

Analysis of the ceb challenger sale approach in the book the challenger sale: tak...

[Business](#), [Marketing](#)



Purpose of the book

The traditional approach to B2B selling no longer works. Deals are becoming increasingly complex, and customers have access to more information earlier in the sale than ever before. As a result, B2B customers are delaying contact with suppliers until they are 57% of the way through the purchase process; and they require greater consensus to move that process forward.

They and their colleagues at CEB (The Corporate Executive Board Company) have studied the performance of thousands of sales representatives around the world. Dixon is an executive director of strategic research at CEB. More than 15 years, Matt has worked to uncover the reality of conventional wisdom in sales and customer service. Brent Adamson is a speaker and facilitator with more than 20 years of experience as a professional researcher, teacher and a trainer. Adamson expedites a wide range of executive-level discussions around the world for Fortune 500 companies. Their team behind the book has been featured in the Harvard Business Review.

Summary of the book

Key concepts

In this book, the authors focus on how to achieve best performances for B2B Sales (Business to Business Sales) and introduce the audience to few key terms such as Challenger Sales, Commercial Teaching, Resonance and the PAUSE framework

Firstly, Challenger Sale – a sale in which the representative has a profound understanding and use that understanding to push the customer's mindset and introduce them to something new about their company, thus they can compete more efficiently.

Tailors their needs to resonate with customer issues and take control of the sale procedure. Commercial Teaching is an approach where the representative teaches a prospect how to focus on their commercial needs. Whereas, resonance is a casual way to measure of how strongly a sales pitch or outline to what a customer cares about. Representatives should be customizing their pitches to resonate with each customer and address their biggest worries. Sales representatives can be classified into five personality profiles and they are:

- The hard worker: the hard workers show up early, always willing to go the extra mile. They have their nose to the grindstone, are self-motivated and don't give up easily.
- The relationship builder: These sellers are very generous with their type and work on developing strong personal relationships while diligently resolving any tensions that arise in commercial relationships. Ironically, while most sales program encourages relationship builders they are the least effective.
- The lone wolf: they are deeply self-confident and have a natural ability to succeed on their own instincts. They are the least common profile of all salespeople, but they are the second most common among the top sales people.

- The problem solver: these reps are highly reliable and detail focused. They make to fulfill all promises when a deal is complete. They are known to ensure issues are solved quickly and thoroughly.
- The challenger: These representatives use unique perspectives to makes customer think differently about their needs. Challengers also cover other bases. They do work so in a way that connects more strongly and quickly.

Authors' viewpoint In *The Challenger Sale*, the authors Matthew Dixon and Brent Adamson reveal the key secret to success that fundamentally building relationships with customers is not the best way to make sales, but to challenge them. Dixon and Adamson argue that typical relationship building is the wrong approach. As every sales representative in the world categorizes into five distinct profiles. Whilst, all of these types of representatives can declare average performance, only one – the Challenger, addresses constantly high performance. Rather than intimidating the customers with facts and figures, Challengers approach customers with insights on how they can save money or make money.

They customize their messages to the customer's particular needs. Their characteristics include, being assertive, disregarding when necessary and taking control of the sale. A sales representative, once armed with the right tools, can achieve higher levels of customer loyalty and finally greater growth. Evaluation According to my point of view, if the company has gone through the process of *The Challenger Sale* and has completed their Commercial Teaching presentation, the final part should come easy.

If the company follows the steps accurately, the product will be the perfect fit. The company's approach to find the solution mainly relies on what type of products they offer. A financial firm might need a strategy diagram, a tech or IT company might need a software demo and a logistics company might need an interactive map. These should be designed well by using the appropriate technology. For instance, if it's a PowerPoint, an iPad app, a video or anything else, ensure that the sales people have the right tools and know how to use them. Strengths and weaknesses of the key concepts? The fact that solution selling has remained close to its roots for so long is at the heart of The Challenger Sale's challenge.

The Internet has changed the complex selling environment so drastically, the authors contend, that old approaches are no longer relevant. Buyers come to a sale "armed to the teeth" with information, and this changes the dynamic entirely. According to this view, by the time buyers reach out to a salesperson, they have already clearly defined the pain they're trying to solve, identified the elements of the solution they want, and are looking for a provider to deliver what they've already designed. Buyers have no patience for lengthy "discovery" sessions to go over their requirements, and they're not looking for a buying guide. In such an environment,

The Challenger Sale says, it's easy to fall into either a bidding war, or to annoy the buyer to the point that you don't get an opportunity to bid. Instead, Adamson, Dixon, and Toman say, high performing salespeople focus on uncovering needs that the buyer doesn't yet know they have.

In practice, for instance, the salesperson may come to an RFP presentation session with answers to all of the buyer's requirements in written form, but not focus on it at all during the actual presentation. Instead, the seller uses the time to challenge the buyer to consider needs not covered by the RFP, creating doubt that the solution is the right one, and opening a dialog in which the salesperson becomes the guide to a new way of looking at the problem. Writing style and layoutThe authors used a very motivated and realistic style of writing.

The text is formal and professional like but at the same time their style is similar to how a teacher would layout information for their students. It is extremely helpful to understand and once the reader starts reading, he or she would get into the flow of it. Does the author support his views and concepts with strong evidence or just opinion? Is it believable? As stated before, they are part of a company that conducts an extensive research. Their findings are from researching thousands of sales reps from various industries.

Moreover, many companies have successfully used their strategy and taught their reps something new about sales process. What was the most interesting aspect of the book to you? What insights did you gain from the book? After reading this book, the process of sales caught my attention. As a Challenger, a sales rep has to follow the steps- teaching the customers, tailoring the sales message to the customer, taking control of the sale and building constructive criticism. The relationship-building sales technique that was successful, when customers couldn't do an online price comparison with

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just a few mouse clicks (or taps on a smartphone) — has simply passed its prime. The sales team needs to use the sales techniques that will work with today's customers, and the research says it's all about the Challenger Sales Model.

Conclusion

I'd say that the team at CEB really struck a chord by using the unpredicted word "Challenger" to define what top sales performers have the capability to do: refocus the buyer's mind and better align it with their offerings. The leading assumption in this methodology seems to be that sellers can add information that changes the buying decision process, hence creating a competitive advantage. Many feel this insight can be embraced without discarding solution selling and that top performing sales people have done this for decades, without placing a label on it.

However, there would be no contrast or intrigue if CEB had promoted their findings as "Solution Selling, Iterated." In other words, instead of simply providing an updated solution, they've created their own intellectual property by choosing the word "Challenger" and thereby challenging the entire sales world's conception of the solution they need. In practicality, each organization must carefully evaluate their own strengths, their needs, and their marketplace, and match their strategies to the situation.