Selling to Value: What Happens Post-Sale Impacts Success

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# Table of Contents

- Customer Experience, the #1 Priority .................................................. 3
- The Value of Post-Sales Support ......................................................... 4
- Selling to Value (S2V) ....................................................................... 5
- The Challenge of Supporting .............................................................. 6
- Support = Time Not Selling ............................................................... 7
- The Salesperson’s Role in Supporting is Critical ............................... 8
- S2V Support ................................................................................... 10
- Ensure Satisfaction .......................................................................... 11
- The Zone of Indifference .................................................................. 12
- Tips for Ensuring Customer Satisfaction ........................................ 13
- Validate Your Role as Trusted Advisor .......................................... 14
- Tips for Remaining a Trusted Advisor .......................................... 16
- Gaining a Client Champion ............................................................. 17
- Gain a Champion by Building a Success Story ................................. 18
- Elements of a Success Story ............................................................. 19
- Using a Success Story ..................................................................... 20
- Tips for Gaining a Champion .......................................................... 21
- Expanding Reach through Referrals and Leads .............................. 22
- Referral Strategy ............................................................................ 23
- Tips for Expanding Your Reach ...................................................... 24
- Leveraging Corporate Customer Engagement Systems .................. 25
- Tips for Leveraging Corporate Customer Engagement Systems .... 26
- Summary ....................................................................................... 27
- Wilson Learning Worldwide ........................................................... 28
- About the Authors ......................................................................... 29
Customer Experience, the #1 Priority

The Customer Experience is getting a lot of attention in the c-suite! In fact, improving customer experience is the number 1 priority of business executives, according to a recent Brandon Hall survey.

Your salesforce is the key to cultivating positive customer experiences. The critical link between sales performance and customer experience is highlighted by the fact that the number 2 priority among business executives is improving sales effectiveness.

#1 Improving Customer Experience
82%

#2 Improving Sales Effectiveness
76%

Essential Selling Competencies: The Buyer's Side Perspective (Brandon Hall Group)

And nowhere else does this come together more than in the after-sales support your salesforce provides to your customers.
The Value of Post-Sales Support

Post-sales support carries its own value. Whether it is finding ways to prevent customers leaving for other providers or increasing the share of wallet you gain from an existing customer, the degree to which customers express satisfaction and feel supported impacts your success.

- **50%** of B-to-B customers switched vendors rather than complain.
- **96%** of customers are willing to switch to another provider.
- **70%** of existing customers buy additional products/services.
Selling to Value (S2V)

Over the past few years we have developed an approach to selling we call Selling to Value (S2V) as a way to elevate your salesforce to a higher level of performance. S2V is about aligning your sales process with how you add value to the customer’s business. Your success depends upon your salesforce’s ability to create new value for customers. Over the years we have used the S2V approach to build customer trust, discover their needs, and advocate solutions to customers’ problems.

In this ebook, we turn our attention to the last major component, the S2V approach to supporting customers after the sale. Following the S2V process will enhance your brand image, improve customer retention, and be the final step toward increasing your sales.
The Challenge of Supporting

Despite the significant impact of post-sales support, many salespeople just don’t do it. Over many conversations with salespeople, we have found a pattern of reasons why they don’t.

“I need to move on the next sale; I have a quota to meet.”

“Others are in charge of implementation and support.”

“I don’t think I add any value in a unique way.”

“I do respond, when there is a complaint.”

The end result is the same.
Many salespeople have the unfounded belief that the time spent supporting current customers is time spent not selling to new customers. This belief comes from an outdated view of what after-sale support entails. In the modern market, support helps a salesperson sell successfully.
The Salesperson’s Role in Supporting is Critical

There are many ways organizations can support customers after a sale—websites, installation teams, support resources, etc.

But the salesperson plays a unique role in supporting the customer. They, in fact, play a critical role in differentiating you and your organization from the competition.

Support:
The act of ensuring the customer is satisfied with the solution and enlisting them as an ally in championing your solutions

Answering the Question
"Now that I’ve made the decision to buy, will I be satisfied?"
The salesperson’s after-sale support is critical because customers don’t compare you to your competitor.

They compare you to the best support they have ever had.

In order to be seen as an organization that delivers great customer service, all parts of the organization must be involved—including the salesforce.

So, what are the actions of the salesforce in delivering differentiating customer service?
S2V Support

There are five major elements of a salesperson’s role in creating superior customer service.

- Ensure Satisfaction
- Validate Trusted Advisor Role
- Gain a Champion
- Expand Your Reach
- Leverage Corporate Customer Engagement

Each element is critical to both creating customer engagement and to the salesperson’s long term success. The remainder of this ebook unpacks each of these elements.
Ensure Satisfaction

Ensuring satisfaction is a cornerstone of a salesperson’s role in support. Salespeople ensure satisfaction by doing the following:

- Making sure everything goes right
- Securing an expression of satisfaction

Most salespeople never ask for an expression of satisfaction; they assume that the customer is satisfied unless they hear differently.

This is a misunderstanding of how satisfaction and dissatisfaction relate to each other. Salespeople believe that Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction are two ends of a single scale.
The Zone of Indifference

However, customers understand satisfaction and dissatisfaction as two different things. A customer can be low in satisfaction and low in dissatisfaction. In fact most customers are in this Zone of Indifference.

A salesperson’s goal is to move customers from Indifferent to Highly Satisfied.
Tips for Ensuring Customer Satisfaction

- Provide updates on success and impact.
- Send short online polls to gauge customer perceptions.
- Introduce the customer to your company’s support team.
- Coordinate the customer experience.
- Deal quickly with any expressions of dissatisfaction.
- Keep in contact; keep adding value.
Validate Your Role as Trusted Advisor

Salespeople have to achieve the role of Trusted Advisor to get the sale, but there is no guarantee that they will retain that role. The status of Trusted Advisor is earned over time, not a given.

To remain a Trusted Advisor you must add value in every interaction.
Salespeople retain the role of Trusted Advisor by paying attention to the three following core elements of their communications:

- **Frequency**: How often do you connect with your customers so you are neither forgotten nor appear to be a nuisance?
- **Content**: What information, wisdom, or advice do you share?
- **Method**: How can you use different methods of communication to most effectively connect with your customer?
Tips for Remaining a Trusted Advisor

- Personalize your messaging. Make sure customers know that this communication is not something sent to all contacts.
- Decide how frequently you need to check in, and set up a system alert to do so (e.g., Sale CRM or calendar).
- Identify follow-up content that the customer will value.
- Ask your customer what contact method they prefer for following up.
- Vary your contact method with each follow-up.
How prepared are you to build a new type of relationship?

Gaining a Client Champion

The support period begins a new type of relationship with customers. You are no longer selling a product but rather are selling yourself as someone worthy of their time and effort.

How prepared are you to build a new type of relationship?
Gain a Champion by Building a Success Story

Most successful salespeople build customers as a champion for their organization.

A key element of gaining a customer champion is to work with your customer to create a success story.

Success Story:
A story that describes your and the customer’s efforts to bring value to the client organization.
Effective success stories have the following four critical elements:

- A description of the challenge the client organization is facing
- The solution to this challenge
- How this creates value for the organization
- Measurement of the critical outcomes
Using a Success Story

A strong success story helps both you and your customer achieve the following more effectively:

- Communicate the value the salesperson and the customer are creating to others in their organization
- Elevate your customer’s visibility and performance
- Demonstrate the salesperson’s value to other prospects
- Create visibility in the industry or community for both the salesperson and the client
Tips for Gaining a Champion

• Focus on documenting evidence of success for the client.
• Co-create a success story to communicate results.
• Help your client share the success story within their organization.
• Create opportunities for joint visibility within their industry.
• Be specific about the client’s Call to Action.
Expanding Reach through Referrals and Leads

An individual sale does not make for a successful sales career. Salespeople need to ask for referrals and introductions to prospects so their business can grow. Unfortunately, many salespeople are not very good at asking for referrals.
Referral Strategy

Asking for a referral requires a Referral Strategy, a process for ensuring the greatest success in gaining a referral. A referral strategy needs to address three elements.

### When
- After implementing of the solution
- After the customer has experienced value
- After the customer has given you an expression of satisfaction

### What
- Asking for a name or introduction to someone they know
- Permission to use the customer’s name and success story
- Asking if they know “X” at another company/division
- Connecting with the customer on social media

### How
- In an in-person meeting
- Over a phone call or virtual meeting
- In an email or text
- On social media

Referrals have 70% higher conversion rates
90% of buying decisions begin with a peer recommendation
Sales from referrals close 69% faster
Tips for Expanding Your Reach

• Acknowledge/recognize their help.
• Match their role to their communication/social style.
• Be direct and specific.
• Know your company’s referral system.
• Become a digital influencer.

Remember:
“People hate asking for help, but love giving help.”
Leveraging Corporate Customer Engagement Systems

In today’s business world, organizations have multiple systems for connecting with their customers—support is no longer just in the hands of the salesperson.

Does that mean salespeople have no role in after-sales support?

No, but it does mean that salespeople need to **understand and leverage** all of the ways their company connects with the customer.
Tips for Leveraging Corporate Customer Engagement Systems

Checklist
To leverage Customer Engagement Systems (CES), salespeople need to be able to answer the following questions:

☐ Which CES components does your organization use?
☐ Which CES components does your customer want to access?
☐ What gaps do you need to fill?
☐ How can you link your efforts to the CES?
☐ Does your customer have a preference for how they like to engage?
Summary

What happens post-sale impacts success as much as any other phase of the sales process—if not, more. Gaining a new customer costs six to seven times more than retaining a loyal customer. So while new customers are important, retaining current, satisfied customers can lower costs, increase revenue, and create greater organizational success.

By following these five critical elements, your salespeople can help create that success.

- Ensure Satisfaction
- Validate Trusted Advisor Role
- Gain a Champion
- Expand Your Reach
- Leverage Corporate Customer Engagement
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More than 55 Years of Driving Human Performance Improvement.

Download our article

"Selling to Value: A New Standard for the New Sales Environment"

Selling to Value: The Art and Science of Discovery

More Information

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Michael Leimbach, Ph.D., is Vice President of Global Research and Development for Wilson Learning Corporation. With over 35 years in the field, Dr. Leimbach provides leadership for researching and designing Wilson Learning’s diagnostic, learning, and performance improvement capabilities. He has managed major research studies in sales, leadership, and organizational effectiveness and has developed Wilson Learning’s impact evaluation capability and ROI models. He has served as a research consultant for global clients, was Editor-in-Chief of the ADHR journal, and serves on the ISO Technical Committee on Quality Standards for Learning Service Providers. Dr. Leimbach is a published author and frequent speaker at global conferences.

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David Yesford is Senior Vice President of Wilson Learning Corporation. With over 35 years of experience developing and implementing human performance improvement solutions around the globe, Mr. Yesford brings valuable experience, strategic direction, and global perspective to his work. He has held strategic roles in Wilson Learning’s core content areas of sales and leadership, as well as e-learning and strategic consulting. Mr. Yesford is the contributing author of several books and has been published in business publications around the world. He frequently speaks at international engagements, focusing on sales, leadership, employee and customer engagement, brand, and strategy implementation.