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About the author

Bob Apollo is the CEO of UK-based Inflexion-Point Strategy Partners, the sales and marketing performance improvement specialists. Following an eventful corporate career, Bob now works with a growing client base of UK and European-headquartered B2B-focused expansion-phase technology companies, helping them to find ways of systematically accelerating their revenue growth.

✍️ Bob Apollo

When Geoffrey Moore published the first edition of *Crossing the Chasm* over 20 years ago, it rapidly became a B2B sales and marketing classic – rated by *Inc.* magazine as one of the top-ten marketing books of all time. Moore's focus on the behavioural chasm that exists between innovators and pragmatist buyers was a revelation to a generation of technology marketers.

It's probably accurate to claim that a large number of market-leading businesses (and Silicon Valley fortunes) were built upon the principles enshrined in that book. But new generations of disruptive technology start-ups have emerged in the period since the book was first published, and it's appropriate to ask: is Moore's methodology still as relevant today?

The third edition of *Crossing the Chasm* was published in 2014. It's clear that many things have changed in the intervening decades, but it also seems that the fundamental principle remains: if technology vendors seek to bring disruptive technologies to mainstream business markets, they must target pragmatic buyers with burning business issues that conventional solutions have been unable to address.

Complex value proposition

Moore acknowledges that a few consumer-oriented technologies might appear to have been able to grow to scale without having to worry about having to cross the chasm – although even they typically started with a targeted approach. But wherever the

value proposition is complex, the potential costs significant, or the buying decision process convoluted, the chasm remains very real – and very relevant. For any organisation in a similar position, there is still no substitute for focus.

Dave Brock, CEO of management consulting company Partners in EXCELLENCE, which numbers the sales organisations of GE, Bank of America and Deutsche Telekom among its clients, argues that “the fundamentals still prevail”. He adds: “To be most effective, we have to clearly define the customers and markets best aligned to our solutions. Using those as leverage points, we can grow into adjacent spaces over time. Without this focus, we are sure to fail.”

Organisations that are trying to enter mainstream business markets with disruptive solutions still need to identify carefully defined target markets that have burning business issues for which they need an urgent solution – and throw all their energies behind creating high-value, repeatable use cases.

According to Charles Clark, CEO of Rosslyn Data Technologies, “having cutting-edge technologies isn't enough; in order to break through into mainstream markets you've got to identify a cluster of potential customers with a compelling reason to use your solution.”

Targeting

But there's a problem: the traditional demographic dimensions of market segmentation (size, sector and location) invariably prove inadequate as a basis

for targeting or qualifying these high-potential prospects. In fact, the only reliable way of identifying them is usually through some combination of structural and situational factors.

In short, you've got to do your research, and progressively refine your initial view of your primary bridgehead market(s) in the light of evidence. This is not a trivial exercise – but then again, the prize of market leadership is hardly insignificant either. The chasm may have evolved over the past 20 years, but for most solution categories, it still can't be avoided.

Organisations still face the same choices as their peers did 20 years ago: either get focused and get across, or adopt the strategy of targeting everyone and everything – in which case, you still run the same real risk of free-falling into the chasm until the money runs out. When it comes to new market creation, miracles rarely happen....