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*Sales Challenges and Opportunities*

What can sales leaders and professional do to survive this disruption?

Several executives suggestedwe must learn how to excel at the remote sale. Think about how to turn everything virtual. For example, so many companies do corporate tours where they show their facilities and capabilities. Move that entirely online, so someone could be sitting at home and have that same experience. We should quickly be building those assets. Turn *everything* virtual, with an emphasis on video.

One sales leader has directed his sales force to divert all attention to existing accounts and stop pursuit of new logos. He acknowledges the strategy may be right or wrong, but he’s betting that one of the key elements that causes companies to choose one company over another is trust. And it's going to be hard to establish trust during this time with somebody you don't know. They’re putting their energy where they have existing high-trust relationships.

There’s one skill we always need to work on, and it’s become even more critical: [listening](https://www.forbes.com/sites/randyillig/2019/10/07/selling-to-executives-the-biggest-mistake-salespeople-make/#1b04d999dcee). Converse with customers rather than relying on a slide deck. One leader said, “I'm always against PowerPoints because it just says you're lecturing, but you *really* don't know if the client is focused on a PowerPoint over the phone. If you're situationally conversing, you're at least understanding if they’re distracted or you’re having a solid interaction and engagement.”

Another suggested that we be more efficient with meeting time**.**Virtual meetings often start late and have a hard stop, so be prepared. Plan out your calls as structured conversations, with thoughtful research and prepared questions. Use a conversation planner. Don’t wing it. To avoid disengagement, state upfront that you’ll be asking questions and listening for much of the discussion.

Take advantage of the new platform skills**.**Check the background of your physical space. Have you assessed the image you’re projecting onscreen? Do you have the correct technology for streaming clear video and sound? How are you dressing for your video calls? When and how do you use screen sharing or other tools?

**Challenge to leaders*:*** *Turn this crisis into opportunity. Think about new ways to connect with your current clients to help them solve their problems. Do more listening than talking and get your people the help they need to do their jobs more efficiently.*

* Generally, salespeople are used to being independent, working from home, and conducting business over the **phone or video. But many of our customers aren’t as used to this mode, and they’re being disrupted, too.**
* Some leaders perceive this challenge as a leap forward into a new operating rhythm, a different way of interacting with clients. Others expect a swift return to face time once the danger has passed.

*---Leslie*

*Business Challenges and Opportunities*

PRINTING GOING FORWARD

COVID-19 has pushed our industry much more rapidly along several trends which have been building for some time. The packaging segment growth has accelerated its growth while, publication printing has been permanently reduced, direct mail is impacted but has some possibility of a comeback with more focused audiences and dependent on the survival of the USPS, entertainment and event printing is severely impacted, while general commercial printing will continue but not all of the players will be around.

This is the time when you need to think about the skill set that you and your company are bringing to the market. No one buys print just to have it. They buy it to achieve more sales of what they’re now doing. They buy it to introduce the latest and greatest that they plan to bring to market. This reality should enable to decide whether you and your company are good at understanding your customer’s plans and using print to further them or whether you are better at manufacturing print—putting the ink on the paper.

If you conclude that helping the customer achieve their goals by the creative use of print—think about become a broker and leave the manufacturing to others. If getting the work out on time and right is your forte, then concentrate on that and become a trade printer who is centered on protecting the interest of your broker clients.

Your successful survival will be determined on doing what you do best, not on doing everything.

SITUATIONAL PRICING

Even in challenging times like these, printers who are busy are making money. It helps that they’re in markets where customers are buying but even then, they’re getting the work while others in the same market aren’t.

What’s the difference? They’ve come to understand that the mission is to get as much as possible for the work but also get the order. They’ve escaped from the tyranny of the estimating package and adopted “situational pricing.”

This starts with an estimate based on the specs for the job which is put together in simplified form without a lot of fiddly detail and preferably using an internal price list. Then, a mark-up or mark-down adjustment is applied based on the relationship with the customer. If it’s one who thinks of the printer as a trusted sole-source who gets the work done right and on time, a mark-up is appropriate. If it’s a price buyer like a government agency, a mark-down is called for.

Finally, the importance of the project to the customer is considered. If it’s a mission-critical piece which is already behind schedule, a significant mark-up recognizes this. If it’s a total non-rush job that the customer could really get along without, it’s definitely a mark-down.

The thought effort in matching pricing to the customer’s reality pays big dividends in increased sales by getting the order more of the time and picking up the dollars left on the table.

*--Bob*

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