Breaking Taboos

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In many ways, the advice and commentary provided in The Wiglaf Journal are ordinary business suggestions: conduct market research; prospect for new customers; use resources to close sales opportunities; sales and marketing are integral to corporate strategy. If this were the extent of the Wiglaf Journal editorial bias, the Wiglaf Journal would have stayed at the level of a polite business newsletter. But it hasn't. Instead, we broke taboos and played outside of the sand box in which many executives think sales and marketing belongs.

Specifically, we broke three taboos in the conceptualization of sales and marketing for business markets. One, we recognize the sales and marketing effort as a process to be optimized; not as acts of hucksterism or sporadic campaigns. Two, we require the integration of sales and marketing which forces the blurring of organizational boundaries and the focusing of both departments on the common goal of creating customers and capturing profitable revenues. And three, we promote tradeoffs between various sales and marketing activities based upon cost efficiency rather than historic budgets and practices.

To set the agenda for change, we broke these taboos deliberately in three recent articles: Rolodex vs. Campaigns; Creating Business Customers; Performance/Execution – Integrated Sales and Marketing. First, in Rolodex vs. Campaigns, we highlighted the need for a continual process in order to create customers and clarified its value over that of sporadic campaigns and wishful thinking. Then, in Creating Business Customers, we clarified how marketing activities can be integrated into sales activities to improve effectiveness at a lower overall cost. And, in Performance/Execution – Integrated Sales and Marketing, we provided an outline for integrating, evaluating, and executing entire sales and marketing campaigns based upon total cost of sales.

Many readers doubted our sincerity while others responded with concerns. To clear the air and create room for other subjects, we provide a conclusion for this chapter.

Taboo 1: Process Orientation to Creating Customers
To produce reliable results, sales and marketing activities must be conducted within an overall process.

A process orientation to sales is not new, yet it is still battling the sporadic and tactical approach. Heiman and Sanchez, Rackham and Ruff, and also Bosworth have each written at length on sales methodologies wherein the process took center stage in front of the salespeople and their presentations. However, many would prefer to ignore the process approach and instead concentrate on specific tactics. For example, managers may send sales people on courses to improve their telephone presentation, client meeting skills, closing skills, or human relations skills. While we strongly agree that honing each of these sales skills is highly valuable, we go further to claim that their value is maximized when placed within the larger picture of a sales process. Without a continual process, closing sales opportunities is sporadic at best.

Likewise, a process orientation to marketing isn’t new. The Deming, Six Sigma, and TQM process approaches have each been applied to the market communications process. Many
professionals will concede that marketing also has a responsibility for pricing, product management, distribution, and corporate strategy alongside corporate communications. Unfortunately, when it comes to getting things done, some will forgo the overall process approach and focus on specific tactical campaigns. Logos and graphics are redesigned, websites are rewritten, and new brochures are produced. Good marketing efforts may require each of these activities, but sporadic tactical improvements produce sporadic revenue improvements.

A process approach to sales and marketing is far more difficult than executing specific tactical efforts. Some readers accept that a process approach must be taken and an elite few are engaging in its implementation. Crossing this line and promoting process over specific tactics is perhaps perceived as a polite motivation rather than a mindset reorientation. But some readers have objected to the process approach as ineffective and too costly.

Taboo 2: Integrated Sales and Marketing
To minimize wasted effort and optimize results, the sales and marketing processes must be integrated.

Many practice, or claim to practice, integrated marketing. But, integrated marketing alone will not generate revenue in most business markets. Others have stated that sales should dominate in business markets and relegate marketing for consumer products. But unsupported salespeople in business markets have a high failure rate.

Despite the convenient organizational chart separation of Sales and Marketing, an Integrated Sales and Marketing plan dictates that these two departments should work as one with the common goal of creating customers and capturing profitable revenues. Unfortunately, sales and marketing oftentimes work in opposition to one another. While sales claims that marketing can’t produce good leads, marketing claims that sales doesn’t follow through on the leads that are created. The debates and finger-pointing between the two will continue until both departments agree on a common goal and determine to work together, within a common process, to achieve that goal.

Integrating sales and marketing is considered a good idea by most readers, yet organizational practices that separate the two are continued. Perhaps readers have allowed us this indulgence of suggesting that sales and marketing be integrated with the perception that it was as innocuous idea whose time hasn’t come.

Taboo 3: Cost Efficiency Tradeoffs between Sales and Marketing Activities
To determine which activities should be included in the integrated sales and marketing process, tradeoffs based upon cost efficiency between specific sales and marketing activities must be conducted.

Beyond all other boundaries that we crossed, this was the straw that broke many camel’s backs. Suggesting cost efficiency tradeoffs between sales and marketing activities was simply blasphemy for many readers, an anathema to managerial thinking, and heresy in its evaluation.

Some believe that sales and marketing are simply a cost of doing business. These departments are considered revenue centers or overhead. As such, costs are irrelevant. One reader even responded that sales people’s time is free to the organization, and thus any cost efficiency calculation that included the cost of a salesperson’s time is erroneous.
Others agreed that sales and marketing should be integrated, but it is not possible to make tradeoffs between one and the other. Once a lead is generated, responsibility is handed off from marketing communications to sales. But such a distinct hand-off between the two departments precludes the opportunity for a tight integration of sales and marketing. For these readers, the depth of integration between sales and marketing that is being advocated is beyond acceptability.

To these objections, we reply: Poppycock. Business is an economic activity and the guiding principal for business decisions should be economic tradeoffs. Cost efficiency calculations enable these economic tradeoffs to be made with the clearest possible indicators.

**Researched Approved Taboo Breaking**

Each of these suggestions is based upon research into academic literature and business practices. Although some believe the above protocol demands too much, peer research demonstrates otherwise. And, if the last three years of a down economy hasn’t encouraged mindset changes, then perhaps it will take a generational change to drive forward these practices. In the meantime, we will continue to communicate, practice, and implement this approach.

If it will help the medicine go down, the Doctor can prescribe the agenda with small sound bites and poker analogies.

*Won Some, Lost Some, but was up for the Night*

– **Take a Process Approach to winning the market.**

*Three of a Kind Beats Two Pair*

– **Integrate Sales and Marketing.**

*Call, Raise, or Fold*

– **Make Decisions with Economic Tradeoffs.**

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