

Top 11 Principles of Great Sales Messaging

– by Michael Cannon

Sales Messaging – the stated reasons you give people to buy from your firm – is the foundation on which all your sales and marketing efforts rest. Sadly, most companies lack a definition for their sales messaging, let alone a methodology for developing and deploying it. The results are millions of dollars in lost revenue, higher sales costs and missed bonuses.

Sales messaging is the foundation for all your sales and marketing efforts

Here is your chance to break from the pack and enhance your competitive advantage. Use these top 10 principles to create a definition for great sales messaging that will enable your company to win more orders, increase market share and improve margins.

1. **Specific to One Offering.** Sales messaging is about selling one offering a complete product or service. If you sell a number of products and services bundled together, then you can think of this as one offering. If the products or services are sold on a standalone basis, then you must have separate sales messaging for each offering.

2. **Target Each Buyer.** There are a number of buyer types to consider, including the prospect, customer, channel partner, industry analyst and investor. There are also buyer roles like User, Technical and Financial. It's important to identify buyers by offering, by title and by role so that the sales messaging resonates with each buyer's interests and perspective.

3. **Answer Buyer's Primary Buying Questions.** Each buyer has different buying questions. For example: Prospects are asking, "Why should I buy your solution rather than a competitive option?" Customers are asking, "Why should I keep buying from you?" Channel Partners are asking, "Why should I distribute your product or service?" Each buyer's questions are different and thus require tailored answers.

4. **Support the Product and Sales Cycle.** In the early stages of a product life cycle, the most important buyer question to answer is "Why should I change what I currently do and buy a product or service like this?" The question has nothing to do with your company. It's about educating the buyer on why they should make a change. The primary goal is to create a buying event.

In the later stages of the product life cycle, when market demand is established, the primary buying question shifts to "Why should I buy your solution rather than a competitive option?" It's about competitive differentiation and educating the buyer on why they should buy your offering. The primary goal is to create an order for your company.

5. **Great sales messaging supports each phase of the sales cycle.** Like the product life cycle, the sales cycle has distinct phases. For example, let's say you're selling an early stage product. At the beginning of the sales cycle, the primary buying question to answer is "Why should I meet with you?" Once you have a meeting, the next phase in the sales cycle is answering, "Why should I change what I currently do and buy a product or service like this?" The final phase of the sales cycle is then answering, "Why should I buy your solution rather than a competitive option?" Great sales messaging supports each phase in both the product life cycle and sales cycle.

6. **Determine the Differentiation Factors.** There are 5 important differentiation points including Time, Money, Risk, Strategic, and Personal. The more of these differentiation points you appeal to, the more likely you are to attract and create buyers.

7. **Apply the Black and White Factor.** Numerous studies conclude that the brain comprehends best when presented with clear contrast between opposites. Statements like

“We are one of the leading...” is not as compelling as “We are the leader in...” Use lots of sharply contrasting adjectives like Only, Fastest, Easiest, Best, etc. to create powerful sales messaging.

8. Test Against the Me Too Factor. In order to have truly effective sales messaging, especially for competitive differentiation, no other company should be able to make the same claims that you do. The buyer must perceive that your company is different from all the other competitive options and vendors.

9. Organize into Three Points. People remember things best when they are presented in groups of three. The brain works this way, so optimize your sales messaging for maximum effectiveness by incorporating this important principle.

10. Summarize on One Page. The answer to each buying question must be simplified to a one page format for a few of reasons. Your sales reps cannot remember and articulate more than this and your buyers surely will not. In order to be effective, sales messaging must be delivered to the buyer in digestible amounts.

11. Provide Proof Points. Most buyers consider your sales messaging to be claims. To add more credibility to your key points, you must provide lots of evidence that your claims are true. The more evidence you have, the more believable your claims. The best way to validate that your claims and evidence are true is to use proof points such as customer testimonials, case studies, etc. The second best proof points include third party organizations like International Organization for Standardization or Gartner Group, etc.

The next best proof points are a demonstration or proof of concept. Great sales messaging gives your company the foundation on which to create more meetings, buying events and orders for each of the products and services that you offer. Since most companies do not know what sales messaging is, and you do, you have a tremendous opportunity right now to gain a competitive advantage. This advantage has been proven to increase sales, reduce costs and improve margins.