

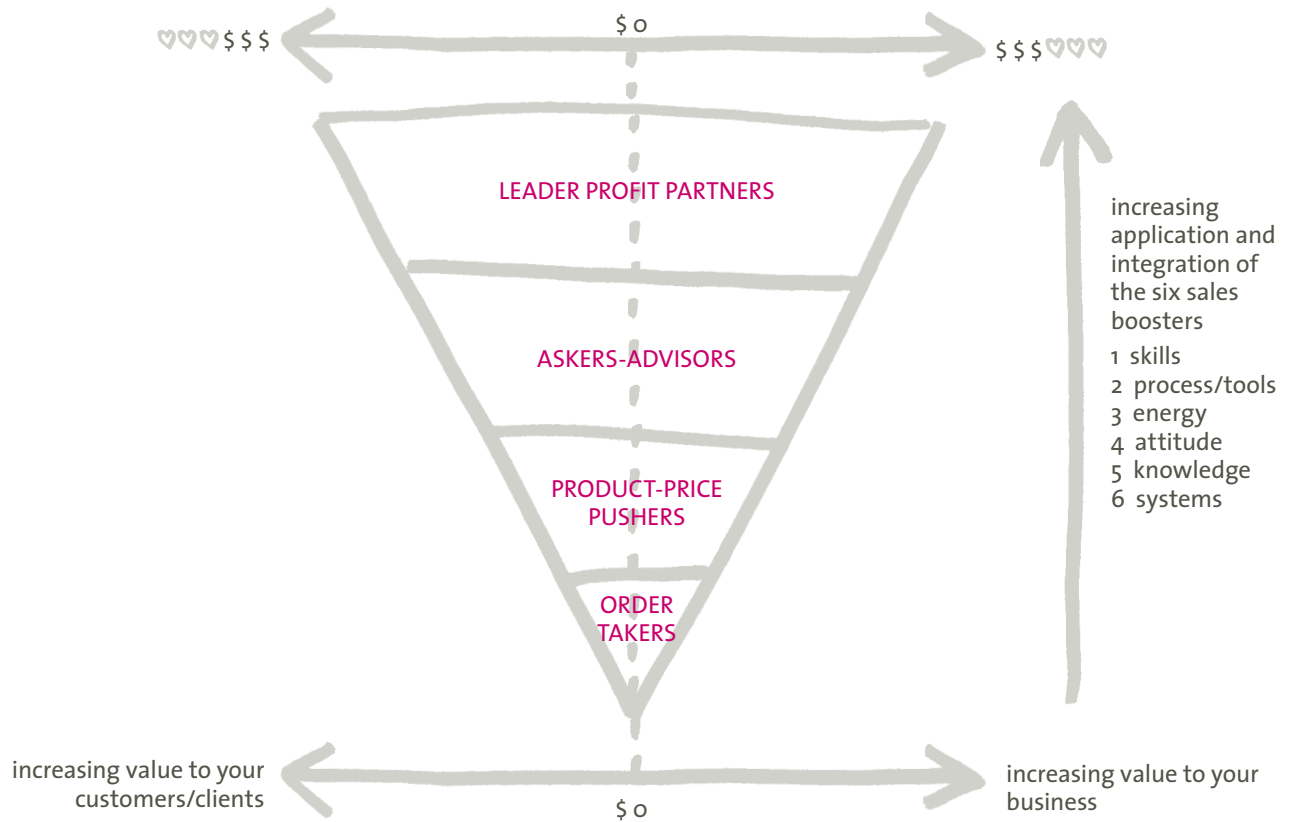
profit

“There are four types of salespeople in your business – the predominant type will determine how successful you are or how much money you are losing.”

Order takers kill revenue! If your salespeople can't effectively sell your company's high-value offerings, you could have too many order takers and not enough profit partners. Improving your sales team can give you the alignment you need to stay where you want to be: ahead of your competition!

from order takers to profit partners
BILL CARSON

FROM ORDER TAKERS TO PROFIT PARTNERS



NO DEVELOPMENT, NO GROWTH

Are any of these issues impacting your business's sales results?

- Your salespeople are not willing or able to sell the high-value offerings your company has developed.
- There is a lack of clear and consistent sales processes.
- Sales managers are not developing their teams like coaches should.
- You are not getting the alignment across functions in your business that is required to deliver customers' wants and needs and stay ahead of your competitors.

Many businesses are missing out on millions of dollars of increased revenues because they have too many 'order takers' and not enough 'profit partners' in their sales organisation.

Many companies place too much emphasis on manufacturing, marketing, supply chain or their core offering and not enough on developing a sales, service and leadership culture.

There are four different types of salesperson, and each type is committed to very different kinds of results. The predominant type of salesperson in your business will reflect your attitude to the sales function and your business results.

1. Order Takers – these salespeople are committed to their weekends and to doing the basics of their job.
2. Product-Price Pushers – these salespeople are committed to features, dollars and haggling.

3. Askers-Advisors – these sales professionals are committed to understanding customer needs, wants, concerns and benefits.

4. Leader Profit Partners – these sales professionals are committed to adding superior client/customer value and returns for your company.

The leader profit partner is characterised by a distinct desire to not only understand the buyer's business or needs extremely well, but also to really explore ways of adding value.

ORDERTAKERS

The first type of salesperson is the 'order taker'. Many companies have order taker salespeople. They are characteristically people with low skill and knowledge levels. They generally will add no value to the buyer as they see their role as just 'taking orders'. These people are predominantly committed to the weekend and not to the profession of selling. A business that has many order takers doesn't care about selling and believes that the functions of marketing, manufacturing, design, distribution or accounting are more important.

One example is a very well known brand in Australia, a company that makes residential and commercial building products. Before we began working with them we mystery-shopped their showroom sales staff, and in virtually every showroom in both Sydney and Melbourne the salespeople failed to create engagement with the prospective buyer. Their first question was, 'Do you want product X or product Y?' Their second question was, 'Do you want a brochure?' And the third thing they said was, 'When you have your sizes, fax them to me and I will give you a quote'. The bottom line was that their selling skills were very low level. They relied on 'taking orders' from buyers who knew what they wanted. This company spends millions on marketing, but has low conversion rates because their high quality marketing is not backed up by high quality selling and service. The problem is that this business has lowered many of its own standards 'because that is what everyone else in this industry does'.

At the time of writing, we have started coaching the sales managers and helping the showroom salespeople to create a much more engaging and informing purchase experience for prospective buyers and customers.

PRODUCT-PRICE PUSHERS

The second type of salesperson is the 'product-price pusher'. These people are slightly more skilled and knowledgeable than order takers, but their only sales training is product based and they are then put in front of buyers. They have been given a price list, car keys and are told to 'go sell'. These people are the foot soldiers of selling. They are sales representatives – as in they simply re-present back to the prospect what they have been taught. They are 'walking, talking billboards': here is the product, here is the price.

In most instances their skill levels are quite low, they are generally only capable of asking closed questions and the good ones are very good at haggling (which is not negotiating although they often refer to it as this). These people are committed to features and dollars.

We worked with a company that sells internet telephony services through a call centre. This company was very active in print and television advertising that encouraged people to ring to enquire about (and ideally purchase) the product. The telephone salespeople had been given reasonably extensive product training and when potential customers rang they would be greeted with a barrage of technical questions, starting with, 'Do you have broadband?' 'What size modem do you have?' 'Do you want a series one, two or three model?' Most customers were disengaged and confused. The sales that were achieved through hard closing methods created a lot of unhappy customers who struggled to use the product and didn't understand it.

We have contributed to increasing their conversion rates by training the telephone salespeople to build rapport and a relationship with the prospective buyer, how to ask much better questions, how to provide relevant and useful information, how to handle concerns, and how to ask for the order and follow up. There was a significant increase in the motivation and skill level of the team – one young guy got four sales in the afternoon following the training!

ASKERS-ADVISORS

The third type of salesperson is one that really starts to add value and actually produce profit for your business. These people are the 'askers-advisors' and they are the first level of professional salesperson.

Askers-advisors are committed to building relationships and understanding the buyer's needs, wants and concerns. They are extremely adept at asking good open and closed questions, listening effectively and building confidence and trust in the buyer. They provide ideas, advice, options and solutions to help the buyer make a decision to buy. When this type of salesperson is very good, they are also able to 'value sell' – which means that they can protect the margin and premium that is built into the company's products, whereas the first and second types of salesperson cannot do this. Askers-advisors are also very attentive and they always follow up.

In many ordinary companies this type of salesperson is scarce, but you will meet many professional salespeople of this type in very successful sales organisations.

A young salesman at a Mercedes dealership took the time to really understand what my needs were and provided information about various cars. He was knowledgeable and he provided information both to inform and to guide. He provided options in the sales process, and he was flexible when I needed to change my mind for a variety of reasons.

LEADER PROFIT PARTNERS

The fourth type of salesperson is the 'leader profit partner'. These are the true sales professionals. Most organisations have very few, if any, of these people. They will often be the head of an entrepreneurial company. Their total commitment and obsession is to add superior customer value. They develop partnering relationships with their clients to build true value and profit, not only for their customer but also for the customer's customer. The leader profit partner is characterised by a distinct desire to not only understand the buyer's business or needs extremely well, but also to really explore ways of adding value. These people understand the profit and loss requirements of a business and they have strong business acumen, but their fundamental intention is to create value.

Leader profit partners are leaders in three areas:

- *For their clients/customers* – by constantly thinking about how they can bring more value to their customer’s business and the relationship.
- *For their company* – by creating innovative ways to position their company and its offerings to the market.
- *For their colleagues* – by speaking well of their company, supporting their colleagues with information, coaching and positive role modelling.

A very good example of a leader profit partner is a senior account manager in an Australian steel manufacturing company. What sets this sales professional apart is his total dedication and commitment to really understanding his customers’ businesses, as well as knowing their customers. He and two of his colleagues are unique in their product and applications knowledge, business acumen, quality of relationships, energy and commitment.

What happens to leader profit partners?

They often leave a company because they aren’t being looked after or because they get tired of dealing with bosses who are order takers or product-price pushers, or they get promoted to sales manager positions.

How do you transform your sales force from order takers into leader profit partners?

1. Awareness – where are you now, what is the predominant type of salesperson in your business?
2. Goals – where do you want to be?
3. Actions – what needs to be done?
4. Measures – getting results and keeping going.

There are six sales boosters that our research over 15 years has identified:

1. **S** – Skills
2. **P** – Processes/Tools
3. **E** – Energy
4. **A** – Attitude
5. **K** – Knowledge
6. **S** – Systems

Each of these sales boosters are interlinked, but we are unashamedly biased toward skills, knowledge and behaviour change. If you look at any activity, until you can do it superbly well – you can’t win. I might have the best attitude toward golf, or tennis or football or dressmaking, I might apply considerable energy and commitment, I might be considerably knowledgeable about the activity, but if I haven’t been trained and coached to develop really good skills, I will under-perform and I will lose.

In the world of selling most people are judged on how long they have been selling, as if tenure had anything to do with ability!

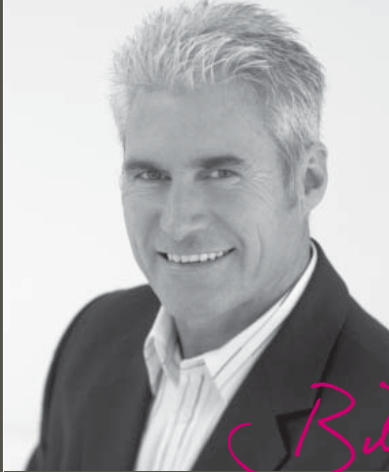
You must have an ongoing program to develop the skills and capabilities of your salespeople. Many salespeople and their companies are notorious for not valuing the profession of selling. Other professions such as accounting, engineering, law and marketing require regular ongoing study. In the world of selling most people are judged on how long they have been selling, as if tenure had anything to do with ability!

We all know that sporadic and impulsive efforts to make change in our personal lives usually leads to dissatisfaction and frustration. The same is true professionally in organisations which is why using a formal program with accountability built in is so important. You need to have a program that includes a sustainable people development structure customised to the knowledge, applications, skills, systems, markets and culture of your business.

By applying advanced change management, adult learning and strategy implementation principles, people development can be:

- Defined in strategic business outcomes.
- Designed for the complete learning and behaviour change experience.
- Driven for follow through.
- Documented for results and return on investment.

Transforming your salespeople from order takers and product-price pushers to more valuable askers-advisors and leader profit partners is an exciting, demanding and rewarding journey for your business. ☺



Bill Carson

BILL is the executive director of Perform Solutions, a consulting, coaching and training company that specialises in helping companies to build Sales, Service and Leadership Academies to enhance individual, team and organisational performance.

Bill has observed that all top performers in work and life are 'made not born'. He passionately believes that if companies want outstanding results from their people they need a consistent, sustainable, branded people development program that is customised to their business. His clients benefit from his more than 20 years' experience in management, business development, training and coaching across a wide range of industries – manufacturing, telecommunications, finance and banking, pharmaceutical, insurance, logistics, energy and utilities, professional services, food and beverage, computing and retail.

With a background in science, engineering, selling, consulting, and learning and development Bill brings a systematic, unique and exciting approach to achieving improved performance.



Matt Church

MATT is one of Australia's foremost experts on personal leadership. His best-selling books have paved the way for him to become one of Australia's top ten conference speakers. He was recently awarded the coveted Nevin Award for service and contribution to the professional speaking industry in Australia.

When Matt is not presenting, his passion is guiding some of the world's leading thinkers in his role as CEO of Thought Leaders Limited.

Known as one of the most creative educators in the country, Matt is obsessed with discovering how the best get better – a focus he brings to everything he does, from coaching high-performance teams, to advising CEOs on strategic communications.

Matt is the author of five books, as well as countless digital publications. His national bestseller, *Highlife 24/7*, is available through all good bookstores.