

MARK DONNOLO

THE
INNOVATIVE
SALE

Unleash Your
Creativity for Better
Customer Solutions
and Extraordinary
Results

THE INNOVATIVE SALE

Mark Donnolo

AMACOM

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INTRODUCTION

From Art School to MBA

CREATIVITY HAS ALWAYS COME EASILY TO ME. From an early age, I was the kid who could draw just about anything. I took all the art classes I could, starting with Saturday morning instruction from a television cartoonist and later progressing to regular classes at a local art museum, sitting among students who were two to three times my age. So going into a design profession was natural for me. To get there, I had to battle my way through a top art school where the level of talent and intellect initially overwhelmed me. It taught me that, despite any innate abilities we may have, there is much to be learned in order to be competitive.

A few years later, I had worked my way into a highly regarded design firm in New York and later progressed into a design role with one of the top branding agencies in the world. Working there, I crossed over the creative line and learned about how design integrates with marketing and sales to help

companies grow. Fascinated with the intersection of business and design and inspired by my Wall Street stockbroker roommates who had decided to enroll in business school after a few years in the work world, I wanted to learn more. Instead of furthering my design education through a master of fine arts degree, I, too, went to business school to get a master's degree in business administration (MBA). My artsy friends thought I was nuts. My Wall Street friends agreed. At the time, the business schools accepted a few of what they called "dance students" into their rigorous programs to bring some innovative thinking to all the left brainers with engineering, finance, and other business backgrounds. As a hybrid right and left brainer, I got my shot . . . and it worked.

I discovered that the practice of sales demands creativity and innovation. After earning my MBA, I did the straight business thing by playing down my design background. Most companies that recruit newly minted MBAs can't see the relationship between creativity and business. It was safer to play by the left-brained rules. But over the years, working with leading sales organizations around the world, I noticed an interesting pattern in the solutions we were developing in highly competitive sales environments. The work we were doing on sales strategy and sales process design was different than the companies that were making decisions simply by the straight analytics or by copying industry practices. The analytics and industry practices provided a foundation for the next level of creative thinking. We were bringing together the analytics of

sales effectiveness with the creative processes I had learned and honed in the design field. And something new was happening. We were coming up with solutions the teams wouldn't have otherwise found, and we were getting performance results the teams hadn't seen before. We were essentially teaching sales leaders and salespeople to think differently . . . to think as sales innovators. We were unleashing the creativity they had within themselves and applying it in ways that helped them differentiate from the competition.

As sales organizations, we can track leads and dollars sold until our pipelines burst. But the sale happens when we connect to the buyers and offer something they need in a way that our competitors cannot. And often, that sale is ultimately made through thinking that is more difficult to measure. It includes listening, understanding the customer, gaining new insight, getting beyond our standard offer, creating divergent ideas, pushing the customer's thinking, and coming up with an answer that leads the customer ahead rather than simply meeting a requirement. Without creative thinking, salespeople are reduced to the roles of order takers and replicators of the competition. Sales creativity is not an elusive quality. It's not for the few with natural talent—we all have it. It's not only for salespeople working in companies labeled by the business press as innovative. It's not about eureka moments. Sales creativity follows a clear approach to get results.

In *The Innovative Sale*, I share some of these approaches for how you and your team can become sales innovators to

create new ideas you wouldn't have normally conceived and to improve your sales performance. And since predictability and results are keys to sales success, I share a thinking method to develop ideas, not just in moments of inspiration, but through a predictable process that you and your team can rely upon. I've also drawn upon the experiences of a range of innovators from the world of sales to the world of design, and shared a few stories from the front line, to illustrate creativity in action.

The first six chapters of the book explain the Innovative Sale principles and process. Chapters 7 through 9 include a few examples of the Innovative Sale applied to developing a value proposition, improving the sales process, and coaching the sales team. Chapter 10 gives you a glimpse of the Innovative Sale assessment to understand your Creative Quotient for Sales. We also have a comprehensive version of the Innovative Sale assessment that provides a detailed profile and actions for you and your team on six dimensions of sales creativity that you can request at SalesGlobe.com.

I hope you enjoy the book and put the Innovative Sale approaches into action. As you make them a natural part of your work, they can change the way you think and the way you create sales strategies and customer solutions. I believe you'll find the results very rewarding.

Mark Donnolo

CHAPTER 1

The Sales Innovation Dilemma

THE CAB PULLED UP to the hotel. As I fished for money to pay the fare, I wondered how the English carry all those heavy coins around in their pockets. I wheeled my suitcase through the revolving door to find Alastair in the lobby at “half-ten,” as they say in Britain. It was a sunny morning in London’s Canary Wharf financial district, but my body clock reminded me that it was still 5:30 AM on the east coast of the United States. The time zone change and the long flight were starting to kick in. Sleeping less than four hours in an airline seat, no matter how far it reclined, left me weary as I transitioned into a day full of meetings.

Alastair was an executive with a global technology company and my host for a three-day meeting on sales strategy. In

his buttoned-up, crisp style, he described the purpose of the days ahead.

“Our sales organization needs some inspiration, Mark. We’ve got a reputation for great products and service once we finally make the sale, which, unfortunately, does not happen often enough,” he explained. “We need to put some welly into it when we’re showing the customer how we’re unique and why they should hire us. That’s what this meeting is all about. Getting them to loosen up and think differently about new ways to help the customer.”

We entered an expansive ballroom with plush carpet, heavily paneled walls, and thick crown molding. Alastair and his team had tried their best to transform the opulent space into an environment that would inspire creative thinking. In the middle of the room was an odd assortment of thought-provoking items—picture books, oversized board games, and three-dimensional puzzles—meant to arouse creativity. Positioned around the room were beanbag chairs and sofas, presumably for the executives to hang out and talk. The executives had been encouraged to dress casually, but they still showed up in suits, minus the ties, with the occasional pair of starched khakis or expensive jeans. Looking around at this proper group, it was hard to imagine even a few of them reclining in a beanbag chair for a serious conversation.

As I tried to absorb this peculiar setting, Alastair led me to the area where I would present my speech the following day. He had warned me this was a PowerPoint free zone, but when

I looked at the large, blank whiteboard in front of the rows of chairs, I felt a wave of uncertainty. Alastair, however, was clearly excited.

“You will stand here, Mark,” he explained, facing the empty chairs, “and your artist will stand behind you and illustrate your presentation in real time.” Alastair beamed. “He has read your speech, but we have encouraged the artists to be free with their interpretations,” he confided, enhancing my anxiety.

As Alastair and I walked away from the whiteboard, a sales manager approached us and asked if she could book a conference room for her team.

“Certainly, but this room is designed for working as well,” Alastair replied, gesturing toward the beanbag chairs.

The sales manager nodded politely and mumbled something about needing a projector, then walked quickly out of the ballroom. Clearly, I wasn’t the only one struggling in this setting. As I studied the executives in the room, I realized none were interacting with the picture books, games, or puzzles. Instead, they gathered in groups of three and four along the perimeter of the room, which was lined with coffee stations. Some had moved large coffee urns aside to make room for laptops, while others leaned against the walls or sat awkwardly on the floor to be close to an electrical outlet.

What was happening here? Offering toys to high-powered sales executives was like offering vegetables to a pack of wolves. Alastair’s team attempted to promote new thinking

by providing an environment without a clear purpose, boundaries, or constraints. But this was a group used to processes and technical specs. Alastair had inadvertently created a major constraint: The executives weren't allowed to conduct their meeting in any way familiar to them. To them, this creative stuff was just window dressing to the work they were trying to do. They were lost and, as a result, grasped for the familiarity of the sidelines while they talked about forecasts, sales pipelines, and products.

Alastair and the team found themselves faced with a common problem: the sales innovation dilemma. They knew they needed creative thinking to improve their unique value proposition and to offer customers better solutions. Their markets had become increasingly competitive, their products more commoditized; their buyers understood more about what they were buying than ever before.

For Tracy Tolbert, executive vice president of global sales at Xerox Services, creativity is an essential part of the business and an essential characteristic of successful reps: "In almost every case, our most successful sellers are the most creative. We occasionally get a salesperson who's in the right place at the right time, and it's the perfect storm and they get a big deal, and that's great. But those who deliver it quarter after quarter, year after year, are the creative thinkers, who put themselves in the client's situation and figure out how to make the environment better. And by the way, that's true for salespeople who are hunters, who are out there trying to find new clients; and it's also true for our account executives who

are managing existing customers. It's the same kind of thinkers that are successful year after year."

Tolbert stresses that innovation has to be a priority for the organization and not just the initiative-of-the-day: "You have to be relentless. You can't just write about it in some newsletter one month saying, 'Okay, well, make sure everybody's got it.' They have to get sick of hearing it from you, because then it becomes part of what they're naturally thinking. You have to push, push, push and constantly expose your organization to creativity and the demand for innovation, or they just won't pay attention."

The consistent delivery of innovative ideas has paid off for Tolbert's sales organization. For example, the chief executive officer (CEO) of a current customer came to one of Tolbert's senior sales executives and told him about a financial problem the company faced. He essentially asked that executive to create solutions for his company's budget crisis. "This sales executive just got directions from the CEO to take tens of millions of dollars of cost out of the organization," says Tolbert. "He came to us and asked, 'Hey, how can you help me do this? Not in reducing the price on the service you already deliver for me, but here's the rest of my organization. How can you help me take the cost out?' It's because we have a great relationship with the CEO and have delivered creative solutions in the past. We wouldn't even be talking to these guys if we were not delivering service to them perfectly on the other side of the business.

"In response to this challenge, we have to be creative. We

have to say, ‘Yes, we can think of new ways to deliver for you.’ I think our customers see us as really, really good creative thinkers around complex solutions. And they believe it because we’ve demonstrated it to them, rather than just talked about innovation.”

Some sales organizations, like Tolbert’s, have made sales innovation a part of their culture. Others, like Alastair’s, are still stuck, trying to understand how innovative thinking merges successfully with metrics and quotas. So year after year, they turn to possible answers in selling a “solution,” “spinning” the sale, building the “relationship,” or “challenging” the customer. But the problem is that, while the sales organizations predefine a solution or take the customer through yet another new sales process or set of questions, the sales team goes through the same old thinking patterns. Sales executives know they need creativity to produce new and better ideas. They just don’t understand how to get there.

Alastair’s first mistake was assuming that all forms of creativity are the same, and that childlike props are appropriate for a sales organization. The first step in solving the sales innovation dilemma involves correcting some dangerous misperceptions about creativity.

The Dilemma of Perception

Alastair is not alone. Almost everyone has perceptions about what creativity is and how innovation is born, based on their

own experiences. Teresa Amabile is the Edsel Bryant Ford professor of business administration in the entrepreneurial management unit at Harvard Business School and a director of research there. She is also a leading researcher in the field of creativity. Her work began thirty years ago with a study of 12,000 daily journal entries from 238 people working on creative projects. She coded the journal entries to understand how they made creative breakthroughs and to identify some of the motivating factors. “Because there are many misconceptions about creativity,” she wrote in a noteworthy paper, “it is important to consider what creativity is not.” According to Amabile, creativity is not necessarily the result of an eccentric personality or of art, or even a sign of intelligence. Neither, she wrote, is creativity inherently good.

This insight highlights an important point: Misperceptions about creativity and innovation are common, and may lead the sales organization in the wrong direction or prevent you from incorporating creativity into your sales practices altogether. You’re not prancing around with finger paints to find your inner Picasso. You’re solving a sales challenge in a creative way that will differentiate you from competitors.

Brian Stone, associate professor in the department of design at The Ohio State University and cofounder of Växa Design Group (creators of the gardening app, Sprout it), says many of his students believe real creativity is elusive. “When people tell me things like ‘I’m not creative,’ that’s actually not true. They say ‘I’m not creative,’ because they think there’s this magic bullet or some kind of potion that they take to get

creativity. In reality, you just have to change your approach and your mind-set around solving a particular problem in a unique manner.”

There are some surprising ways creativity can be applied to the sales environment. But first, let’s look at a few perceptions and realities:

Perception: You have to be born with creativity.

Innovators are those few individuals blessed with naturally high creative intelligence.

Reality: Most creators and innovators have learned how to be creative. Creative processes and principles are easy to learn, but practice and tenacity are required before they produce results. This is particularly true in the sales environment, which tends to be reactive and defaults to preconceived answers.

Perception: Creative ideas come from eureka moments.

Creative people have moments of epiphany that lead to innovation.

Reality: Creative moments are usually the culmination of a creative problem solving progression. In the majority of situations, brilliant results come amid numerous other ideas that never see the light of day.

Perception: You have to work in a heralded innovative organization in order to be creative. The business press regularly covers corporate innovators like Apple, Google, and Pixar with a focus on how they

work, how their offices are designed, and how their cultures function.

Reality: Any organization can adopt innovative practices, and any individual can use creative methods independently. Being in a really cool environment can inspire a creative mood, but if you're in the 90 percent of sales environments that aren't regularly cited by the business press for their innovation, the opportunity still exists to create distinguishing competitive strategies and customer solutions.

Perception: Innovation doesn't apply to sales. Sales necessitates a target customer base, an offer, and a sales pipeline in order to hit your numbers. Innovation belongs in product design or marketing, but not sales.

Reality: Innovation wins deals. Innovation can be the differentiating factor in a competitive sales situation, and continued innovation can help retain customers.

Perception: Creativity is creativity; it's all the same. A painter, musician, or poet can translate those talents to creativity in the business arena.

Reality: All creativity is not created equal. Most creative endeavors fall into one of two general categories: "artistic" creativity and "functional" creativity.

When you think about creativity and innovation, names like Jackson Pollack, Walt Whitman, or Andy Warhol may

come to mind. These talented people were famous for their artistic creativity. Artistic creativity leans heavily toward expression and the unconstrained innovation seen from painters, sculptors, poets, musicians, and interpretive dancers. But it's hard to assign a place for this in a sales environment. Artistic creativity is inherently subjective in the way it's made, when the artist says, "This is how I want to paint this picture." It's also subjective in the way the finished product is judged. Some people may say, "I love it," while others respond with an equally valid, "I hate it."

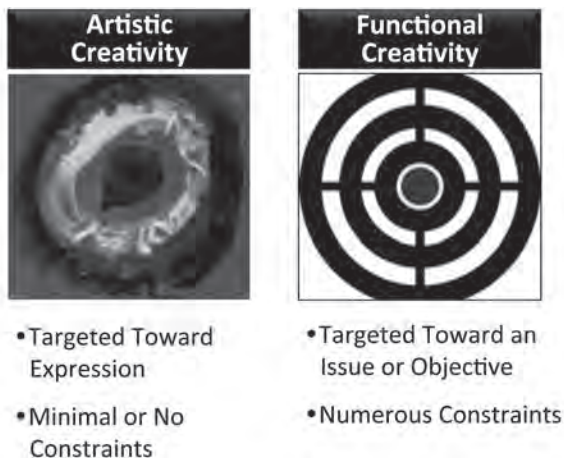
When I was in art school in the 1980s, I created a series of silk screens about the Cold War, which loomed large at the time. I used color, format, texture, and line to communicate my ideas about this nuclear threat. By all standards, it was successful. My professor understood it, most of my peers liked it, and I felt I had communicated my thoughts through these silk screens. But it had no practical application. I never, for example, considered sending it to Ronald Reagan as a suggestion for how to deal with this conflict.

Artistic creativity has limited application in a sales environment, which is marked by goals, expectations, and objectivity. Sales organizations demand a different type of creativity. Functional creativity is defined by its objective outcomes. With functional creativity, there *is* a right answer. In art school, everyone in a class can feel something different about a project's end result; but in a sales environment, you want everyone to see the same picture.

After graduating from art school and working as a designer in New York, I earned my MBA and began working with sales organizations. Here, I found, creativity was just as necessary, but was no longer judged subjectively by a sales manager's feelings about your work. The end results of a sales rep's work were objective: How much revenue did she bring in? Did she win a small project, or a major piece of new business? Was the customer satisfied enough to maintain loyalty in years to come? Figure 1-1 illustrates the difference between artistic creativity and functional creativity.

As president of The University of the Arts, Sean Buffington understands both artistic and functional creativity. "We tend to think of creativity as something that resides in people who we think are creative," he says. "We believe that creativity is a thing that some people have and other people don't have. I

FIGURE 1-1. ARTISTIC VERSUS FUNCTIONAL CREATIVITY.



would argue against that. While not everybody is necessarily visually acute or has the same kind of ability with their hands or can sing, everybody does have the ability to create; that's something that is fundamentally human.

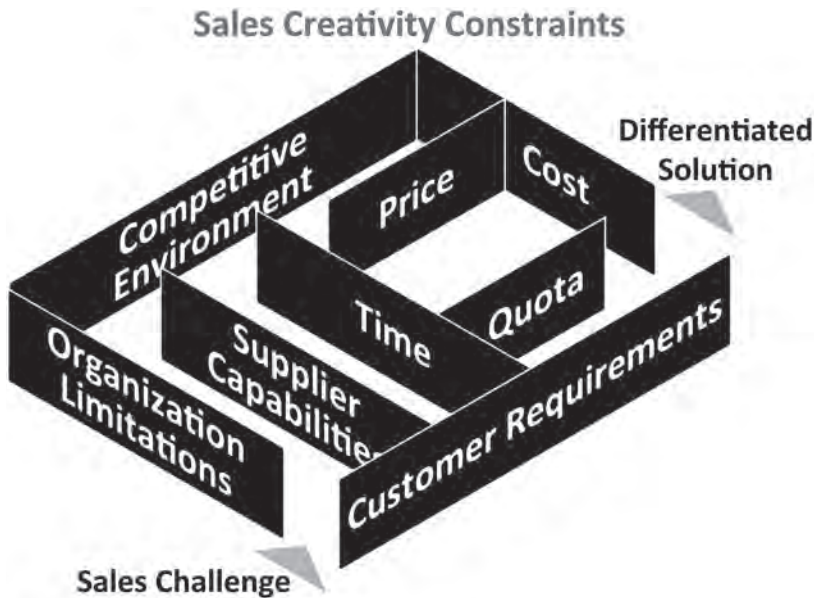
“But even though we're all creative, our goals are different. Our purposes are distinct. In the case of the arts, the process is iterative and lifelong; it's a process of learning and reacting and changing and adjusting.

“But in business timeframes are shorter and goals are different. In business, you don't have the luxury of saying ‘I made these four pieces of ceramic art and they didn't really come out the way I like, so, I'm just going to put them on the shelf and go back into the kiln.’ In the case of business, the decision is more immediately consequential. The company either made money or it didn't make money. It successfully entered that new market or it didn't, and there could be real consequences that have to do with revenues, whether people are able to keep their jobs or not, whether the company can hire people or not.”

The Dilemma of Constraints

To solve the sales innovation dilemma, it's also necessary to make peace with the many constraints and limitations in the work of a sales organization (Figure 1-2). In the beginning of this chapter, Alastair and his team made a common error:

FIGURE 1-2. SALES CREATIVITY CONSTRAINTS.



They confused artistic creativity for functional creativity. Alastair wanted the executives to be inspired and sought to remove any constraints in their thinking. But ironically, the constraints, if combined with the right creative approaches, could have actually inspired their thinking. Without the constraints, the creative efforts of the executives in the London meeting ebbed and flowed like the English Channel rather than being harnessed purposefully like the powerful River Thames. The organization was applying the wrong type of open-ended creativity to a sales environment that is, by necessity, purposeful and goal-oriented.

Constraints enable creativity. It sounds like a paradox

at first, but think about it. Without constraints, options are unlimited. For example, if your customer needs a new customer relationship management (CRM) system and has no budget or time constraints, it would be easy to sell them a product. It's more likely your customer has a tight budget, a three-month time frame, and must get approval from the chief financial officer (CFO), who may or may not be a fan of your product. How can you devise a sales strategy that will close this deal?

The Apollo 13 space mission is a great example of constraints within functional creativity. This rocket was bound for a moon landing until, on April 13, 1970, a spark from an exposed wire in an oxygen tank caused a fire. In an instant, the mission of the three astronauts on board, and the many scientists in NASA's Houston control center, changed from lunar landing to a nearly impossible safe return home.

Commander Jim Lovell couldn't just turn the rocket around and head full-speed back to Earth. The astronauts were now in the desperate situation of not having enough power, so they turned off all nonessential systems. The constraints they faced were life threatening, and they inspired creative thinking at its most impressive. Prime crewmember Ken Mattingly, who was grounded from the mission just forty-eight hours before liftoff after an exposure to German measles, worked tirelessly in the Apollo simulator. He recreated the astronauts' situation and experimented within the constraints of severely limited power and water, which was needed to cool the capsule's necessary

systems. He configured and reconfigured ways the spacecraft could safely burn through the Earth's atmosphere. Finally, thanks to the ingenuity at mission control, Mattingly, Lovell, and the rest of the crew were rewarded with that famous safe landing.

Although not facing life-threatening situations, Allen Kay has also worked within limitations, albeit clients' financial constraints. He is chairman, CEO, and chief brand architect of Korey Kay & Partners, an award-winning advertising agency in New York City. He's also the creative mind behind such well-known advertising campaigns as Xerox's Brother Dominic (the monk who uses Xerox to make 500 copies of a hand-written parchment text), which aired during the 1976 Super Bowl, and the "if you see something, say something" advertising campaign for the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority after 9/11.

Kay also worked with Sir Richard Branson, chairman of Virgin Group, back when Virgin Atlantic consisted of exactly one airplane, which it did not yet have the right to fly. "The initial strategy was for Virgin to be a more affordable version of British Air," says Kay. "But we suggested doing the opposite. If British Airways is the stiff upper lip, let Virgin be the loose upper lip. The ads should be un-airline-like: irreverent and edgy, appealing to a younger hipper customer.

"And oddly enough, that described Richard Branson. We did not know that at that time, but they said, 'Boy, you just described Richard. That's just how he is.' So, we said, 'Great.

It makes sense that a person like that would create an airline like that.’ And that’s how the character of Virgin was born.”

When Virgin Atlantic was originally introduced, the target market largely depended on backpackers—those twenty-something Americans coming to England for low-cost exploring. Virgin was the high-frills, low-fare airline. They had eleven seats in upper class, and the mission was to fill the back of the plane, which they did, according to Kay: “All the while that Virgin was at Korey Kay, they had the highest trans-Atlantic load factor of any airline. We marketed to the backpackers, the kids that were going away for their summer vacation and staying within Europe, and those that traveled all year long.”

But, the strategy didn’t work forever. “Right in the middle of everything, when Virgin was two years old, America and England decided to bomb Gaddafi, and terrorism rose its ugly head around the world,” says Kay. “It was right before the summer, and all of the parents said to their college kids, ‘You’re not going to England this summer. In fact, you’re staying very close to home.’

“So, I got a call from David Tait, the executive director at Virgin. He said, ‘Richard is shutting down Virgin Airways. Since terrorism and the Gaddafi thing, the planes are flying empty.’

“And I said, ‘They’re flying empty? You mean to say that there’s a pilot, a copilot, a navigator, some flight attendants, and that’s it?’

“He said, ‘No. There are some people on the plane.’

“I said, ‘And where are they sitting?’

“He said, ‘Well, they’re sitting up front, in upper class.’

“I said, ‘Right, because they have to fly. They’ve got business to do. They’ve got billions of dollars at stake. Terrorism is not going to stop them.’

“So, I asked the question. ‘How long does it take to reconfigure the airplane?’

“And he said, ‘Overnight. You put it in the hangar and by moving a few bolts, you could make upper class as big as you want it.’

“I said, ‘Okay, here’s what I suggest then. Let’s go after what I call the must-flyer, and instead of advertising the back of the plane, let’s advertise the front of the plane and put all the money into promoting upper class.’ He agreed it was worth a shot, the idea was approved, and we got seventy-six seats in upper class, up from the original eleven. And the profits soared, because so many more people were flying in upper class.

“And in its way, it actually saved the airline. This disastrous situation caused the airline to remarket itself and suddenly become even more profitable than it was before. And what was interesting is that we didn’t change the character of the brand, just the target. The nature of the airline was as iconoclastic as it had been before, but the irreverent kids grew up to be irreverent adults, and they became our target.”

Allen Kay and Virgin Atlantic found themselves faced

with a serious constraint: Their target customer was no longer flying. They got creative and, ultimately, made the airline better. Today, Virgin is known for its affordable upper class and unique customer experience.

While every industry faces specific challenges, a sales organization's constraints will most often involve:

- ◆ **Time.** A deadline must be met.
- ◆ **Organizational limitations.** The talent, manpower, or policies of the organization limit what can be achieved for the customer.
- ◆ **Supplier capabilities.** Providers have practical limitations including the amount of product they can provide to the organization and how quickly they can provide it.
- ◆ **Cost.** Labor and material costs limit the company's margins.
- ◆ **Quota.** The organization must reach a performance objective.
- ◆ **Customer requirements.** Customers have high expectations and performance hurdles.
- ◆ **Competitive environment.** Competitors' capabilities sometimes dictate what the customers want.
- ◆ **Price.** The customer or market values the offer at a certain dollar amount.

When was the last time you or your team came up with an idea to solve a customer's problem? What else *could* you

have done for the customer if you hadn't been limited by their budget or other constraints? Your team might have had some great ideas that were dismissed by the customer for a range of reasons. But when it ran into those constraints, the team probably pushed a little harder and came up with something more creative that it might not have otherwise developed.

The Dilemma of Personality

You are probably familiar with the popular notion of left-brained or right-brained dominance, which states that, like being right-handed or left-handed, most people have a governing hemisphere of their brain. The theory says that left-brained people tend to be logical and analytical, while right-brained people are creative, big-picture thinkers. The idea has circulated since the mid-1800s, but it gained momentum in the 1960s when Roger W. Sperry, who worked with epileptic patients, conducted experiments with people who had had their corpus callosum severed. (The corpus callosum is a bundle of neural fibers that connect the left side and right side of the brain. The cord was sometimes surgically severed to reduce seizures.) In a typical experiment, a patient would see a word, for example “fork,” flashed on a screen, but only by the right hemisphere of the brain. (This is possible because the left vision field is connected to the right hemisphere, and right vision field to the left hemisphere.) Interestingly, the patient

was unable to say the word “fork.” Asked to write it down, he was able to do, but only with his left hand. However, he was unable to read it. Sperry concluded that the left side of the brain is responsible for logic, mathematics, reading, writing, and naming objects, among other tasks; and the right side of the brain is responsible for holistic views, symbolism, music, emotion, and intuition, among other qualities.

While Sperry won a Nobel Prize in 1981 for his work, recent science has proven the two sides of the brain are less distinct. The idea, however, was so popular for so long that it has worked its way into our vernacular. Typically, we understand a reference to someone who is described as “left-brained” as a rational, logical person. And we understand a reference to someone who is “right-brained” as a creative, philosophical person. The exact science may no longer be accepted, but the terminology seems to have taken on its own descriptive, relevant meanings.

Innovative ideas for sales organizations require the best of both brains: the left brain’s ability to work within the constraints of a process and sales context, and the right brain’s inclination to think freely. But salespeople often overemphasize the pipeline and analytics or work too intuitively, shooting from the hip. Or, as we saw in the case of Alastair’s fumbled attempts at innovation from the beginning of this chapter, a sales organization over-rotates, bringing the right-brain artistic ideas to the forefront and promptly confusing everyone. Finding the equilibrium between left and right, analytics

and ideas, and those individuals we label “left-brained” or “right-brained” is an important step in solving the sales innovation dilemma.

Sales executives and software publishers have further enhanced this analytical focus. They’ve designed CRM systems that track not only lead flow, but also every relevant activity that can help management see what the organization is doing. Then they use that information to explain how sales reps can modify their behavior and enhance results. Consequently, many focus on the numbers.

My friend, David, for example, certainly does. David works for a large professional services firm as a business development director. His job involves finding new opportunities for large outsourcing deals in current clients and also landing new clients with big wins. David has been doing this for years and is regarded by his firm and his competitors as one of the best. If he isn’t giving advice to his colleagues, they are probably seeking it from him, and it usually comes in the form of a calculated, black-and-white evaluation of their opportunities and performance. David, I’ll admit, isn’t deep on personality. He can light up a room by just leaving it, but he is effective. As a manager, he is known as “The Bullet.” The garden variety, optimistic salesperson, not quite making quota, or a rep with a sales pipeline bloated with exaggerated opportunities and aged prospects are red meat for David. He can systematically dismember a pipeline to expose every weakness. After recovering from their humili-

ation, reps usually become stronger sellers as a result of David's work.

With his customers, David is equally analytical to their benefit. He is a return on investment (ROI) seller who shows customers how smart they would be to work with David's firm. Most executives trust his advice because he is one of the sharpest people they know. David is a dispassionate, economic being, and the ultimate selling machine. He is an "analytic."

In stark contrast, sales organizations are also full of right brainers. These folks sense a customer's needs and come up with the right strategy to close the deal. This type of talented salesperson has the gifts of intuition, spontaneity, and the ability to develop lasting customer relationships.

Greg is a sales manager for a large telecommunications company. I first saw him at a wedding when he got up and gave a toast to the new bride and groom. Before he said a word, I felt an affinity toward him. He has a look, a demeanor, and a character that draws people in. He was the most approachable person at the wedding. I later realized he is that way all the time. Greg is one of the strongest relationship developers in his company, and his customers are raving fans. He intuitively knows how to work with people to help solve their problems and, in doing that, exceeds his quota year after year. But if you asked Greg to tally up his pipeline and show you how he is going to hit his quota, he'd wonder what language you were speaking. The closest Greg comes to a sales funnel is putting a hotel pen to a Post-it note or hastily having his

assistant fill in his CRM opportunities prior to a pipeline call he can't avoid. Customers love to work with Greg because he understands them and what they are trying to accomplish. Greg, the ultimate relationship manager, is passionate about people. Greg is an “intuitive.”

The truth is that salespeople usually lean either toward analytical or intuitive thinking. Some are hybrids. These lucky few do an impressive job of balancing both kinds of qualities in their work. But for the most part, salespeople, sales teams, and sales executives tend to operate either analytically, reproducing the same answers and working the numbers; or intuitively, selling without a methodology they can use consistently.

How Sales and Innovation Work Together

As sales organizations develop solutions for their business, they certainly have plenty of left-brained models. One we use almost every day with clients, the “Revenue Roadmap” (described in the Appendix), is an example. It tells us how to fit strategy to coverage to enablement. It provides clear answers to how these parts work together. But it doesn't help us to innovate.

Salespeople can, however, build upon their natural intuitive abilities with a right-brained model—a creative process to develop better customer solutions and sales strategies.

The Innovative Sale is that right-brained model. It guides sales organizations through creative thinking, but with very real sales challenges in mind. The Innovative Sale is based on a set of six principles and eighteen imperatives gathered from the world of art and design that specifically apply to sales. These principles and imperatives will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

The process begins by defining the specific sales challenge and considering all the current solutions, including what competitors are doing or the way someone used to do it at IBM. Once the tried-and-true ideas have been acknowledged, it's time to step out of our comfort zone and consider unrelated ideas: how problems are solved in other industries, in other cultures, and in other periods of history. This is the discovery phase, and it's what most people skip when they go through a typical brainstorming session. Most jump straight to the final application, where ideas—usually the tried-and-true—are plugged in. The Innovative Sale, however, requires the application of a new solution.

The importance of functional creativity in a sales organization is real. For this reason we designed the Innovative Sale assessment, which asks salespeople to answer questions by rating their behavioral preferences in sales situations. The results of this assessment provide a “Creative Quotient,” the scores in six different areas of functional creativity.

As you might expect, salespeople who are more functionally creative and have a higher Creative Quotient for Sales

have consistently higher sales performance, in terms of quota attainment and year-over-year growth, compared with their peers in the same environment.

We have an abridged version of the Innovative Sale assessment in Chapter 10. When you take the assessment, you will get a specific rating on several dimensions of functional sales creativity and also insight into your creative strengths and weaknesses. You can request the comprehensive version of the assessment and learn about actions you can take to improve areas of functional creativity by visiting SalesGlobe.com.

Becoming more creative isn't about a eureka moment. It's about building on a set of principles and a process to grow your capabilities. Over the next several chapters, we'll introduce you to the Innovative Sale principles and the Innovative Sale process and show you how to apply them in sales situations.

INNOVATIVE SALE ACTIONS

- ◆ Dig beyond a veneer of innovation and get functionally creative.
- ◆ Don't be dissuaded by common creativity myths.
- ◆ Watch for the eight types of sales constraints that can enhance your innovation.

- ◆ Know the personalities on your team and align them to their strengths using the Innovative Sale assessment.
- ◆ Push your left-brained sales analytics to more effective customer solutions and sales strategies with right-brained sales creativity.