



WHAT *SALES WINNERS* DO DIFFERENTLY

*The surprising differences between sellers who win the sale
and the second-place finishers.*

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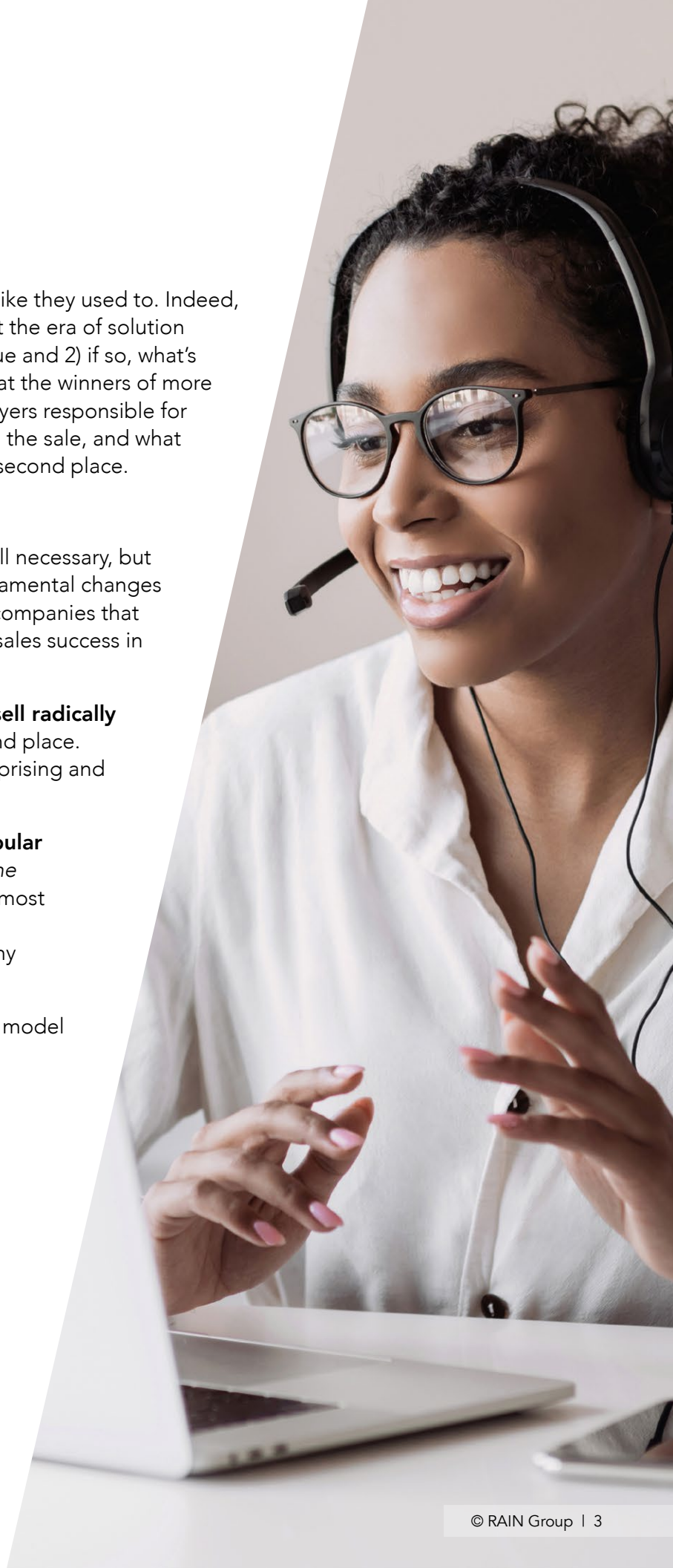
Executive Summary

Standard solution sales methods aren't working like they used to. Indeed, several prominent sources have pronounced that the era of solution sales has ended. We wanted to know 1) is this true and 2) if so, what's working now instead. To find out, we studied what the winners of more than 700 actual B2B sales opportunities (from buyers responsible for \$3.1 billion in annual purchases) are doing to win the sale, and what they do differently than the sellers who come in second place.

We found:

- 1. Solution sales is not, in fact, dead.** It's still necessary, but no longer sufficient on its own. While fundamental changes to core concepts are needed, sellers and companies that dismiss solution sales outright place their sales success in grave danger.
- 2. Winners don't just sell differently, they sell radically differently** than sellers who come in second place. And the winners sell differently in both surprising and fascinating ways.
- 3. We compared our research to other popular research in the field of selling**, such as *The Challenger Sale*. On perhaps some of the most important points, our research revealed opposite results. Thus our advice is, in many ways, quite different.

Finally, we've compiled our major findings into a model that sellers and organizations can follow to sell like the winners (see page 16).



Sellers Who Win Consistently Demonstrate Behaviors on Three Levels

Introducing the Three Levels of RAIN SellingSM

	Major Points	Insights
LEVEL 3 Collaborate	<p>Sellers who win:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with buyers by being proactive and responsive Collaborate with buyers to educate them with new ideas and perspectives and bring value to the table themselves 	<p>In Level 3, sellers drive demand, create their own opportunities, and become essential to the buyer. Through collaboration, the buyer becomes a partner in the process and owns moving the sale forward as much as the seller.</p>
LEVEL 2 Convince	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persuade buyers they will achieve worthwhile results Minimize the perception of risk by demonstrating experience, building trust, and inspiring confidence Persuade buyers they are the best choice 	<p>Level 2 minimizes losing to “no decision” and maximizes competitive wins.</p>
LEVEL 1 Connect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect the dots: they understand buyers’ needs and craft compelling solutions Connect with people: they listen to buyers and connect with them personally 	<p>Solution sales is not dead, but it needs to change fundamentally; it’s no longer enough. Level 1 is simply the price of entry.</p>

Key Insights

- Fundamental changes to the solution sales premise include focusing on aspirations and goals as well as afflictions and pain. Diagnosis of need isn't as important anymore, but demonstrating *understanding* of need is.
- Minimizing risk has risen greatly in importance and must become a core part of sales conversations.
- Sellers who get to Level 3 not only win sales, but also tend to outperform sellers who don't because they're able to inspire buyers, create their own opportunities, and drive their own demand.
- Organizations that adopt sales approaches that encourage concepts of challenging and provoking customers—while at the same time discouraging solution sales approaches and dismissing the importance of building relationships—place their ongoing sales success at grave risk.
- Sellers who connect, convince, and collaborate, and follow the advice outlined in this report, will not only win the current sale, but will also put themselves in an even better position to win future sales through repeat purchases (loyalty) and increased referrals.



What Sales Winners Do Differently

The New Revolution in Selling

From the late 1970s through the early 2000s, not much changed in the world of sales methodologies. Sellers could study and learn consultative and solution sales approaches, apply them well, and consistently produce excellent results.

Not anymore.

Driven by the internet, the commoditization of many products and services, the aftermath of the Great Recession, and the radical intensification of competition in many industries, buying has changed. It's no surprise, then, that standard solution sales concepts aren't working like they used to. In fact, an article in the *Harvard Business Review* titled "The End of Solution Sales" ostensibly signaled the end of an era.

Yet, while many sellers struggle and lose, others are winning sales—and winning them consistently. So we posed the question: ***What are the winners of actual sales opportunities doing differently than sellers who come in second place?***

To find the answer, we began studying individual purchases in industries with complex sales, such as technology, consulting and professional services, financial services, and industrial products. The results of this study focus on more than 700 B2B purchases made by a broad sample of buyers. In aggregate, these buyers were responsible for \$3.1 billion in annual purchases.

Here's what we found:

1. Winners sell *radically differently* than second-place finishers. In many ways, what sales winners do differently is both surprising and fascinating.
2. There's a specific combination of behaviors that sales winners do and outcomes they achieve that second-place finishers don't.
3. Several key factors that set winners apart are rarely discussed in the world of selling. They now demand attention.
4. Solution selling is definitely not dead, but fundamental solution sales concepts need re-imagination and relabeling. And while solution sales concepts are necessary, they're no longer sufficient to win sales.

Before we share the specifics, it's important to note we didn't have preferences for what the results would show. Our intent was to find out what's really going on and proceed from there. We expected the results would influence our thinking, our sales consulting, and our sales training process and programs, requiring updates and changes. And, indeed, this is the case.

We found three levels of selling behaviors and outcomes that set winners apart from second-place finishers.


Level 1 is Connect. Winners *connect the dots* between customer needs and their company's products and services as solutions more often than second-place finishers. Winners also *connect with people*. They're perceived to listen and connect personally with buyers more often.

Connecting with people and connecting the dots—sounds a lot like relationship and solution sales to us. On its own, connecting used to be the crux of winning sales. Now it's the price of entry. Sellers who stop at Level 1 don't find themselves in the winner's circle nearly as often anymore.

While popular thinking on the concepts needs to change in fundamental ways, relationship and solution sales are far from dead.

Level 2 is Convince. Winners convince buyers that they can achieve *maximum return*, that the *risks are minimal*, and that they are the *best choice* among all options.

Level 3 is Collaborate. Winners collaborate through behavior. They're perceived to be responsive, proactive, and easy to buy from (collaborative in *how they work*). At the same time, it's not only *how* the seller interacts; but also *what* they do. Buyers believe that sales winners *collaborate with them* during their buying process (collaboration in the sense of working with the buyer to achieve a mutual goal). Indeed, the buyers perceived these sellers to be integral to their success.



Relationship and solution sales are far from dead.

Research from the Buyer's Perspective

One of the interesting things about reading sales books and articles is that the advice often makes sense on its face, even to us after 50 collective years following the sales training world. While, with a few exceptions, most selling methods sound fine, the reality is that some of them are wrong, or at least wrong for certain businesses. But it's not easy to suss out the good advice from the bad.

Sales research methods often focus on asking sellers, sales managers, and leaders what the top performers do versus average performers. Unfortunately, people's perceptions of what they do and what they actually do tend to be quite different.

Our research looks at sales from the buyer's perspective. This approach allows us to get past people's perceptions of themselves and their colleagues and concentrate on what actually happens in the field of play.

We asked buyers to consider recent major purchases and rate the winners (the sellers who won their business) and second-place finishers. Our objectives were to see:

1. What winners do
2. What winners do more often than second-place finishers (to understand what most separates the two groups)
3. What buyers report that second-place finishers should change in order to make buyers more likely to choose them

We also looked at the statistical key drivers of buyer:¹

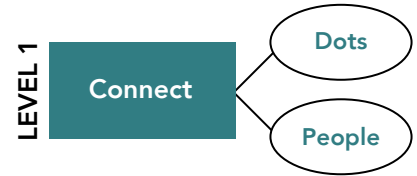
4. Satisfaction with the buying process
5. Likelihood to buy again
6. Likelihood to refer the seller

The first three categories are the keys to winning the current sale. They're what sellers do to "win now" so to speak. The latter three help to win now, but mostly they're the keys to "win later."

Each of these six categories turned out to be pieces of a puzzle. When we viewed all six pieces together, a fascinating story emerged. Sellers could take a codified set of actions to maximize their current wins and their ongoing selling success. We call this the Three Levels of RAIN SellingSM (see page 16).

As you begin reading about the three levels, note that sellers should apply them not separately or in sequence, but as a combination. Applied in combination, there's a compounding effect as the various areas build on each other. At the same time, leave anything out and you introduce barriers to winning competitive sales and increase the odds of losing to no decision.

¹ A key driver analysis is a statistical technique that identifies the factors most likely to influence a specific topic. For this study, we analyzed the key drivers affecting buyer satisfaction with the buying process, buyer loyalty, and likelihood to refer.



Level 1: Connect

Sellers who win connect. They *connect with people* and *connect the dots* between needs and solutions. This is a surprising finding—sort of. Given that the end of solution selling was announced in the *Harvard Business Review*, we expected to see that winners had abandoned solution sales concepts.

Not true.

In fact, the opposite was true. Solution selling isn't dead. Not even mostly dead. But it has changed in two important ways:

1. It's no longer sufficient by itself for success, and
2. People need to think of it differently than they might have in the past.

While people define solution sales in a number of ways, at the core of the solution or consultative concept is connecting the "pain" of the buyer with the products, services, and overall capabilities of the seller as "solutions" (see page 12). There's typically a heavy emphasis on the seller diagnosing the needs of the buyer.

The need for diagnosis implies that the buyer doesn't have a thorough understanding of why they find themselves in their current, undesirable situation or what to do differently. Through diagnosis, the seller figures this out like a doctor might with a patient who feels unwell but who doesn't know what they have or what to do to get better.

Winners demonstrated they understood the buyer's needs **2.5x more often** than second-place finishers.

These days, diagnosing needs isn't nearly as important as simply demonstrating understanding of needs. Of all the factors buyers experienced with the winners, "deepened my understanding of my needs" was 40th of 42 factors. Winners barely did it compared to the rest of the factors, yet they still won the sale.

Second-place finishers actually focused more often on diagnosis than winners, yet they still lost. Situationally, diagnosis can be important. If, indeed, the buyer wants to make improvements but doesn't know what their issues are, diagnosis is necessary. But at a macro level, it's not nearly as important as it used to be.

However, while sellers may not have to diagnose as often or deeply anymore, they do have to demonstrate *understanding* of need. This is critical. The terms may seem similar, but throwing the "understanding" baby out with the "diagnosing" bath water isn't a good idea.

Looking at the differences between winners and second-place finishers, "understood my needs" was the fifth largest gap (see page 11). In fact, winners demonstrated they understood buyers' needs 2.5 times more often than second-place finishers.

On top of that, of the 42 factors, buyers said "understood my needs" was the fifth most important factor that second-place finishers should change in order to win their business.

After initial sales conversations, sellers often summarize their thoughts and action plans in a document to the buyer. In one recent example we know of, the opposite happened. The *buyer* sent the *seller* a document outlining what they understood their challenges to be, why they thought the challenges existed, what they were planning to do, and what they wanted from a seller. The buyer had this prepared beforehand to send to sellers who passed the buyer's sniff test in a first call.

Sometimes a buyer's perception of what's happening misses the mark. In this case, it was thoughtful and on-target, so the seller didn't spend much subsequent time diagnosing needs. Rather, they focused on listening to the buyer and talking with them about possibilities for how to move forward. While they didn't diagnose, the seller's eventual proposal communicated that they "got it" regarding who the buyer was, what they needed, and what they were hoping to achieve with an external provider. This turned out to be very important decision-making criterion to the buyer, and the seller won the business.

This isn't to say that buyers have it all figured out all the time. But with the internet and other sources of information, buyers are typically further along than they used to be when they engage sellers.

It's much like when a person doesn't feel well these days. They often turn first to WebMD, Wikipedia, and Google to investigate. If need be, they find themselves at a doctor's office, but people are often much further along than in years past in their understanding of what might be going on.²

² Self-diagnosing buyers, like patients, aren't always right or complete in their diagnosis. When this happens, top sellers collaborate with buyers as a team to arrive at the right answers.

FIGURE 1. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WINNERS AND SECOND-PLACE FINISHERS

Factors Most Separating Winners from Second-Place Finishers

1	Educated me with new ideas or perspectives
2	Collaborated with me
3	Persuaded me we would achieve results
4	Listened to me
5	Understood my needs
6	Helped me avoid potential pitfalls
7	Crafted a compelling solution
8	Depicted purchasing process accurately
9	Connected with me personally
10	Overall value from the company is superior to other options
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31	Depicted purchasing process accurately
32	Crafted a compelling solution
33	Overall value from the company is superior to other options
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38	Connected with me personally
39	Helped me avoid potential pitfalls
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41	Persuaded me we would achieve results
42	Educated me with new ideas or perspectives

Winners sell radically differently than second-place finishers.

Of the 42 factors studied, these are the top 10 factors that most separate sales winners from second-place finishers. In other words, buyers reported that these factors represented the greatest gaps between what the winners did versus second-place finishers.

Here we show how often second-place finishers demonstrated the factors on the left in relation to all 42 factors we studied.

Not only do winners and second-place finishers sell differently, they sell radically differently. Second-place finishers either don't have the skills to implement, or don't value, the concepts noted here in this graphic.

Another needed change in the solution sales concept is a shift away from the prevalent use of the words “problem” and “pain.” These are the two most common terms associated with discovering a prospect’s needs. These words all too often drive sellers to employ find-out-what’s-wrong-and-fix-it thinking.

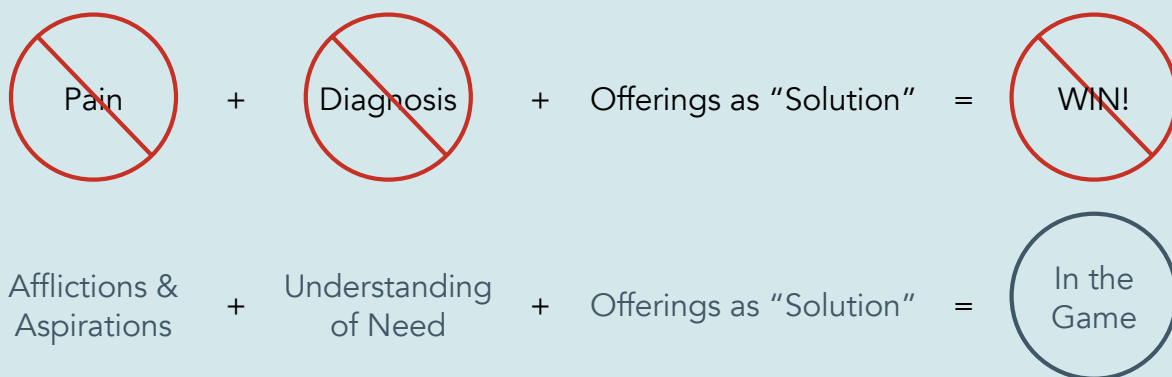
Let’s say the buyer doesn’t perceive anything—or anything important enough to act on—to be wrong. Soothe-the-pain sellers find themselves at a dead end. No problems to fix. Nothing to sell.

Sales winners, however, not only focus on the negative, but also on the positive. Along with having much richer sales conversations, focusing on the positive opens the door to significant opportunity to increase sales: driving their own demand (opportunity creating) versus reacting to demand (opportunity reacting) that comes directly from buyers.³

The sellers most successful at creating opportunities focus much more on the positives: goals, aspirations, and possibilities achievable by the buyer, even if the buyer doesn’t know it yet.

Sellers who focus on aspirations as well as afflictions are able to directly influence the buyer’s agenda by inspiring them with possibilities they hadn’t been considering but should be. Indeed, opportunity creation is a core outcome of Level 3, but it starts in Level 1 with a shift in focus from afflictions-only to afflictions *and* aspirations.

FIGURE 2. CHANGES TO BASIC PREMISE OF SOLUTION SALES



Aspirations and Afflictions represent the A in the RAIN Selling conversation framework. [Learn more →](#)

³ See Creating Opportunities, Driving Demand on page 22 for further explanation.

Working in conjunction with demonstrating an understanding of needs is the seller's ability to craft a compelling solution. This was the seventh greatest difference between winners and second-place finishers, and, according to buyers, the third most important factor that second-place finishers needed to change.

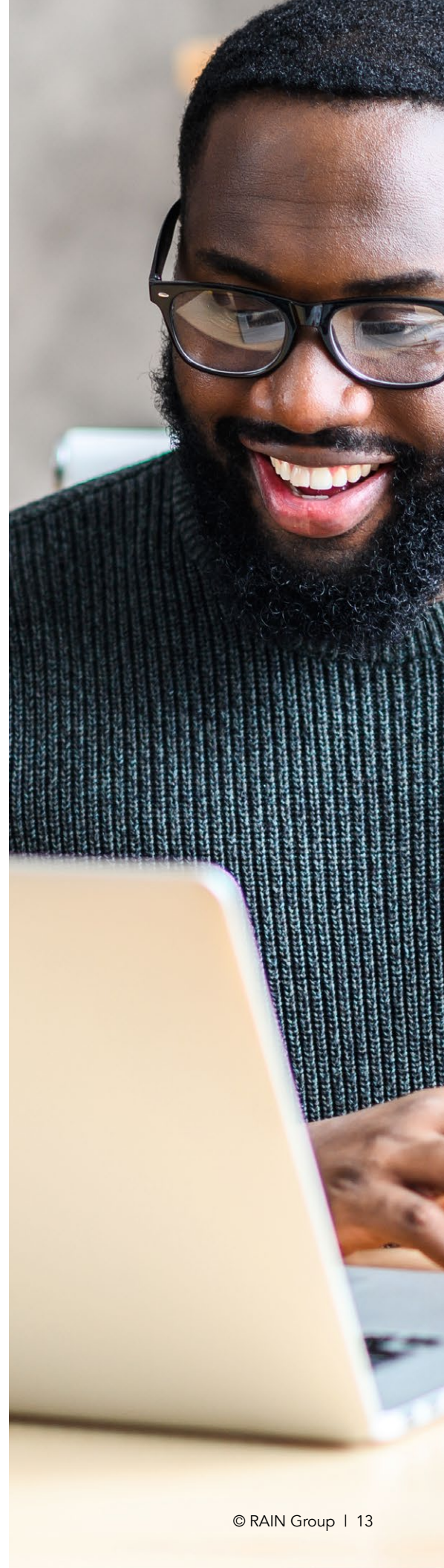
Together, "understood my needs" and "crafted a compelling solution" mean the seller *connects the dots*, drawing clear parallels between buyer needs and how to solve them. Again, this is part of the gestalt of mainstream thinking in solution sales. But simply connecting the dots is in no way sufficient by itself for sellers to win.

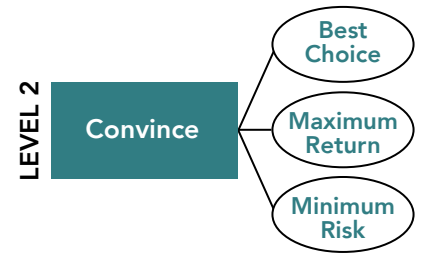
Imagine for a minute that someone is selling to you and you perceive the seller doesn't understand your needs and doesn't craft a compelling solution. Their chances of winning business from you are probably pretty slim.

Now consider that the seller connects the dots okay, but you perceive that they aren't listening to you and you haven't made any kind of personal connection with them. As long as *any other seller* meets the minimum criteria, you're not likely to buy from the unlikeable seller who isn't listening.

Sellers who do a good job connecting the dots and connecting with buyers haven't yet won the game, but they're in it. If they're in it to win it, however, they have two more levels to cover.

Level 1: Connect used to be enough.
It's now the price of entry.





Level 2: Convince

Sellers who win convince buyers of three things:

1. The return on investment is worth it.
2. The risk is acceptable.
3. The seller is the best choice among the available options.

To do these things, the seller must be able to define and communicate the maximum return on investment, minimize the buyer's perception of risk, and differentiate from other available options.

By themselves these may not seem surprising. They weren't to us. But as we investigated further, we found 1) sellers who win achieve these outcomes much more often than second-place finishers, and 2) winners are much more attuned to risk than second-place finishers.

In our sales consulting and training work, we've encountered surprisingly strong backlash from sellers against helping clients to set an agenda (versus just reacting to one), influencing the buyer too much, and using maximum persuasion.

Yet, in our research, winners convinced, and they convinced with gusto.

Indeed, "persuaded me we would achieve results" was the third greatest difference between winners and second-place finishers. It's not that this is new; it's simply that the winners are doing a better job of it.

However, for every hundred times you find advice to "sell the ROI," you might find one piece of advice focused on minimizing the perception of risk for the buyer.



Forty years ago, marketers and sellers didn't focus as much on results and impact. The transition away from the features and benefits approach had just begun.

Fast forward to today and every company's marketing and sales messages promise results—often wild results—as their first foot forward. Yet, while everyone is promising results, buyers regularly report disappointment.

In a study by Bain & Company, 375 companies were asked if they believed they delivered a "superior value proposition" to clients.⁴ Eighty percent said yes. Bain then asked the clients of these companies if they agreed that the specific company from which they bought delivered a superior value proposition. Only 8% agreed.

Buyers simply don't believe they get either what they expected or were promised by sellers. They've been burned in the past and are therefore skeptical of sellers and their claims.

Most every experienced seller has lost a sale to "no decision," where the seller believes the buyer is crazy not to move forward because the return on investment case is so compelling.

Sellers often say things to us like, "I can't believe they didn't see it!"

Oh, they saw it—and they got it—they just didn't believe it.

In these cases, buyers typically perceive the risk of not achieving results as either too great (buyer: "this is impossible/improbable"), or they perceive the provider to be too high a risk (buyer: "this is possible, but working with this provider is a potential liability because of...").

In other words, if the buyer isn't convinced of both maximum return and minimal risk together, the seller will lose to "no decision."

Minimizing Risk

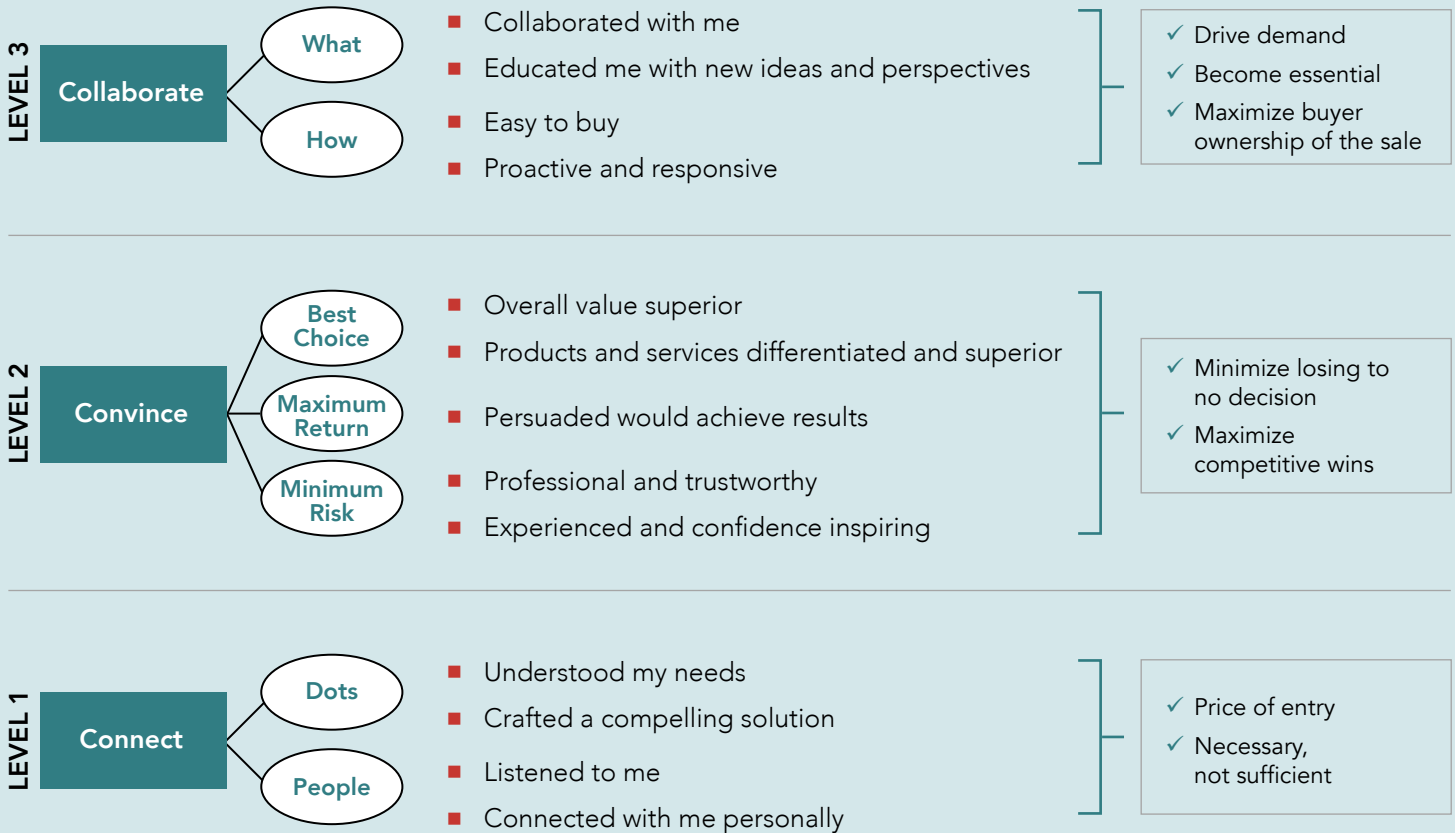
The following factors showed up as important in minimizing risk:

- Provider is respected at my organization
- Provider has experience in the specific area I have needs and in my industry
- Seller was professional
- Seller depicted purchase process accurately
- Seller was trustworthy
- Seller inspired confidence in his/her company
- Seller helped me avoid potential pitfalls

These are all confidence builders. In other words, they're about minimizing the perception of risk.

⁴ Allen, J., Reichheld, F., Hamilton, B., Markey, R. "Closing the delivery gap." Bain & Company, Inc., 2005.

FIGURE 3. THREE LEVELS OF RAIN SELLINGSM



When sellers follow the Three Levels of RAIN SellingSM approach, they achieve a veritable “fourfecta.” They:

1. Do what winners do
2. Do what winners do differently than second-place finishers
3. Do what buyers believe is most important to win their business
4. Put themselves in a position to win later with maximum repeat business and referrals

Now, assume there's a competitor. The seller has to not only maximize ROI and minimize risk, but also convince the buyer they're the best choice among all alternatives.

Winners are more than twice as likely to create the perception that the overall value they offer is superior.

And when a second-place finisher doesn't create this perception, it's the number one most important factor they need to do differently in order to influence buyers to select them.

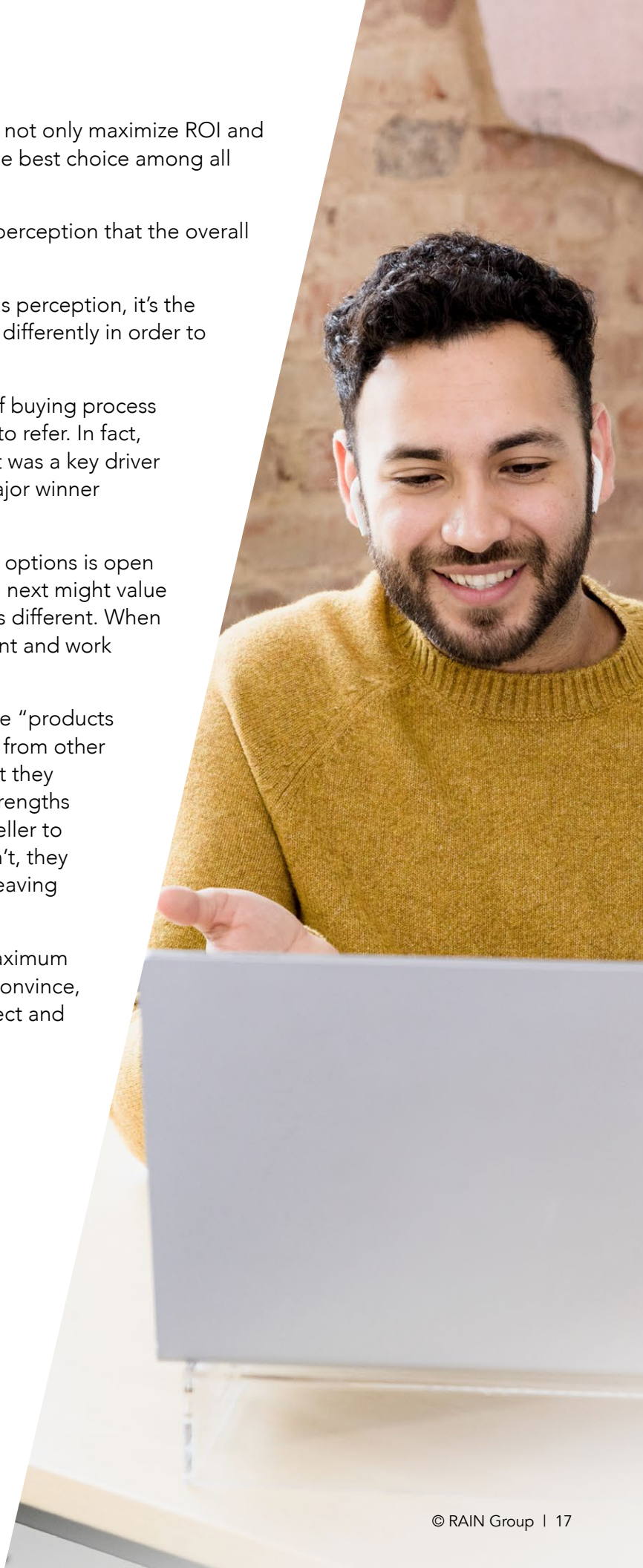
"Overall value was superior" was also a key driver of buying process satisfaction, likelihood to buy again, and likelihood to refer. In fact, "overall value was superior" was the only factor that was a key driver of all three, and a top 10 factor in all three of our major winner research categories.

Now, the term "overall value was superior" to other options is open to interpretation. That's the point! One buyer to the next might value one thing over another, and every buying scenario is different. When sellers figure out what buyers believe to be important and work towards that, they win more often.

The other two factors in the *best choice* category are "products and services superior" and "offerings differentiated from other options." Does the seller build the product? No, but they are the lens through which the product or service strengths are communicated to the buyer. It's also up to the seller to differentiate from the other options. When they don't, they leave it to the buyer to interpret their advantages, leaving competitive differentiation to chance.

When sellers understand all three components—maximum return, minimum risk, and best choice—of Level 2 Convince, they take the groundwork they laid in Level 1 Connect and turbo-charge their chances of a win.

Level 2: Convince stacks the deck of winning in the seller's favor.



Level 3: Collaborate

This was unexpected. The top two things that winners do more often than second-place finishers are 1) educated me with new ideas or perspectives, and 2) collaborated with me. At first blush, they might not seem to go together, but they do. These two factors both indicate that the seller, as a person, brought something worthwhile to the table.

Why unexpected?

1. Isn't the word "collaborate" directly opposite in tone to "challenge" or "provoke"?
2. Collaborate is defined as "working together to achieve a common goal." Wait, that feels like solution sales. Isn't that dead?

We were quite surprised that these two particular points would most separate winners from second-place finishers. These were the #1 and #2 gaps between the groups.

Regarding educating with new ideas: when buyers believe sellers bring something new to the table, by definition, it's not something the buyer was previously considering. When buyers perceive sellers provide new ideas, sellers have a huge advantage. The right new ideas can shape buyer belief systems and approaches to action. This gives sellers tremendous influence.



While educating about new ideas is in no way a unique advantage, it's still uncommon. In fact, only 21.5% of buyers strongly agreed that winners "educated me with new ideas and perspectives." At the same time, only 7.4% of buyers strongly agreed that second-place finishers "educated me with new ideas and perspectives." So there's room for almost all sellers to improve in this area. Those who do will reap the rewards.

It's important to note, however, that the gap between the groups for the factor focused on "valuable" ideas or perspectives wasn't nearly as stark. It was 35th on the list separating winners and second-place finishers. There's no question that bringing insight to the table that might not be new can still be helpful, but it doesn't stand out as a factor that leads to sales wins. It seems buyers want to be surprised and inspired. If they've heard something before, even if it's applicable, it's not as impactful as something they perceive to be new.

The second most important factor that separates winners from second-place finishers is "collaborated with me." We didn't expect this factor to separate winners from second-place finishers more than all but one other factor, but it did. And the implications for selling shouldn't be understated.

When viewed in the light of everything else, it certainly makes sense. The essence of collaboration is working together to achieve a common goal. Once the buyer sees the seller as an important member of the team and sees moving the sale forward as a common goal, the likelihood of buying in general, and buying from that seller, increases dramatically.

When a buyer sees a provider as working with them as a team to achieve common goals, it's extremely difficult to unseat that provider from the account. And this is the crux. This is one reason collaboration is at the pinnacle in Level 3.

Level 3: Collaborate makes the seller a key component of the buyer's success.



On Relationships, Solutions, and Challengers

The authors of *The Challenger Sale* confidently declare “the end of solution sales” has come, and that “selling is not about relationships.” These declarations are, in fact, verbatim titles of articles they published in the *Harvard Business Review*.

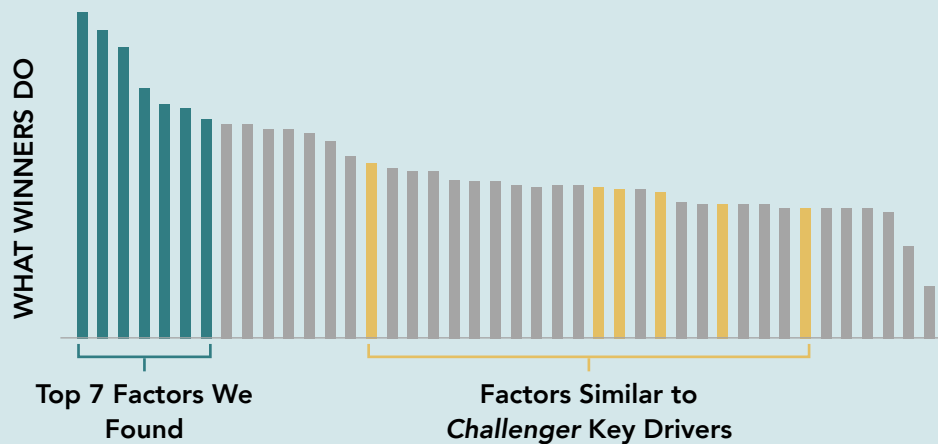
Based on our research and our experience, we disagree wholeheartedly. Sellers and companies that dismiss core solution sales and relationship concepts place their sales results at grave risk. While our research findings and theirs share some similarities, so much was different that our

recommendations differ from theirs in a number of essential areas.

For example, in our research, we tested six factors using language similar to that of the key drivers of buyer loyalty they tested in their research.

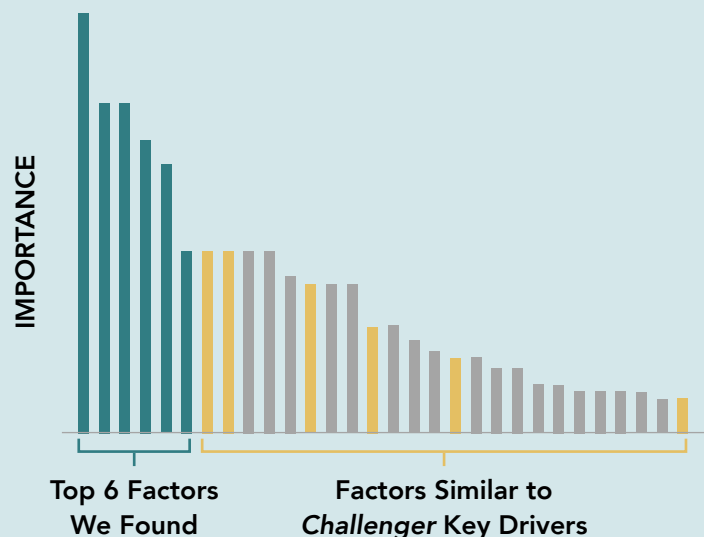
First, we wondered if their key drivers would match up with what we found winners do (fig. A). Turns out they didn't. There were *other factors* that were vitally important.

FIGURE A. FACTORS DEMONSTRATED BY SALES WINNERS



Next, we ran our own statistical key-driver analysis of buyer loyalty. We wondered if these would match up more closely, given that we, as they, were analyzing the key drivers of buyer loyalty as they relate to the selling process (fig. B). No match there. We found *other factors* were more likely to drive buyer loyalty.

FIGURE B. FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE BUYER LOYALTY

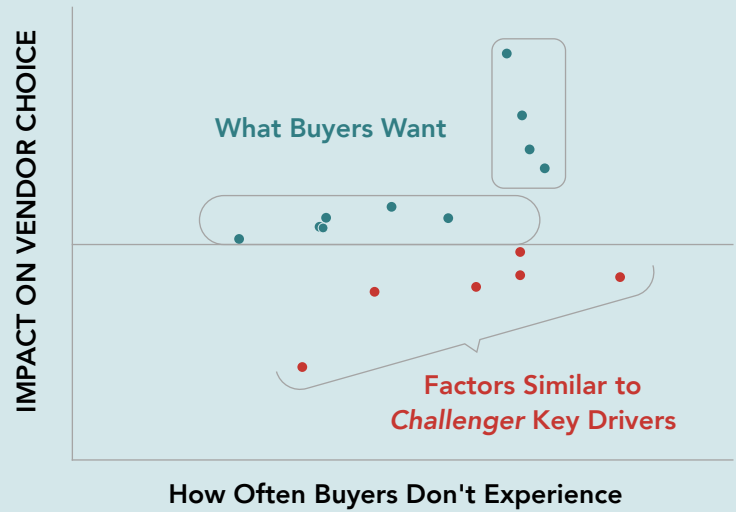


Then we compared their key drivers to the top 10 factors in our study that buyers indicated second-place finishers need to change to win their business (fig. C). Buyers found *other factors* more important to win their business.

This was all fascinating from a data perspective. Now, this is not to say *Challenger's* key drivers aren't reasonable. More often than not, they are. For example, several show up in our graphic on page 11 of this report. But we found factors beyond these that were also important, so much so that if sellers ignore them, they place their likelihood to win sales in jeopardy.

Finally, in tone and interpretation, the words "challenge" and "collaborate" are more antonym than synonym. While we agree that sellers should ask tough questions, be comfortable with (and, if necessary, create) tension, and help buyers see new possibilities, doing these under the label of "challenging" can lead to an unproductive, adversarial dynamic with buyers.

FIGURE C. WHAT BUYERS WANT IN SELLERS



Creating Opportunities, Driving Demand

When we ask company leaders, “What’s your greatest opportunity for revenue growth?” they often say that if they could sell things proactively versus reactively to both new and existing customers, they’d have tremendous revenue growth.

This is true across industries. Bankers have business clients who have checking and savings accounts, but who don’t have insurance, investments, or lending. Technology companies have a fraction of what they sell—and what buyers should buy—installed at their client sites. Professional services providers tell us universally that their greatest opportunity is to sell more to existing clients.

The main reason that buyers aren’t buying the additional offerings is this: it’s usually up to the seller to create these opportunities and drive the demand themselves.

For sellers, this means implementing Level 3.

In fact, sellers *can’t* drive demand without being proactive. They must take the initiative or the conversation never begins. They can’t inspire buyers unless they educate them with new ideas and perspectives.

Let’s say they do. When the buyer believes the seller is collaborating with them, the ownership of the idea shifts from seller to buyer. When that happens, the idea—previously not even in consideration—becomes an important item on a buyer’s agenda. This is critical for driving demand and moving sales forward proactively. And remember, this was a sale that never would have been possible if the seller hadn’t implemented Level 3.

Bringing It All Together

When we deliver this content we find that a few points bear special mention.

Companies often work with us to train their people in the sales skills and knowledge they need to become top performers. While people can surely be trained to have the capability to do something, having the capability doesn't mean they actually put their skills to use. You need a training curriculum that focuses on knowledge retention, application, and use on the job.

Separate from skills and knowledge, there are specific attributes that drive salespeople to achieve. As you're looking to build winning sales teams, make sure you help them to succeed in all three levels, but also drive motivation, support the development of good habits, and teach them to take charge of their time so they're most likely to achieve in their roles.

To the previous point, we've rarely seen major changes in seller behavior across selling teams without a strong coaching program. Creating Level 3 sellers typically requires coaching *and* training.

Three Levels of RAIN SellingSM

Level 1: Connect is the price of entry. When buyers perceive sellers don't understand their needs and don't have a solution that can help—and the buyer doesn't like them—sellers don't win.

Level 2: Convince increases wins. When sellers don't convince buyers they'll get a worthwhile return, the risks are acceptable, and they're the right choice, the buyer might not buy at all, might buy much less than they should (or only be willing to pay less), or may select another provider.

Level 3: Collaborate is when the seller becomes a key component of buyer success. The sellers who are seen as Level 3 collaborators, bring new ideas to the table, and who work with buyers as a team will find themselves in the winner's circle more often.

We've found those who apply the Three Levels of RAIN SellingSM as a systematic approach, and apply it well, not only see themselves in the winner's circle more often, but also maximize client loyalty and generate the most referrals.

Train Your Team to Top Performance

Discover the skills of Top-Performing Sellers and build a curriculum to upskill your team.

[Learn more →](#)

Maximize Productivity and Motivation

Uncover motivation, drive sales energy, and help your team achieve more at higher standards.

[Learn more →](#)

Unleash Performance with Coaching

Support your leaders to unleash the sales potential of your sellers and professionals.

[Learn more →](#)

Transform Your Team into Sales Winners

Enabling your team to succeed with the Three Levels of RAIN SellingSM requires training and coaching that's effective, role-specific, and flexible.

RAIN Group Total Access is subscription-based sales training that gives you access to our entire suite of training modules, videos, tools and assets, Train the Trainer and Train the Coach, learning journeys, and implementation support across sales skill, productivity, management, and coaching areas.

Train cohorts concurrently, assign different curricula per role, and launch on-site and virtual instructor-led, self-study, and hybrid training on your schedule for a low per-person subscription.

- **Complete access** to world-class, award-winning sales training
- **77 modules** covering the sales cycle and sales management, organized across 11 programs
- **4 delivery modalities**, including instructor-led (ILT), virtual ILT (VILT), hybrid, and self-study
- **Manager coaching discussion guides** and application assignments for each module
- **Core sales planners** for conversations, opportunity management, account management, prospecting, and more
- **Just-in-time learning** with videos, job-aids, and tools that are quickly accessible when sellers need them
- **Training implementation** best practices, checklists, and tools for success
- **Train-the-Trainer and Coach Certification** processes
- **Facilitator walkthroughs** of all modules and programs

[Click here to request a complimentary consultation →](#)



RAIN Group Delivers World-Class Sales Training

- Modular, multi-modal, and purpose-built for the **modern learner**.
- Unique approach to driving **behavior change** through training that we call Execution Assurance.
- Focused on driving the **business results** important to you.
- A **transformational experience** that ensures the development, adoption, and implementation of new skills.
- Action-oriented **coaching** prepares sellers for real situations and provides direct feedback.

RAIN Group Unleashes Sales Potential

We help organizations:

- Develop and improve sales strategy, process, messaging, and talent
- Enhance sales capability with award-winning sales training
- Design and execute strategic account management initiatives
- Increase effectiveness of sales management and coaching

Best IP: We study buying and selling relentlessly through the RAIN Group Center for Sales Research. Our research and field work allows us to create industry-leading intellectual property to help our clients achieve the greatest success.

Best Education System: We use the best education approaches, methods, and technologies to make training work, stick, and transfer to the job.

Best Results: We make it our mission to drive value and achieve the highest client satisfaction through excellence in quality and producing transformational results for our clients.

