



**Marketing
Leaders**
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BOOK OF THE MONTH SUMMARY

FOR MEMBERS

OVERVIEW

Disruptive Selling

A New Strategic Approach to Sales, Marketing, and Customer Service

by Patrick Maes

Recommendation

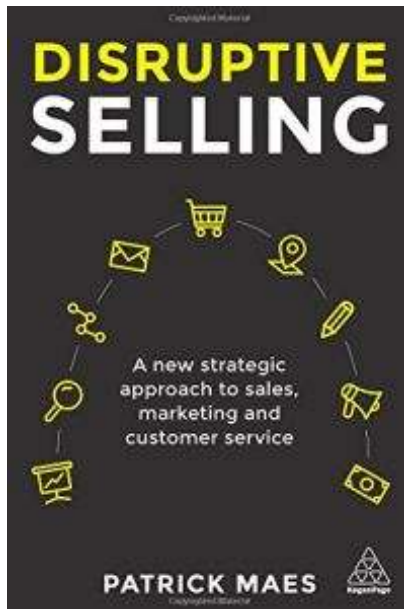
In the not-too-distant future traditional salespeople may become as extinct as the dodo bird. Signs of the remarkable “disruptive selling” revolution are now evident online. The goal of “disruptive selling” is to treat customers so well that they become brand evangelists, linking sales, marketing, and customer service into a single functioning unit. This book explains the momentous changes uprooting sales and marketing and describes far-reaching, technological advances yet to come.

About the Author

Patrick Maes is CEO of CPI, a consulting firm focused on sales, marketing, customer service and value delivery. It developed many innovative practices now reordering the business world.

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Disruptive Selling

A New Strategic Approach to Sales, Marketing, and Customer Service

Patrick Maes
Kogan Page, 2018

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In the not-too-distant future traditional salespeople may become as extinct as the dodo bird. Signs of the remarkable “disruptive selling” revolution are now evident online. The goal of “disruptive selling” is to treat customers so well that they become brand evangelists, linking sales, marketing, and customer service into a single functioning unit. This book explains the momentous changes uprooting sales and marketing and describes far-reaching, technological advances yet to come.

Take-Aways

- The sales business faces ongoing, transformative technological change.
- Airbnb and Amazon are leading this change, along with European web retailer Coolblue.
- The goal of “disruptive selling” is to treat customers so well that they become brand evangelists.

- Disruptive selling is a new marketing, sales and customer service approach that can give you a strong competitive advantage.
- It dissolves the barriers among these areas of activity and makes them a unified whole.
- This approach to sales and marketing can lead to lower costs, more satisfied clients and better results.
- Today, customers control the selling process.
- Disruptive firms leverage marketing technology to learn about their customers so they can tailor personalized offers to them.
- These companies maximize customer satisfaction by using data from marketing tech.
- Disruptive firms focus on their customers and track “return on marketing investment.”

Summary

Breathtaking Changes

The business of selling is undergoing massive, transformative change due to four factors. First, developments in marketing technology enable companies to harvest comprehensive insights about what their prospects and customers want and expect. Second, consumers now demand superior, personalized value around the clock. Third, employees have become lifelong learners who want meaningful jobs and won't accept being bored. And fourth, companies are reorganizing to adapt to the latest technology, which leads to further change that requires workers to gain new skills.

Disruptive selling calls into question all existing wisdom about commercial organization and the deployment of people and resources in sales, marketing, and customer service.

Such companies as Airbnb, Amazon, and European e-retailers Coolblue and Zalando are leading the way and, in some instances, bringing about colossal shifts as they transform business practices. These firms champion “disruptive business models” that shake up the entire commercial world.

To illustrate, if you buy something from fashion retailer Zalando that you don't like, send it back – no questions asked. When you order a ride from Uber, you can immediately read reviews of riders' opinions about their experiences with your driver. If the book you buy from Amazon arrives with even a small flaw, the online giant will immediately send you another copy, and you get to keep the first one. Amazon isn't worried about the cost of the extra book because the goodwill gesture generates positive word-of-mouth marketing.

Technology and Sales

Technology — specifically marketing automation and mechanized systems — plays a large role in the transformation now underway. The necessity of adopting efficient use of these innovations — including artificial intelligences and intelligent software — compels companies to shift to more up-to-date organizational models. And all of this costs money.

Lower costs, better results, and happier customers: This is the enticing paradox of disruptive selling.

Today's high-tech tools enable disruptive firms to make reliable predictions about their customers' preferences and behavior. The result is automated offers and automated deliveries. The Internet of Things adds to the information stream as smart products relay valuable consumer information back to the manufacturers.

Modern customers decide what is valuable and when it is valuable. If a customer is dissatisfied or feels held to ransom, they are no longer afraid to tell their story to the world.

Sales now revolve around being friendly to customers, who have come to expect superior service, efficient product delivery, and helpful information and support from both B2C and B2B firms. Shoppers avoid providers who have cumbersome customer relationship management (CRM) systems, and they abandon firms that fail to satisfy them.

You need to be really good to compete for customer attention with your mails and telephone calls against all the other spam and noise.

Firms that ignore or remain unaware of today's radical transformation usually exhibit certain negative characteristics and behaviors. They have counterproductive attitudes about customers. They "hunt" for consumers and try to tie them up in long-term arrangements.

Customers Are in the Driver's Seat

When companies refuse to engage in positive conversation with their consumers, those customers, in return, stop trying to communicate with the company. Instead, they talk to other people – many, many, many other people – on social media. Many potential customers, the online contacts of disgruntled shoppers, will go elsewhere. In the same vein, today's consumers jump eagerly online to share positive experiences with products or services. Some create their own networks focused on customer service and care.

The customer takes the lead in the sales process.

Disruptive firms organize transactions, so customers do most of the work. These innovative companies gain efficiency, which is a great competitive edge, and their customers like having a hand in their own transactions. It empowers them.

Forward-looking companies track the factors that motivate consumers. They base their value propositions on what they learn about their customers, and adjust their organizations, processes, and cultures accordingly. They promote "customer advocacy" at every touch point and pay attention to their "return on marketing investment."

If customers are not satisfied, they go somewhere better. Your task is to make sure that you can hold their attention and their interest.

Consumer influence will diminish the importance of conventional sales forces and call centers. Many customers no longer want sales representatives to call on them. They believe going online is the best way to buy. While companies may not like this situation, they can't do anything about it, so they must accept it. Customers are now in charge of the commercial experience.

Your Care Package for Customers

Companies need the latest marketing technology to track customer wants and needs, to keep up with consumers and to tailor their sales operations to this new paradigm. This requires companies to redesign their sales cycles from scratch.

Every customer leaves a digital footprint...Thanks to marketing automation, it is now relatively easy to monitor this online body language, allowing you to adjust your sales, marketing, and after-sales systems in real time.

To begin, the company must understand the customer's commercial journey. These journeys begin when consumers first become aware of a product or company through advertising, word-of-mouth, or other means. The journey continues up to and through the time of additional purchases.

Your company must adapt its overall sales process accordingly. It can use marketing automation, social listening, and customer relationship management to glean the knowledge necessary to increase the value it gives its customers and to hyper personalize its offerings.

The number of suppliers who bury crucial documents and information so deep in their website that only the most persistent prospect will ever find them is still surprisingly large.

This “made-to-measure care package” has several components:

- **Marketing automation** – Through this technology, companies follow what their customers do and say. To illustrate, firms can monitor exactly when and for how long customers visit their websites and what they do while there. Firms also can learn about customers from how they respond to mailings and interact with company blogs. Every consumer touchpoint reveals potentially valuable information. Thanks to marketing automation, companies can immediately initiate automatic responses. It's a cycle: Marketing technology analyzes customer data. It interprets the data into useful information that disperses throughout the company. On that basis, a company can develop smart initiatives using marketing automation to tailor its customer offerings.
- **“Disruptive selling”** – Companies use all available technology, including marketing tech, to optimize the sales processes. This enables them to respond to their customers in meaningful, effective ways. The goal of disruptive selling is to treat customers so wonderfully that they become enthusiastic brand evangelists. Customers become unpaid salespeople, and your paid salespeople come to function as sales managers.
- **Customer Relationship Management (CRM)** – Through this versatile tool, companies can manage their relationships with customers. Modern, cloud-based CRM systems are a significant improvement over earlier iterations. Salespeople can use them with ease and enjoy interacting with them.
- **Social listening tools** – Companies can monitor what consumers say about them on the Internet. Related internal communications tools include Yammer, Slack and Yamla.

- **Objectives and key results tools** – OKR tools enable companies to develop and promote new ideas and product concepts.
- **Customer journey “appification”** – The growing use of apps is moving marketing automation into a new era of world-class capabilities. Appification makes mobile marketing a vital component of a disruptive company’s overall marketing strategy.

A Profusion of Marketing Technology Solutions

Sales once focused on finding and securing new customers. Today, sales must focus, instead, on keeping customers happy and providing support during their entire customer journey.

Negative posts that drag a company through the mud can ultimately cost much more than simply giving the customer what they want – or...coming to a reasonable deal.

Marketing technology enables you to administer your firm’s customer relationships without any direct human involvement. You can automate everything. In May 2017, technology guru Scott Brinker listed 5,381 different marketing technology solutions. Somewhere out there is a technology package that’s right for your firm.

Negative mouth-to-mouth reports spread far more quickly than positive ones.

Marketing automation tools cover five essential functions. Firms can use marketing technology to: 1) monitor the behavior of customers online; 2) enable email marketing; 3) enhance contact management and customer relationships; 4) automate varied marketing efforts; and 5) provide multiple ways to nurture and analyze sales leads.

Roughly 17% of all web pages are viewed for less than four seconds. Only 4% are viewed for more than a couple of minutes.

Marketing technology delivers other valuable benefits. By monitoring their websites, firms gain valuable information about customers. This includes their product and service preferences and in particular which of the firm’s offerings they like the most. Firms need to develop comprehensive customer profiles, but now technology can constantly update such information.

In our app-mad world, it will not be long before companies will be forced to consider the use of mobile marketing as an integral part of their overall commercial approach.

Firms can create highly personalized customer communications. Based on buyers’ histories, you can determine the perfect day and time of day to present special offers.

Sellers can adjust the “dynamic content” of their websites to particular customers as they visit. Marketers can score these customers according to the likelihood that they’ll buy. Marketing technology systems also can create individual sales funnels and marketing campaigns for specific customers.

The role of marketing will switch from branding to the generation of qualified leads and the development of brand ambassadors.

Companies can even create customized online landing pages for individual customers, so each person receives “made-to-measure content.” Firms can automatically evaluate all leads and send out special “cyclical mail” offers based on products that individual customers view online. They can automatically generate “refresher mails” to people who haven’t visited their website for a while. Thanks to marketing technology, sales departments and call centers also can receive alerts when likely prospects are online.

Your Value Proposition

Disruptive firms set the pace for other companies and customer expectations. If you fail to meet these elevated expectations, your firm can become an also-ran. Instead, work to exceed the high standards for customer service that characterize disruptive firms.

Robots working in sales, marketing and customer service will soon be a common sight. Robots telling people where their priorities lie will be with us before you know it. It is not as unlikely as you probably think.

Your firm’s value proposition is your primary avenue for meeting this goal. Organize your value proposition to appeal to customers throughout their entire commercial journey – from their initial contact with your company to a time after the sale.

Making customers the focus of your value proposition means delivering on individual customers’ expectations and needs. Their ideas of what they want will change constantly, of course, depending on context, date, time, wants, needs and other circumstances. That means you will need to develop a robust value proposition for your customers by creating variations of your basic product. Buyers then can pick and choose among these offerings to customize the product to their desires. Apple uses this build-your-own-product approach when selling iPhones and iPads.

Your Disruptive Change Program

Make the “triple-A model” – “authenticity, accountability and agility” – the primary goal of your firm’s change program. Include flow diagrams that show everything you want to do. Refer to each change action your firm must take, step-by-step. Include an associated timeline with essential milestones. Corporate transformations generally take 18 to 24 months, so build in some early wins.

In today’s market, it is the customer who sets the minimum demands. The supplier must meet these demands if it wants to remain in the running with competitors for a possible sale. What’s more, the demands are getting bigger all the time.

To sell your new approach to employees, produce short – no longer than 60 seconds – videos with infographics to educate them. Train employees so they can get up to speed with both new technology and new consumer customization priorities.

Technology is crucial, but inspirational, innovative leadership trumps it every time. Your firm needs an enlightened CEO and forward-looking senior managers to make your change program a

workable reality. Without strong leadership, big shifts are impossible. But if your company can't adapt, disruptive competitors will leave your firm – and your sales operation – mired in the past.

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