

Familiar Selling Behaviors: The Killer Bee of Sales Transformation



Improve Performance.
Drive Revenue.

About The Naro Group

The Naro Group specializes in helping technology companies capitalize on their investment in sales process and sales training. Contact Jim Naro, President, by email at: jnaro@TheNaroGroup.com.

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By Jim Naro, President of The Naro Group

Have you ever seen new selling behaviors that are introduced as part of a sales transformation initiative fail because they compete with familiar selling behaviors that are no longer effective? I personally have seen it happen time and time again, much to the frustration of the sales managers that are attempting to implement change.

Let's face it – people resist change because change brings uncertainty about the future. When new sales practices are introduced, sales people often balk and never overcome that initial hurdle, which is the willingness to support change. Reverting back to familiar selling behaviors is comfortable, but those behaviors won't produce results any longer.

Prepare for resistance

Before you launch into the next round of transformation initiatives, consider some of the existing selling behaviors that may conflict with your efforts to build new behaviors. This will help you understand what actually needs changing in order for the sales people to support your new long-term objectives and strategy.

Here are a few examples of the familiar behaviors I see that conflict with sales transformation programs:

- **Short-cutting the “sales qualification” process.** Although marketing automation has added a layer of prequalification, sales people still need to apply additional criteria and ensure opportunities are “sales” qualified before including them in their pipeline. For example, a lead may need further qualification regarding number of employees or amount of annual revenue. Sales people also need to identify decision makers as part of the qualification process. Without fully qualifying leads, sales people are pumping up pipeline volume with prospects that may not lead anywhere.

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- **Pitching product versus conversing.** Sales people get in the habit of leading with product because they rely on corporate presentations and canned demos when they get their first meeting with buyers. Prospective buyers most likely have already learned a lot about a company's products and services before their initial engagement with a sales person so they don't want a sales pitch. Instead, they want insightful, intelligent conversations with sales people that understand their business objectives and can discuss how their needs and requirements can be met.
 - **Issuing proposals too early.** Sales people continue to be reactive by submitting proposals and pricing upon request, without first understanding the buying process or gaining the perspective of key stakeholders. This results in needlessly expending the seller's company resources without first getting a commitment from the buyer to allocate resources on his or her side for an evaluation plan.

Help old habits die quicker

To help the adoption of new selling behaviors, you can stop the old behaviors like those noted above that undermine transformation efforts with these steps:

- **Don't reinforce behaviors that don't meet expectations.** If opportunities are not properly "sales" qualified, don't let them become sales pipeline opportunities and don't allow them to be included in pipeline health metrics and revenue forecasting. Make it very clear to your sales people that you won't accept pipelines stuffed with unqualified leads.
- **Change the tools that promote these behaviors.** Stop providing sales people with one-to-many marketing messaging, such as corporate presentations. Instead, provide them with one-to-one sales messaging, like success stories the buyer can relate to, that can be used to facilitate intelligent discussions. Have sales people become so familiar with these success stories that they become part of their conversation repertoire.
- **Reduce the ability to fall back on old behaviors.** Don't allocate resources for proposal writing, pricing, and contracts unless there is mutual agreement with the buyer to allocate resources for an evaluation process.

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Where to Start

Changing behavior doesn't happen overnight. It may take some overall change management planning and extended reinforcement that is supported by new infrastructures.

If you are struggling with incorporating behavioral change in your transformation planning and want to stop old behaviors, give me a call at 603-881-7712 or email me at jnaro@thenarogroup.com. I can work with you to identify potential conflicts between familiar behaviors and new behaviors.



Contact Us

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