

Chapter 3

The Digital Transformation

ABSTRACT

B2B selling continued to evolve, and the number of approaches and methodologies created over time illustrates how B2B sales continued to change and are never permanently fixed on a single approach to sales. There were several breakthrough approaches to B2B sales between 1950 and 2018, leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic. Over that 68-year timeframe, some very successful methodologies were developed for the B2B seller to use. In particular, the personal relationship of the seller with their customer was finally realized and valued. All the changes, improvements, and new methodologies in B2B sales, prior to 2019, continue to illustrate how B2B sales is a moving, changing, and continuously searching-for-answers profession.

B2B SELLING BEFORE 2019

In the second half of the 20th and the earlier part of the 21st century, B2B selling continued to evolve and the number of approaches and methodologies created illustrates how B2B sales continued to change and never become permanently fixed on a single approach to sales. There were several breakthrough approaches to B2B sales between 1950 and 2018. Over that 68-year timeframe, some very successful methodologies were developed for the B2B sale. Among these were:

- Transformational selling
- Personal Selling

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- Solution Selling
- Strategic Account Management
- Value Selling Framework
- Customer Centric CRM
- e-Commerce
- The Challenger Sale
- Virtual Selling

TRANSFORMATIONAL SELLING

Transactional selling followed the long tradition of the peddlers and traveling salespeople who concerned themselves purely with making the sale. The goal was to simply get an agreement to buy, collect the contract or purchase order, and to satisfy a customer's immediate need. There was little attention paid to repetitive selling, adding on to a sale with additional value, or worrying about future sales to the same customer.

Over many years, B2B sales leaders came to realize that selling was more complex than just the transaction that closed the sale. (Burns, 2003) argued that

Partly because the variables in the process of causation—human motivations such as people's wants and needs; the ambitions of leaders and rulers; the nature and interaction of agency and of situation; the mysteries of creativity, conflict, and power—are too complex and variegated to lend themselves to simplistic explanations or monocausal analyses. (Burns, 2003, p. 21)

This complexity of the human condition led him to conclude that there is more to a relationship than a single act, a transaction.

To change is to substitute one thing for another, to give and take, to exchange places, to pass from one place to another. These are the kinds of changes I attribute to transactional leadership. But to transform something cuts much more profoundly. It is to cause a metamorphosis in form or structure, a change in the very condition or nature of a thing, a change into another substance, a radical change in outward form or inner character, as when a frog is transformed into a prince or a carriage maker into an auto factory. It is change of this breadth and depth that is fostered by transforming leadership. (Burns, 2003, p. 24)

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