



## Strategies to Diversify Your Sales Strategy Across Gender, Culture, and Racial Differences



Welcome to the new sales landscape. Just think about the world we sell in today: massive uncertainty, global unrest, societal shifts, constant advancements in technology and increasing competition. This is a marketplace that is changing fast and shifting rapidly, and one where you need to think about updating your sales strategies – not only what you sell but who you sell to.

**A**s sales professionals you need to think bigger, smarter and open your prospecting and connections to more diverse markets. You need to think about selling across genders, cultures and racial differences.

Yes, everything about the sales landscape today is changing, and if you are going to keep up, you need to understand it, and most importantly you need to change with it.

### Four Dynamic Shifts

There are four dynamic shifts happening in the sales landscape today that impact the sales environment and the customers we are selling to.

Number one is how your customer's buy. Think about this. Since work up this morning, since you started reading this article, taking your first note, your best prospects, your top customers, have already started the buying cycle and they started it without you. Right now, they are online googling for information, asking friends and co-workers for recommendations, and educating themselves about who they should buy from and what they should buy. The entire sales process has changed, and it starts long before you, as sales professionals, physically get into it.

According to Gallup, a leading researcher, buyers are 67% of the way through the buying cycle before

they ever interact with a salesperson. Think about that, that is over halfway. So face it, the sales cycle has changed.

Next is the shifting marketplace. Customers today come in all different shapes, sizes and segments of the buying cycle. You are no longer selling to just one type or one customer avatar. Understanding how to relate and connect with all markets such as: The women's market, the LGBT Community, Millennials etc. Knowing the different market segments, and who your customers are is critical to your success. How your customers identify themselves, what their priorities are, and what they want from a sales person it is all expanding, and if you understand the shifts you are well positioned to expand your prospect list and your customer portfolio.

And number three is what customers want, what they are looking for, that has changed as well. No longer are customers looking for product or service first. No in today's marketplace your products and services have become a commodity. Something our customers believe they can get anywhere. So, it is not the product or service they are looking for, that's not what they want, or what they are willing to pay for. What customers want in today's marketplace is the personalized experience they believe you can provide and the value (pre and post-sale) they trust you will offer.

Lastly, number four is how all of these shifts impact who you are as sales professionals and how you as sales professionals sell into the marketplace. You are no longer lone wolves or single agents. You have to learn to work closely with departments such as marketing and customer service. Winning new business and expanding into diverse markets takes a team in today's changing sales landscape.

So what does it take to begin to open up diverse markets?

**1. Develop Cultural Awareness** – your own awareness of other cultures by learning about cultures and diversity. Look around your marketplace and

observe where there is the most opportunity – is the growth of diversity across gender, race, culture? Developing awareness takes time and depth, so no need to trying to learn across all cultures at once.

Also, take the time to dive into your bias', blind spots or clear lack of knowledge about how your chosen market buys, communicates and makes decision. In other words, before you start to sell do your homework.

**2. Establish Credibility and Expertise** – now that you have done your homework, you need to position yourself as someone your new market will see as someone that can actually help them. Before you sell, you need to become known in the market and establish your credibility and expertise by writing articles, doing podcasts, sharing videos on topics and concerns they have. Establishing market positioning is crucial if you want to sell into new and diverse markets.

**3. Give It Time** - and last but not least, just like any sales process, give it time. You will not develop awareness, be an expert of close new business quickly. This is a process – one you need to nurture, invest in, and allow potential customers to build relationships with you and view you as a resource.

This is an exciting time in sales. There is so much change, and so many new markets and expanding opportunity. This is creating so much potential for you and your sales team. Start the conversation, implement the strategies and watch as you begin to turn all of this uncertainty to your competitive advantage. ■

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