT
MORE**



**CONVERT
MORE**



**SELL
MORE**