

## THE COMING SALES REVOLUTION

The profession of sales is on the verge of a revolution that will change it forever. Early adopters who have embraced this revolution are experiencing a significant competitive advantage that is causing their sales production and market share to explode. Once this revolution reaches its tipping point and gains market acceptance, economists predict that it will cause worldwide economic growth.

Every sales leader knows that the world of selling has changed and the profession of sales must also adapt. The current marketplace is more challenging than any that preceded it. Technology has made information easily accessible. This has allowed prospects to quickly research potential providers who offer products or services that may meet their needs. Frequently, before a prospect has even spoken with a sales person he or she has already begun evaluating the sales person's primary competitors. This has created a hyper-competitive selling environment, where sales people must battle competitors for every sale. To further complicate the situation, sales people are entering into the prospect's buying process later than ever before. Surveys indicate that prospects are often completing roughly 60% of their buying process before beginning a dialogue with a sales person.<sup>1</sup>

The profession of sales is anxiously waiting for the next revolution to guide it through this unprecedented time. Many sales leaders expected this revolution to be driven by new technology. They believed that the recent technological innovations would transform the profession of sales and usher it into a new era. They were wrong.

Though technology is a potent tool that can make sales people more productive, it is only a tool. When competent sales people use technology it amplifies their ability to positively influence prospects. However, when mediocre sales people use technology their performance is still mediocre. Technology cannot make up for inept sales practices. This is why, in spite of the many technological advancements that have impacted sales in recent years, closing rates have remained largely unchanged throughout the last decade.

The revolution that the world of sales will soon experience will not be brought about by a new technology. The coming revolution will not be a technological revolution, but a psychological revolution. It will not be based on selling better products or services, but on selling products or services better.

### **Social Science Will Stimulate Economic Growth**

A large and growing number of economists have begun to publically state that they believe that the next wave of economic growth will occur, not because of new technological innovations, but because of a better understanding of human behavior. These economists claim that the insights from scientific disciplines, such as social psychology, cognitive psychology, communication theory and cognitive neuroscience, have the power to grow the world economy. This innovation will transform many professions, including the profession of selling.

In the past, standard economic theory asserted that when consumers make buying decisions they do so in a rational, logical manner. Yet, today economists no longer believe this to be true.<sup>2</sup> The reason for this change in philosophy is due to the thousands of academic studies focused on obtaining a scientific understanding of what creates, enables and enhances influence.

Now, because of this social science research, economists know that when people make decisions they do not engage in a rational, cost-benefit analysis, but instead rely upon a set of fixed psychological principles that guides how they behave.<sup>3</sup> This is why an entire branch of economics is devoted to the integration of social science and economics. The premise of the field of behavioral economics is that through understanding the psychological factors that influence human buying decisions, economists will be able to create more precise economic models and theories.<sup>4 5 6</sup>

For instance, in 2002 the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences was bestowed upon Daniel Kahneman, a professor of psychology at Princeton University. Kahneman was awarded the prize “for having integrated insights from psychological research into economic science, especially concerning human judgment and decision-making under uncertainty.”<sup>7</sup> The value of Kahneman’s research was that it provided evidence that human decisions are not ruled by logic, but by “psychological principles that govern the perception of decision problems and the evaluation of options.”<sup>8</sup>

Harvard’s Amy Cuddy affirms that these psychological principles are instinctive and occur naturally through “very unconscious and implicit processes.”<sup>9</sup> Behavioral economist Dan Ariely references these psychological principles as his reason for stating that human beings are “predictably irrational.”<sup>10</sup> Ariely acknowledges that human behaviors “are neither random nor senseless. They are systematic, and since we repeat them again and again, predictable.”<sup>11</sup>

Pause and reflect upon the magnitude of these insights. If the factors that determine human behavior are known to such an extent that those behaviors becomes predictable, then by modifying those causal factors, behavior can also be altered. Because what can be predicted can also be changed.

## **Social Science Will Revolutionize Selling**

Never before in human history has there been so much scholarly research that identified how humans are influenced. Scientists have classified the repeatable principles that govern human behavior. While it is true that human beings are dynamic, they are also predictable. In fact, it is rare that the cause of a human behavior cannot be explained by social scientists.

This proven science is extremely relevant to the profession of selling because it guides sales people in behaving in ways that will enhance their ability to sell. Yet, since this scientific research has been hidden away in academic journals, most sales people were unaware of its existence.

However, this is no longer the case. This science is now available to sales people. The results are when sales people align their sales behaviors with these psychological principles they are literally selling the way that science has proven human beings are hardwired to buy. This harmony between the buyer and

seller will significantly increase the likelihood of the sale.

To disregard this proven science is treacherous because when sales people sell against these psychological principles they are inadvertently behaving in ways that obstruct influence. This is not only an unprofitable business practice, but it will also drastically decrease a sales person's effectiveness. Researchers Brad Sagarin and Kevin Mitnick summarize the importance of this when they maintain that "in the marketplace, practitioners live or die by their skill at harnessing the principles of influence. The skilled prosper. The unskilled go out of business."<sup>12</sup>

Selling with proven science is the future of selling. It is the revolution that will sweep through the profession of sales. However, today, we know that this revolution is not far off. The revolution is here.

## About the Author

David Hoffeld is CEO of the Hoffeld Group, a research based sales training, coaching and consulting firm that is the leader in the integration of proven science and sales. The Hoffeld Group takes the repeatable and predictable principles, which science has proven to create and enable influence, out of the laboratory and academic journals and apply them to selling. For a deeper look at the Hoffeld Group's groundbreaking research and innovative sales strategies visit HoffeldGroup.com.

## Notes

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