

Chapter 5

Resulting Changes

ABSTRACT

To understand and appreciate the continual changes in business-to-business (B2B) selling, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, it is necessary to approach the subject from four viewpoints of organizations and six categories of change. This provides 16 insights and helps identify the effects of the changes on each of the participants and where the available solutions brought new challenges. Technology dominates recent changes in B2B selling. It is not about hardware, or simple software updates, but more profound. Artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, generative AI, and the concept of the metaverse are all changing how B2B sales are accomplished. The lines between virtual reality and actual person-to-person interaction are blurring; thus, sales professionals must learn, adapt, and gain new skills to keep up. While this is happening, buyers have changed. A key for B2B sellers is to recognize how they changed and what they now demand of their sales contact.

DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS

To understand and appreciate the continual changes in business-to-business (B2B) selling, especially since the Covid-19 pandemic, one must approach the subject from four viewpoints of organizations and four categories of change (Table 1). This provides 16 unique insights and helps identify the effects of the changes on each of the participants and where the available solutions brought new challenges.

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The first point of view is that of the significant sales organizations who day to day call on and sell to other businesses, and not directly to an end user consumer, the B2B sales organizations. Their products and services are designed for the use of other businesses, who, in turn, use those values in the creation of their final product, sold to consumers or other businesses. These sales organizations are in many industries, geographically global, and usually large. One can ask these seller organizations what changes have been made, what changes are planned, and what journey they are on now and to what objective. This would provide some insight into what most B2B sellers have decided to change after the pandemic regarding their sales methods and tools. Observing each of the major changes and new technologies would result in determining how some firms are using them.

The second viewpoint on changes in B2B selling, after the pandemic of 2019-2021, is derived from an examination of the various vendors of selling solutions and tools. Some of these vendors provide software, hardware, and some consulting and training for the use of B2B sellers. Some provide all three. The researcher could ask how they have modified, adapted, or changed their products and services to meet the demands of B2B sellers since the pandemic. Some of these suppliers of selling tools have been around a long time, and some are relatively new. Common to all of them is the commitment to use technology to further the sales effort. The researcher could ask how they have modified or altered their offerings because of the pandemic and in preparation for what lies ahead for B2B sales.

The third viewpoint on changes to B2B selling comes from reading and listening to the analyst and consulting practices that write about, analyze, and predict what is about to happen in the B2B selling activity. There are many small boutique organizations in this space, but if the researcher focuses on the major players, they can discern significant ideas, technologies, and changes that these analysts and consultants anticipate. In particular, the analyst firms do not usually sell the tools or solutions of other vendors, and their opinions generally are objective and devoid of a sales pitch. They advise B2B sales organizations on how to prepare for change, what solutions from vendors to consider, and how to rank those solutions for appropriateness and value. They also work at anticipating the future and identifying how technology will affect selling.

The fourth point of view on changes to selling B2B is to look at the buyers and how their process for deciding on a provider, buying a solution,

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