

Features

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58 How Right Should the Customer Be?

Erin Anderson and Vincent Onyemah

If your salespeople aren't quite sure who their boss is—the regional manager? the district manager? the customer?—it could be a sign that your sales force management system is dysfunctional (and that your sales department is in big trouble).

68 Ending the War Between Sales and Marketing

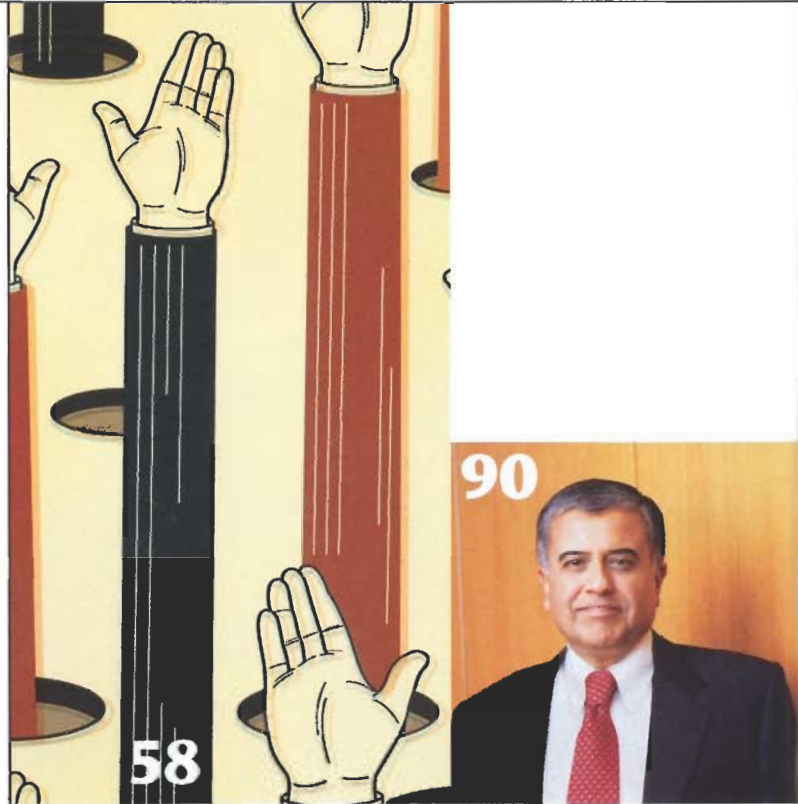
Philip Kotler, Neil Rackham, and Suj Krishnaswamy

In many organizations, cultural and economic forces combine to create friction between salespeople and marketers. They bicker; they play the blame game; they undervalue one another's contributions—all to the detriment of the organization. There are ways to increase the peace.

80 Match Your Sales Force Structure to Your Business Life Cycle

Andris A. Zoltners, Prabhakant Sinha, and Sally E. Lorimer

A company must consider and alter different aspects of its sales force structure as the business moves through start-up, growth, maturity, and decline, just as it matches customer strategy to the life cycle of a product.



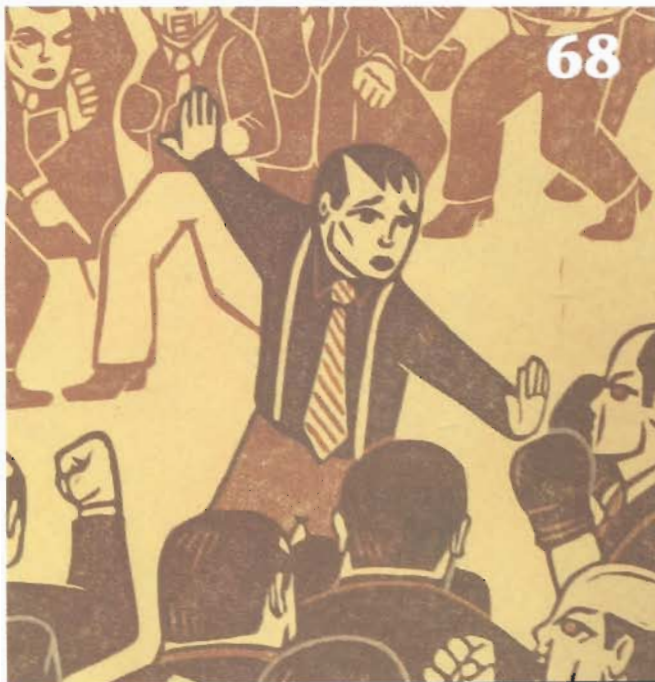
90 THE HBR INTERVIEW

Leading Change from the Top Line

Fred Hassan

Interviewed by Thomas A. Stewart and David Champion

When Fred Hassan turns around a struggling company, he doesn't start by cutting costs; he starts by motivating the sales force. Hassan, CEO of the pharmaceutical firm Schering-Plough, believes that sales reps who build trusted, value-adding relationships with doctors can help the company get control of its top line and differentiate itself in a crowded market.



COVER ART: SIGRID OLSSON / GETTYIMAGES

102 **Better Sales Networks**

Tuba Üstüner and David Godes

It's all about who you know. And who they know. And how good you are at understanding these intricate social webs and mobilizing the people in them to help make the sale. Fortunately, companies can take steps to help their salespeople build better networks.

114 **The Sales Learning Curve**

Mark Leslie and Charles A. Holloway

When launching a truly innovative product into a new market, the temptation is to hire an army of salespeople right away to bring in customers. But far from being your first move, that's really the last thing you should do.

124 **The Ultimately Accountable Job:
Leading Today's Sales Organization**

Jerome A. Colletti and Mary S. Fiss

In recent years, sales leaders have devoted considerable time and energy to establishing and maintaining disciplined processes. The thing is, many of them stop there—and they can't afford to. Here's what they need to do to succeed today.



Best of HBR

138 **Introduction**

140 **Making the Major Sale**

Benson P. Shapiro and Ronald S. Posner

A sale can be an expensive, one-shot venture or a complicated, longer-term exchange. This eight-step program will guide you from the logistics of the initial contact through the difficult task of maintaining an account.

150 **Low-Pressure Selling**

Edward C. Bursk

Unlike traditional sales methods, low-pressure sales techniques encourage buyers to arrive at purchasing decisions through a rational process and their own free will. Learn why this type of selling is so effective and how to select, train, and compensate low-pressure salespeople.

164 **What Makes a Good Salesman**

David Mayer and Herbert M. Greenberg

The two key qualities of a successful salesperson are *empathy*, the ability to sense customers' reactions, and *ego drive*, a compulsion to make the sale. How can potential employers accurately identify individuals who have these two traits?

172 **Major Sales: Who Really Does the Buying?**

Thomas V. Bonoma

Psychological information about customers is usually freely available and can pave the way for an effective sales strategy. Why, then, does the sales team so often overlook it?

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Departments

July–August 2006

10 FROM THE EDITOR The Top Line

Because solid, research-based writing about sales is so rare and so important, a team of HBR editors put together this special double issue. We aimed to be comprehensive, both covering the waterfront and delving more deeply into how the economics of a business affect the way it sells.



16 FORETHOUGHT

Sales teams that use a portfolio approach can optimize returns...Automation systems *can* be implemented smoothly...What customers really think of sales reps...A report card on sales forces shows room for improvement... Great sales leadership never goes out of style...Secrets from the world's greatest salesperson.



28 HBR CASE STUDY Old Hand or New Blood?

Frank V. Cespedes

Fusilier Technology's sales have been flat for five years, and its new growth strategy to sell customized business solutions has stalled. Should the top sales job go to one of the firm's veteran sales directors or to a brazen outsider who has experience selling solutions but doesn't know the industry? Alston Gardner of Kenan-Flagler Business School; Goldman Sachs' Steve Kerr; Spencer Stuart's Randall D. Kelley; and Andrea L. Dixon from the University of Cincinnati comment on this fictional case study.



42 DIFFERENT VOICE Leveraging the Psychology of the Salesperson

A Conversation with Psychologist and Anthropologist G. Clotaire Rapaille

Salespeople are like addicted gamblers. On some level, they know they will lose most of the time, but they are excited by the outside chance of winning—and that has implications for how you should manage them.



48 RESEARCH REPORT Understanding What Your Sales Manager Is Up Against

Barry Trailer and Jim Dickie

An annual global survey of top sales executives reveals that today's selling context has changed and buyers are behaving differently. That profoundly affects how sales organizations should be managed and how reps should approach their jobs.

98 STRATEGIC HUMOR

182 LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Employers bear some responsibility for employee dissatisfaction. By lowering standards and rewarding mediocrity to retain workers when labor is scarce, executives give employees a false sense of entitlement and of their value to the organization.

185 EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

192 PANEL DISCUSSION Selling Solutions

Don Moyer

Sellers, take note: Stop chattering about the attributes of your product. Instead, be utterly clear about what it does for those who buy it.

An Invitation to HBR Subscribers

Where will management innovation come from in the future? What are the most important ways that today's organizations will need to change to thrive in the decades to come? Gary Hamel's Management Innovation Lab and *Harvard Business Review* want to hear your ideas on these issues shaping management and innovation. To contribute your thoughts, please visit www.HBR.org and click on the link "Imagining the Company of the Future" on the home page.