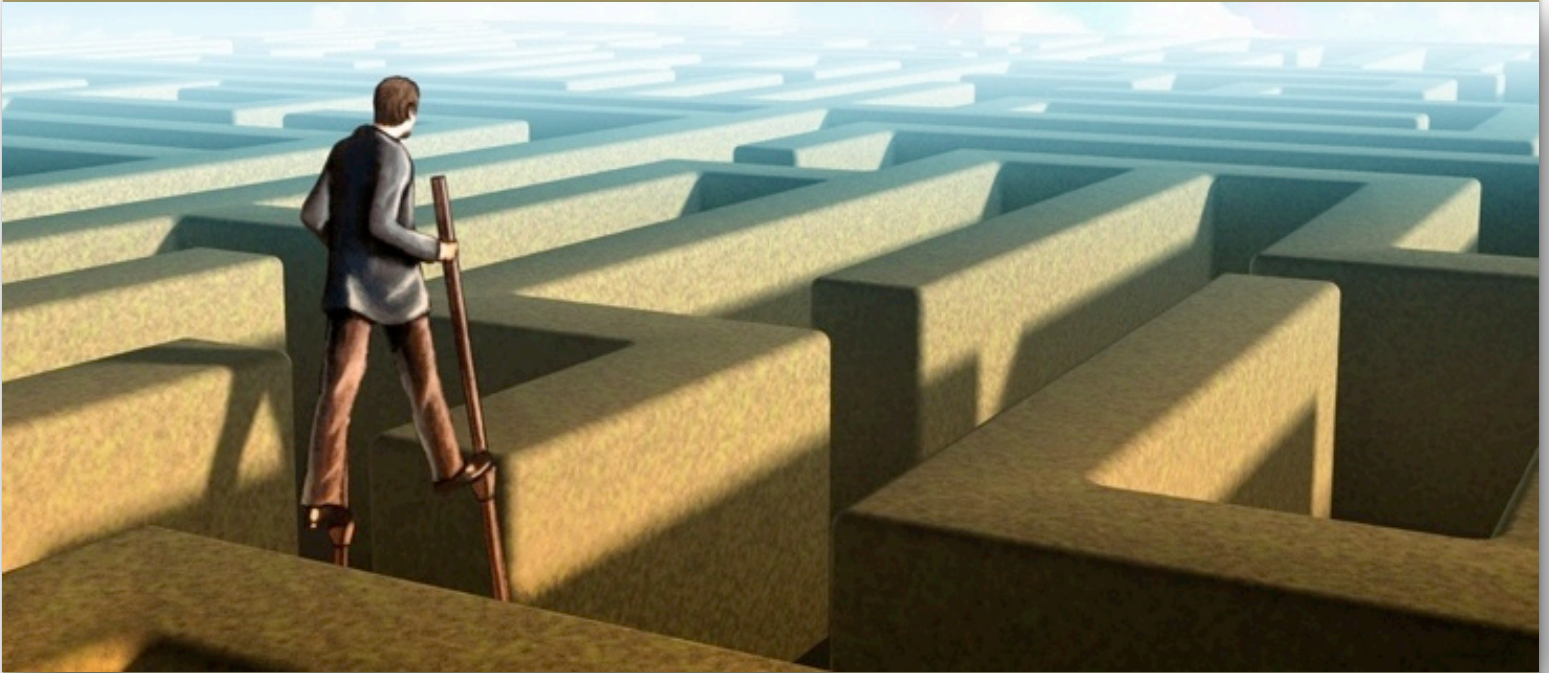




The Journey begins...

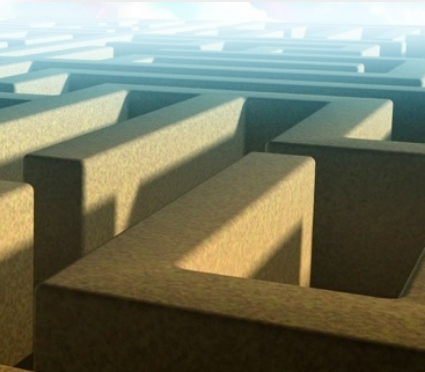


Being relevant to today's buyer

The Age of The Buyer Series | engage

Author: Wayne W. Wood

www.ageofthebuyer.com



The Internet has brought the need for a new form of buyer engagement, the need for succinct enablement and the resources to Empower. Both the Buyer and the Seller

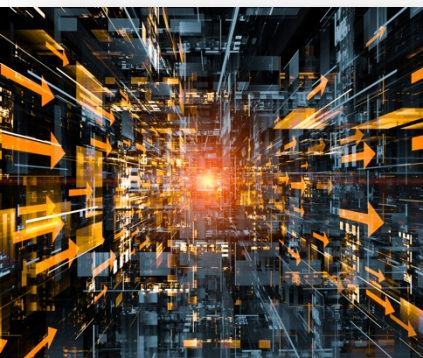
Engage. The journey begins...

Engage! The primary directive of the Star Ship Enterprise's Captain. Engage, is also the primary directive of every marketing and sales organization today. To seek out new avenues of communication with prospective buyers and customers.

Your prospective buyers and customers expectations for engaging with you has changed. Have you? For all the greatest successes, years of experience and exposures in your business life, the single greatest opportunity is to acknowledge that "What got you here... won't get you there!". Tried and true methods can no longer apply in the Age of the Buyer. Because, your buyer is no longer captive to you. They are captive to themselves and entering their spheres of relevance has intensified. They receive 100's of emails each day all promoting a "pick me", "...learn the top five ways to" or "the ten myths of". They participate in LinkedIn group forums, peer communities and subscribe online to their personal selection of publications and the occasional downloads from iTunes, Audible books or YouTube Videos.

Some invest in paid research and Academic sources of Wisdom on a subject of interest and importance to their livelihood. They no longer desire to speak to you by phone, be interrupted by your email or be invited into a conversation unless they wish to.

So how must you engage with this buyer, the "knowledge buyer" How might you best get their attention and be a convenience line to support them? How will they perceive your company's products, services and most importantly perceive you? They will only engage if you speak their language, and make a valuable contribution to them using a currency of knowledge and wisdom they find pertinent. All others, need not apply! They're closed!



While Y2K was a gigantic “non-event”, it had significance as the the Age of the Consumer was about to be unleashed! It laid the foundation for the emergence of “The Age of the Buyer”

Happy New Year 1999 to today

On the eve Y2K (December 31st, 1999) the world was about to change as that date was to potentially reap havoc on the functionality of every technology on the planet. Your car may not start, your computer might not turn on or the street lights change. You see, there is a little known digitally based quartz crystal clock that is embedded in every single computing device and that original programming may have not taken into consideration that 1999 could possibly not click over to 2000.

For the first time, people came to the realization that the reliance on technology had a profound impact on their existence! In the end it became a gigantic “non-event”, as pretty much everything functioned as normal, with the exception of those suffering from the exuberance of their New Year’s celebration. But something happened that impacts today’s buyers and sellers with more significance than ever before. That significance would be known as the decade where technology came of age to the consumer! Technology has brought with it, the ability to access, harness and apply information in many forms, and with it, the introduction of conversations with peers, parties that matter and infinite choice.

Choice. Change. Trust

The Internet has delivered on the promise of providing human beings access to a plethora of information, data and intelligence. It has enabled independent choice, and changed the landscape of buyer and seller relationships. It has reaffirmed the significance of trust and the need for multi-form interactions whether they are direct or indirect. Those interactions are the “**inter**-relationships” and the “**actions**” that form outcomes. It has, unfortunately, brought with it considerable confusion between choices. It has changed the way buyers act with sellers and has enhanced the need for absolute trust as the quantity of content approaches noise. **It has brought the need for a new form of engagement, the need for real time enablement and the ability to Empower. Both to the Buyer and the Seller**

Engage. Enable. Empower

This paper is the first in a series of content focused on “The Age of the Buyer”. The first being “engage”. This is where the journey begins for the buyer/seller interaction.

The Traditional Sales Funnel Model is Dead.

For years, organizations have managed their entire company's well being on the notion of the sales funnel. The sales funnel has long been the singular metric for revenue performance and ultimately business profit.

Often considered a sales process, it embodies a systematic process of events that must occur in order to identify, develop, convert and close a sale. And somewhere along the way, the behaviors of the buyer must be applied at each step or stage, in order to assess the ability to forecast sales activities with a degree of accuracy.

Unfortunately, reliance on the traditional sales funnel and metrics for performance no longer apply in the "The Age of the Buyer." Today's buyers are sophisticated experts in knowing where to find the information they once relied upon being provided to them by the vendor/retailer sales resource. They know where to obtain social proof of a vendors competencies, reputation and ability to deliver on the promise! They also have access to your competition, your customers and knowledge about you that you didn't even know about yourself!

Today's buyer no longer conduct his or her buying activities in a manner than can be predicted or aligns with the traditional methods of forecasting. The buyer's journey begins with differing expectations, interactions and outcomes. **Buyers engage differently and your success is based on knowing their business and competitors as well as they know yours, so you can enter their sphere of relevance**

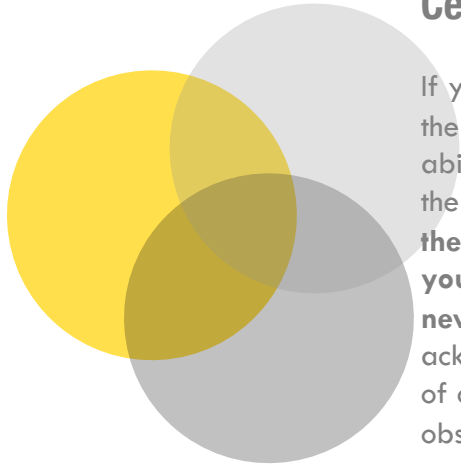
**The
Traditional
Sales
Funnel is
dead**

**Initial Engagement
Prior to "Age of the Buyer"**
1%

**Initial Engagement
In the "Age of the Buyer"**
71%

Close \$\$\$\$
100%

Buyer/Seller Engagement Gap
70%

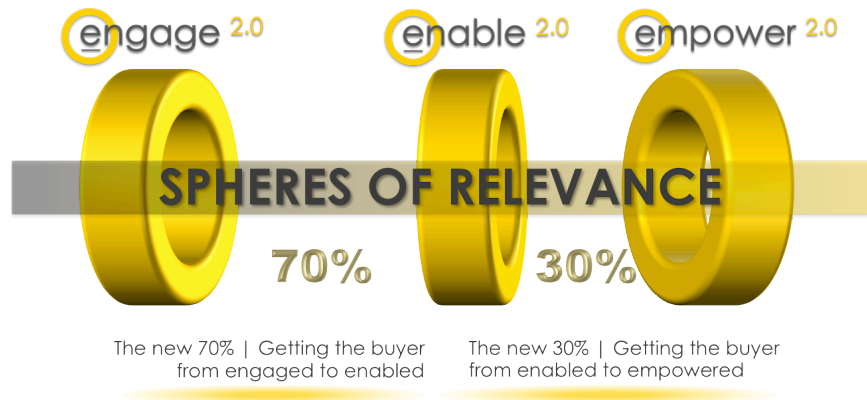


Centricity | The Buyer's Sphere's of Relevance

If you acknowledge that the buyer is now in absolute command of 70% of the traditional sales cycle, then the notion of engagement is based on your ability to realize your buyer is starting their initial engagement with you at the 71% of the traditional sales cycle. **If you enter this engagement with the buyer in the same way you enter your traditional sales engagement, you will be creating a 70% gap between yourself and the buyer and never enter their Sphere of Relevance.** A vendor/retailer must acknowledge and respect that each buying party has their own unique set of characteristics, personality and behaviors that influence their observations, opinions and ultimately belief in you the seller, your products or services. Ultimately your brand value to them.

**To have meaning
for today's buyer
you must become a
member of their
"Sphere of
Relevance." If not,
you will be on the
outside looking in!**

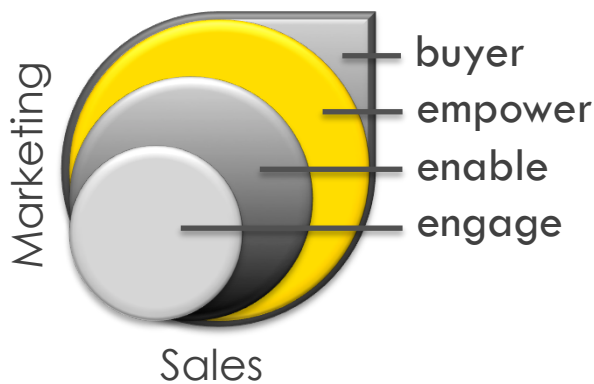
It's now been confirmed by numerous researchers in B2B and B2C environments, that buyers no longer desire to engage with you until such time they desire to include you as part of their "sphere of relevance". It cannot be assumed that it is exclusively all about the buyer's intentions and your ability to influence their thinking! Their expectations are now based on your ability to demonstrate relevance, significance and immediacy. And to participate, it is now based on the **currency of knowledge** you can provide them in real time.



As the buyer's journey begins, a series of steps occur, each contributing to their sphere of relevance. Along their decision path, each forms either a predictive pattern you can simulate or an abstraction that may just be by chance. For each step carries with it ,elements that are purposely designed and others by accident and, in the course of their research, they stumble upon something that may peak their interest, raise their eyebrows or influence their thinking. The question is. **Are you engaged and are you a member of their sphere of relevance?**

Marketing. Sales. | SYNERGY BASED ENGAGEMENTS

In order to become a member of your buyer's "Sphere of Relevance" you must operate your entire business as a meshed collaboration of value that can be easily detected, embraced and desired by your buyer as they experience you on their journey towards a decision that you hope, very much includes you.



Regardless of your organization's core business purpose, you are ultimately in the business of synergy-based engagements with buyers. Each and every stakeholder in your business influences the behaviors, opinions and actions of prospective buyers and customers.

Engagement. Whether it is online, at your website, a social conversation or offline with a member of your staff or channel, the buyer needs to see you as a singular "brand" of substance.

Critical to your success is to engage your buyers by speaking the language of the buyer. You must, for the sake of your customers business as well as your customers "Customers", communicate in the language they operate in. That requires you to have subject matter expertise in the buyer's space and how it aligns to the value proposition of your products and services.

Marketing, sales and customer/buyer-facing resources, whether they are direct or indirect "channels", must operate in a mode that is "synchronized with synergy-based engagements." Each engagement needs to say; I understand your business channels, challenges and champions. I respect you, I acknowledge the courtesy of your time and I commit to be of value at every interaction. I will not attempt to engage without purpose. I will not engage or interrupt you in a self-serving manner. And only after I have diligently done my homework, I will communicate to you in an efficient, ethical and entertaining manner that you will welcome and embrace.

To achieve these tenets for the buyer to engage, requires your sales and marketing organization to completely collapse the "silo's" and operate as a cohesive integrated framework that provides positive influence in your buyer's Sphere of Relevance. In essence, Engage!

About the age of the buyer

engage^{2.0}

Today's statistics on buyers show they only value the salesperson when he or she can speak the language of the buyer. Why? Because everything else is a commodity that they can get via the Internet! To talk you must align your tailored sales training programs using high quality interactive sales online and mobile services that include continuous learning processes for reinforcement and include content that teaches your sales team how to speak the language of their buyers and their buyer's customer.

Engaging in conversation with prospective buyers is more than a web presence, product or service features, advantages or benefits. It's about knowing what today's buyer find of high-value and knowing how to engage in their sphere of relevance.



THE JOURNEY BEGINS...

The Age of the Buyer has arrived. On the dawn of 2010, a new decade was beginning to emerge. One that already has presented profound changes.

Top analysts from SiriusDecisions, the world's leading source for business-to-business sales and marketing best-practice research and data claim that as much as 70% of the buyers experience occurs without direct contact with the organization.*

- Will you be ready to engage them?
- How will you enable your sales team to turn them from buyers to customers?

**Source: SiriusDecisions*



About the age of the buyer

enable 2.0

Bridging the chasm between business strategy and field execution by implementing synchronized synergy-based engagements requires tremendous cross-functional alignment. A unified and scalable approach is necessary to enable Product & Marketing to keep sales and channel teams equipped with the latest competitive and product messaging assets that will deliver value to target buyers.

Drive improved conversations with buyers and shorten sales cycles by crossing the chasm.



...CROSSING THE CHASM

The Age of the Buyer has arrived. Crossing the Chasm requires sales to align to buyers.

The internal pressures impacting sales and marketing gain more meaning when viewed in the light of the external forces at play. Macro economic uncertainty and increased competition reign; this data represents the “new normal” in which businesses operate. But the other forces are at work as well, including increasing customer demands, proliferation of new marketing channels and an accelerated pace of change.

The proliferation of marketing channels is both a pressure and an opportunity for sales and marketing leaders. It presents a challenge for sales and marketing because of the hidden sales cycle dynamic discussed above. Buyers are flocking to new sources of information and communities of interest for business advice, best practices, and learning and buying recommendations.

AberdeenGroup

About the age of the buyer

empower 2.0

Data has exploded on multiple fronts for sellers. The data is often unstructured, disorganized and very little is useful for discovering the buyer's intent. Minimizing the time your sales resources spend looking up information empowers them to do what they do best: SELL!

Re-engineered content that is developed from the perspective of the buyer and utilizes content delivery methods that efficiently distributes this information to sales teams, is the advantage being sought by today's organizations.



NAVIGATING THE LAST MILE.

The Age of the Buyer has arrived. Sellers must change their models to be relevant with today's buyers and navigating the last mile is what separates today's professional sellers.

Watch for the third in this series Empower 2.0 where we will focus on why sellers must provide buyers with the right information at the right time and at the right place.

Empower will show sellers how to better navigate the last mile of the relationship and convert that into a sustainable life long relationship.

Engage
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About the Age of the Buyer series

Our digital strategy agency helps business owners attract new clients, retain profitable customers and predict marketing and sales investments. We can help define what motivates your priority prospects and what are the optimal engagement methods best suited to meet those prospective buyers. What content do you need to attract them to your brand, engage your marketing channels, convert and become sustainable revenue to the business. We are revenue performance advisors who create more meaningful engagement, buyer insight & forecasting intelligence.

The result } sales and marketing transformation that aligns to today's buyers. To find out more visit:

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