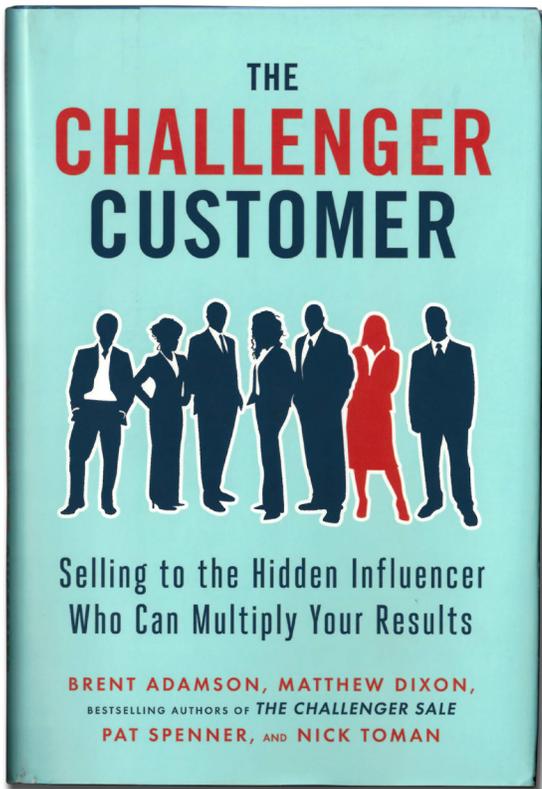

9 Takeaways from *The Challenger Customer*

Provided as a service by DemoChimp



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INTRODUCTION

CEB's classic sales guide, *The Challenger Sale*, is mandatory reading for any aspiring B2B sales rep. It's become a dog-eared playbook for every sales executive's climb to the top.

But CEB's research didn't stop when *The Challenger Sale* became a hit. New insights from CEB help to explain why group buying dysfunction is a major driver of today's price-driven, low-margin deals—even for truly differentiated and deserving solutions.

These insights have inspired a CEB challenger sequel called *The Challenger Customer*.

This new companion volume teaches that solution buying is an even bigger problem—and opportunity—than solution selling. The biggest challenge salespeople face isn't improving their own abilities to sell, but helping customers overcome their inability to reach agreement.

The reality is that today's companies aren't just selling products or solutions. They're selling change. And

change is hard for people to buy, especially when it puts the political capital of individual decision makers at risk.

Summarized in one sentence, the main premise of *The Challenger Customer* is this:

To win today, you must equip Challengers inside the customer organization with the insights and tools they need to drive buying consensus.

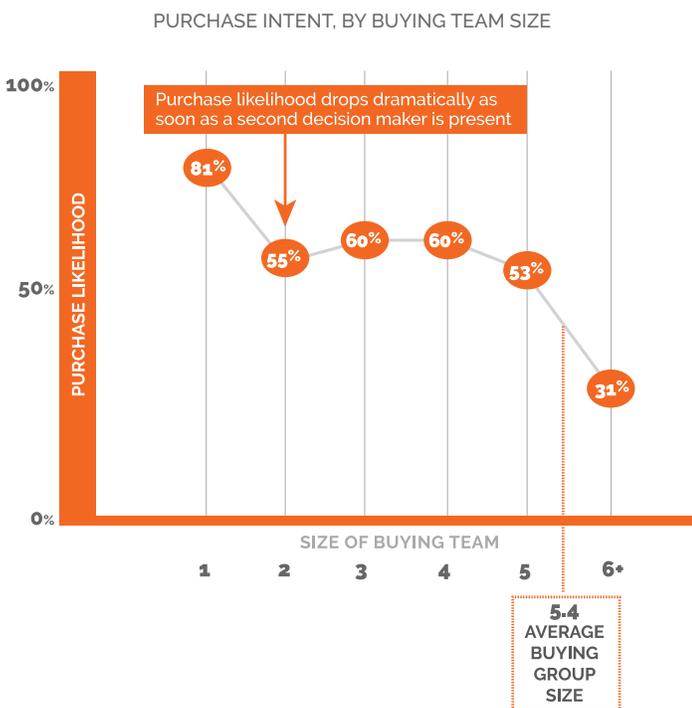
For a complete understanding of how to enable your own Challenger Customers, you need to read *The Challenger Customer*. But for quick reference and actionable takeaways, we've summarized nine key insights from the book and offered an action item for each so you can reap the rewards right away.

What's *The Challenger Customer* all about? Read our summary to find out.

ONE // BUYING GROUPS, COMPRISED OF 5.4 STAKEHOLDERS, CREATE BUYING DYSFUNCTION.

To mitigate the risk of failed purchases, companies have increased the number of stakeholders involved in their buying decisions. Today's buying groups are made up of, on average, 5.4 people. The diversity of responsibilities, points of view and authority among these individual buyers creates conflict and buying dysfunction.

CEB conducted a survey of 3,000 customer stakeholders involved in B2B purchases. They found that going from one to two decision makers dramatically drops purchase likelihood from 81 to 55 percent (a 26% cliff). When 6 people are involved, purchase likelihood drops even lower—into the mid 30s. Yet, eliminating certain decision makers from the buying process puts a successful implementation at risk. All the stakeholders must buy into the new solution along the way.



Seven factors are responsible for the growing number of stakeholders involved in buying decisions:

1. **An aversion to risk** by individual stakeholders and their organizations
2. **Technological components** require the involvement of IT, operations, and procurement
3. **Tighter regulatory requirements** and information protocols from legal and compliance officers
4. **Governmental regulatory reforms** (especially in healthcare) are changing how customers buy
5. **Globalization** involves new regional players
6. **Integration of customer functions and tasks** within the solutions themselves
7. **Flat, networked organizations** place a premium on cross-silo collaboration

In this multi-stakeholder buying environment, often the only things a buying committee can agree on are to minimize risk, avoid disruption of the status quo, and save money. Consequently, suppliers often find themselves competing on price. This is true even for suppliers who've clearly communicated the premium value proposition of their solutions. "Good enough" drives margins down. On their own, buying groups rarely agree on something that is disruptive or ambitious.

Stakeholder dysfunction goes up when:

1. Individual stakeholders don't feel they have a fair say in group discussions
2. Stakeholders avoid discussing important issues
3. Stakeholders disagree with one another outright on purchase details

ACTION ITEM // Observe stakeholder behavior

Getting stakeholders to connect and work with one another is key. The more diverse the buying group, the more dysfunctional it tends to be. Everyone works on priorities they believe are most important for their individual responsibilities. As you talk to customers, observe the behavior of specific stakeholders and what they care about. We'll go more into how to develop insights that align stakeholders later.

TWO // PARTNER WITH CUSTOMERS' INTERNAL CHALLENGERS—MOBILIZERS—TO LEAD CHANGE.

Mobilizers are active buyers who are inherently committed to bringing about the changes needed to help their companies grow. You can't find a Mobilizer in an org chart. They're not the VP of this, or the Senior Director of that. Role and title don't matter to Mobilizers. They're individuals who mobilize irrespective of the org chart, not because of it.

There are three Mobilizer personas, each with unique strengths and weaknesses:

1. **Go-Getters** are relentless and excel at taking ambiguous ideas and translating them into work plans. Yet, they aren't the most visionary buyers, and they tend to explain things using data; Go-Getters are more "trees" than "forest" in the way they view things. They can explain how something *will* get done, but not whether something *should* be done.
2. **Teachers** are the polar opposite of Go-Getters. They like the emotional part of an idea. They're passionate, persuasive, and dynamic. They get excited about taking a contrary position and, through compelling arguments, bending the group to their will. Despite Teachers' passion and excitement, they lack project management skills.
3. **Skeptics** are a hybrid between Go-Getters and Teachers. They like precision and having complete certainty in a plan before moving forward. The rest of the organization knows this, and sees Skeptics' support as a huge vote of confidence for any idea. Unfortunately, Skeptics sometimes allow the perfect to be the enemy of the good. They can get bogged down in seemingly minor details, causing delays. But remember: with these folks, skepticism is a good thing. It means that your insight is resonating with them.

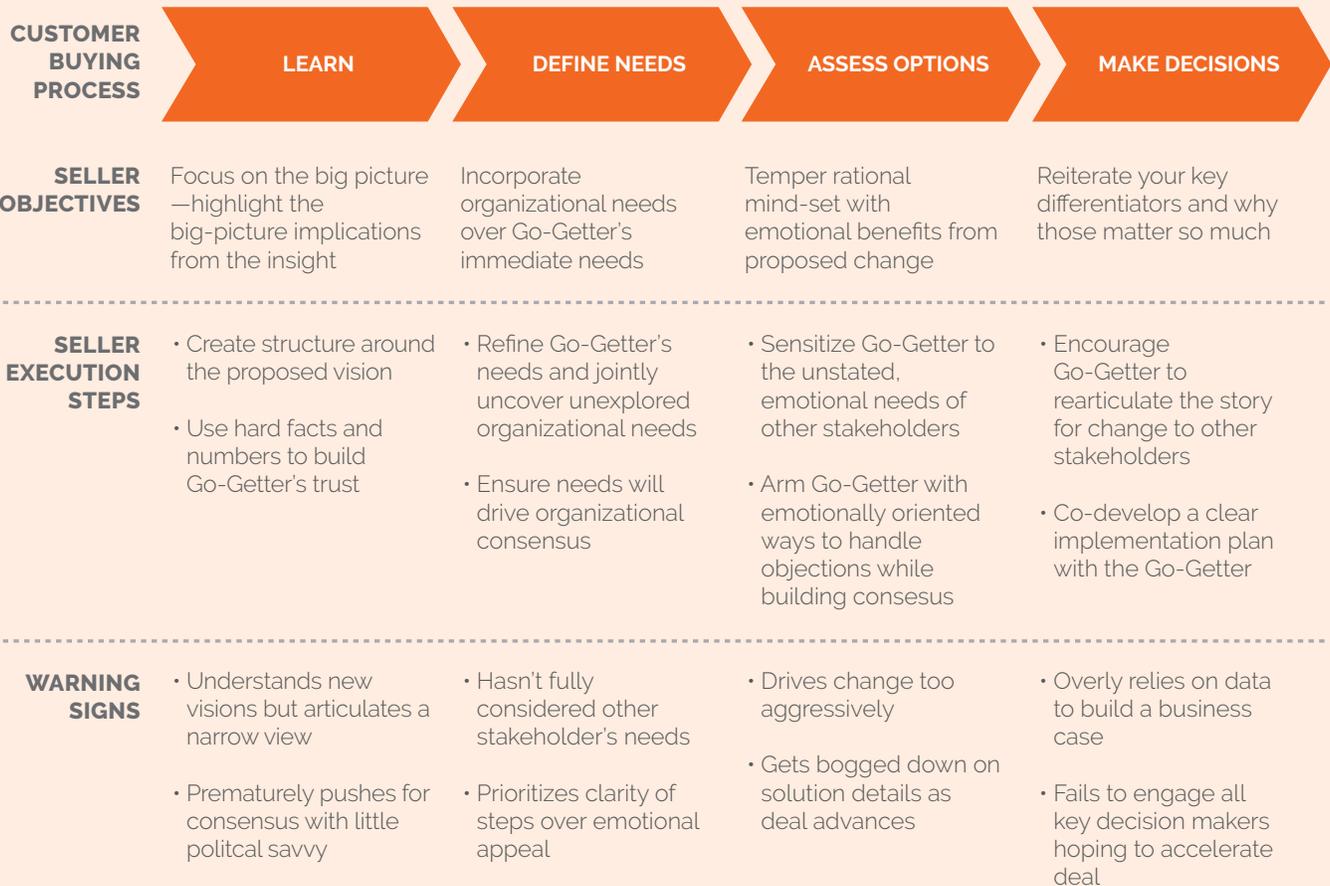
SUMMARY OF THE THREE MOBILIZER PROFILES

"The Go-Getter" — Gets it Done	"The Teacher" — Sells the Vision	"The Skeptic" — Makes you Prove It
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div> <p><i>"Show us business value and we'll get 'er done"</i></p> <p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relentless • Handles ambiguity well (creates structure) • Team player <p>Deficiencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less visionary • Poor storyteller • Values rational over emotional explanation <p>What to Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize organizational benefits • Give them a vision and ensure they convey that vision </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div> <p><i>"I love this ideas! Let's save the details for later"</i></p> <p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persuasive • Advises others • Passionate <p>Deficiencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be viewed as ungrounded • Weak in project management • Manages primarily through excitement <p>What to Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stick with their vision ... only tweak as needed • Provide a clear project plan and timelines • Keep them on track with interim deadlines </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div> <p><i>"I know how to get things done, but you've got a lot to prove"</i></p> <p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His buy-in means organization listens • Prepares others for change • Forces precision <p>Deficiencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggles with ambiguity • Moves cautiously • communicates in plans, not ideas <p>What to Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drive urgency to compel them to act • Provide absolute certainty in the project plan • Give them a compelling story to share </div> </div>

ACTION ITEM // Find Mobilizers

Each Mobilizer’s strength demands a tailored approach. Pulling the right levers can make all the difference in terms of getting your Mobilizer bought in on, and supportive of, your proposed change.

“THE GO-GETTER” ENGAGEMENT ROAD MAP



“THE TEACHER” ENGAGEMENT ROAD MAP

CUSTOMER BUYING PROCESS



SELLER OBJECTIVES

Ground the Teacher's vision to what's achievable and feasible for both parties

Focus the conversation on the economic needs of different stakeholders involved in the change

Steer economic reasoning on the options available and their advantages and disadvantages

Create an implementation road map with next steps and timelines

SELLER EXECUTION STEPS

- Bring specificity to the Teacher's vision and ensure you're not over promising on the change
- Use stories to build trust
- Jointly think through the impact of the new vision on business results

- Based on past deals, share likely stakeholders' needs
- Provide proof points and data to back the Teacher's vision

- Assist Teacher in creating a solution checklist to assess possible alternatives
- Provide supporting research to mitigate objections
- Arrive at a detailed plan on building broader consensus

- Supplement the Teacher's narrative with data that builds urgency for change
- Jointly agree on stakeholder responsibilities, next steps, and timelines

WARNING SIGNS

- Radically increases solution scope
- Gets overly excited with the new direction

- Talks in generalities or at the macrolevel
- Unclear on the impact on individual stakeholders

- Goes with his gut or natural instincts
- Quick to dismiss different options

- Sways opinion without adequate deliberation
- Doesn't articulate the finer plan details

“THE SKEPTIC” ENGAGEMENT ROAD MAP

CUSTOMER BUYING PROCESS	LEARN	DETERMINE NEEDS	ASSESS OPTIONS	MAKE DECISIONS
SELLER OBJECTIVES	Focus on getting buy-in — encourage more questions and exploration	Arm Skeptic with a vision that appeals to the business more readily	Temper rational mind-set with a broader change story backed with key data points	Ensure the vision supersedes the change implications
SELLER EXECUTION STEPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a compelling teaching insight that drives urgency for change • Use both data and testimonials to build trust • Reduce ambiguity by detailing how other companies have taken similar action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jointly assess how needs will vary across organization • Help articulate the common needs across the organization that will anchor the new vision for change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitize Skeptic to the emotional needs of other stakeholders • Arm the Skeptic with emotionally oriented ways to handle objections while building consensus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present a project plan that gives Skeptic more certainty around implementation steps • Break the implementation down to bite-size pieces with clear wins at each stage
WARNING SIGNS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggles with change implications • Is unconvinced on the supplier's ability to partner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gets lost in the implications • Focuses on stakeholder differences and exceptions, not big-picture needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gets bogged down on solution details • Loses sight of the broader vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stalls the change if absolute certainty doesn't exist • Looks for constant reassurances

You can identify Mobilizers by doing the following:

Give them an assignment. This isn't, "Download your org chart from your intranet and e-mail it to me." It's something like, "Research something that's happening in your company, and come back to me with your point of view." If they don't do their homework, that's a red flag. Either they can't get it done—suggesting they aren't a true Mobilizer—or they just aren't on board.

Test their influence. Ask the customer to set up a meeting, then watch who shows up. If the people who matter most aren't there, your customer stakeholder has a lot less influence than you'd hoped.

THREE // USE COMMERCIAL INSIGHT TO SHOW THAT THE PAIN OF THE SAME IS GREATER THAN THE PAIN OF CHANGE

Your goal isn't to convince the buying group to buy a solution. It's to persuade them to change their behavior. This requires Commercial Insight. Done well, Commercial Insight is provocative. It challenges the customer's current worldview—or Mental Model—about how things are supposed to be. This will help stakeholders understand, as a group, that they need to change their business.

You need to engage Mobilizers early in the purchasing process using content focused on Commercial Insight.

Otherwise, they'll have set their own buying criteria before engaging with you. According to CEB, buyers have completed 57 percent of the process by the time they start talking to suppliers. The "golden rule" of customer-supplier engagement is that, *left to their own devices, customers will always engage a supplier as late as they possibly can.*

You don't find Commercial Insight. You create it.

ACTION ITEM // Create Commercial Insight

Commercial Insight is a highly structured, eminently replicable, highly learnable process. It follows a set of core principles that answer one simple, but very powerful, question:

What do our customers fail to fully understand about their business, but should?

To answer this, hunt for hidden connections between your value proposition and your customer's higher-order outcomes. Here's how to do that:

- List your differentiators
- Create a list of outcomes your customers care most about
- Prioritize and choose an outcome as a starting point
- Map customer beliefs about outcome drivers
- Hypothesize connections between your differentiators and customer outcomes
- Test and validate connections

Four questions to ask when building Commercial Insight:

1. What are our sustainable, unique strengths?
2. Of those unique strengths, which ones are currently under-appreciated by our customers?
3. What is it that the customer fails to fully understand about their business that leads them to under-appreciate our unique, sustainable capability?
4. What would we have to teach that customer about their business that would lead them to value our capability more?

Building Commercial Insight is a process for engaging Mobilizers in a conversation that they'll find compelling enough to act on. It equips them with the evidence they'll need to win over the other members of the buying group, despite high levels of internal dysfunction.

FOUR // DON'T SELL. COACH

To be successful in the Challenger world, salespeople need to become buying coaches. Salespeople must coach on how to drive agreement for the buying group on the problem to solve, and the type of solution that can solve it in a vendor-agnostic way.

Commercial Coaching is an empowering force for Mobilizers. This approach helps the customer assess obstacles they will need to overcome in order to get the

business outcomes they seek. It inherently reinforces Commercial Insight. It arms the Mobilizer to share that insight within their organization, ensuring that you are positioned as the best supplier.

All of this is done in the spirit of enabling the Mobilizer to build consensus in the fastest and most productive way possible.

ACTION ITEM // Review the 5 stages of Commercial Coaching with a specific customer in mind

The most important aspect of Commercial Coaching is coaching the Mobilizer to engage the buying group in Collective Learning interactions in 5 stages:

Stage 1 Help the Mobilizer construct a plan for building consensus

Stage 2 Help the Mobilizer confirm their organization understands its true problem and the best course of action

Stage 3 Support your Mobilizer in surfacing and addressing any remaining stakeholder concerns

Stage 4 Establish negotiable points related to the purchase

Stage 5 Secure stakeholder commitment to move forward

FIVE // LEAD TO YOUR SOLUTION, NOT WITH IT

You can't lead *with* your solution because that compromises the credibility of the Mobilizer. What you can do is help the Mobilizer lead their company *to* your solution. The buying group will naturally gravitate towards your specific solution if you and the Mobilizer position the value of your differentiator as being the only way to fulfill the outcomes of Commercial Insight.

Remember: you should teach customers that *the pain of the same is greater than the pain of change*. Do this in a way that leads customers back to some capability that your solution is uniquely able to provide better than anyone else.

ACTION ITEM // Find true differentiators.

What most suppliers are missing is a disciplined, systematic approach to understanding and then replacing a customer's Mental Model. The only way to get customers to think differently about *you* is to first get them to think differently about *themselves*.

If you successfully break down a customer's current Mental Model and replace it with a new alternative (in a vendor-agnostic way initially), the customer is going to turn to you and say, "I've got to change! But who can help me with this?"

In that moment, you must be able to say, "Let me show you how we are the only supplier that can help you with this." You have to change how customers think about their business in a way that leads back to your unique differentiator.

The process for creating this link is to first identify your unique strengths. True differentiators are not:

- Features and benefits common in your market
- Outcomes that your product generates
- Vague or overused descriptions that include any of the following words: "innovative," "green," "user friendly," or "solution"

The ultimate differentiator test: if we removed all the identifying information from your commercial content, would the customer still necessarily have to buy from you? When you can say "Yes" to that question, you have something powerfully different to hang Commercial Insight on.

But remember: the key to Commercial Insight isn't a story about you or your solution at all. It's a story about the customer and how they've missed something materially important to the performance of their business.

SIX // YOU CAN'T BRING ABOUT CHANGE WITHOUT BREAKING AND BUILDING MENTAL MODELS

To build a world-class Commercial Insight, you don't need to continually refine how customers perceive *you*. What customers need is a significantly more refined view of how they perceive *themselves*. The only way to (diplomatically) tell a customer that they're "wrong" is to first understand what they believe in the first place. That set of beliefs is something called a Mental Model.

The goal is to move customers off of their current behavior and towards a new, desired behavior. The biggest challenge is getting customers to reconsider their current thinking in the first place. This is a two-step process:

- First, we have to get a Mobilizer to reconsider their *individual* thinking.
- Then, we have to get the entire buying group to reconsider their *collective* thinking.

Customers' current behaviors are significantly entrenched due to their underlying set of beliefs and assumptions about how the world works. If you want to change someone's behavior, you first have to change their Mental Model. It's the "frame" in the "frame breaking" that creates a Commercial Insight.

The only way to change how a customer *acts* is to first change the way that customer *thinks*.

ACTION ITEM // Practice building a new Mental Model for a customer.

You can create a new Mental Model for a customer by connecting your (*unique, valuable, defensible, and sustainable*) differentiators to the customer's desired outcome. Third-party support is critical for validating the credibility of your differentiators. The more impact your differentiators have on a customer's outcome, the greater the proof needs to be.

Building a new Mental Model requires that you:

1. Identify the customer's ultimate desired goal or outcome for their business.
2. Uncover the primary drivers that contribute to the customer's outcome.
3. Determine the driver that best leads to your *unique, valuable, defensible, and sustainable* differentiator—your unique capability.
4. Map out the logic behind the customer's current Mental Model.
5. Create a new Mental Model that connects a significant customer problem that they

under-appreciate with your unique solution. This doesn't have to be perfect, but it does have to be accurate and believable enough for your customers to see themselves in it.

6. Design a prototype of the new Mental Model, and ask some of your best sales reps what they'd add.
7. Test how significant the "burden of proof" is, and how much evidence you'll need to satisfy it. If you can find disagreement between the customer's current Mental Model and the new one you're teaching them, your insight will hit harder and customers will care more. However, the closer your disagreement is to the outcome, the higher the burden of proof will be.
8. Test your Mental Model with customers and refine it iteratively.

See the case studies in the Appendix for some real-world examples of these principles in action.

SEVEN // FOCUS ALL CONTENT MARKETING PIECES ON COMMERCIAL INSIGHT

Every piece of content you publish should create a thematic narrative chain that leads to an ever-deeper understanding of Commercial Insight. We're talking about creating content pieces that are insight driven and address the customer's problem in a vendor-agnostic way. These pieces equip Mobilizers to talk about the problem and possible solutions categorically, in the stakeholders' language.

Effective content marketing engages mobilizers in a three-step "SIC" sequence:

1. **Spark.** Hooks the Mobilizer into revisiting their Mental Model in the first place.
2. **Introduce.** Lays out the idea in detail.
3. **Confront.** Confronts the Mobilizer with the frame-breaking idea in her own terms.

Content must teach Mobilizers in a way that:

- Captures the attention of a Mobilizer
- Motivates them to champion a change in behavior
- Rallies the support of the other members of the buying group
- Creates a vision that leads the customer back to your unique solution

ACTION ITEM // Build or repurpose content that supports Commercial Insight

Commercial Insight is not just designed to teach customers something new they've never thought of before. It's also designed to un-teach them something that they already falsely believed about their own business. Your content should drive customer behavior change by teaching the customer something new and compelling about their business. It should also arm customers with a compelling reason to take action.

While the types of content listed below are important in other specific situations, Commercial Insight content is not:

General Information: Information that's just out there. Customers are awash in it.

Accepted Information: Information that's credible and relevant, but not that interesting. Customers

may not ignore the accepted information. They may "like" it—and even agree with it. But they probably won't do anything about, it either; at least, nothing they weren't going to do already.

Thought Leadership: Newsworthy, incremental information that customers likely could not have discovered on their own. Unlike accepted information, thought leadership information is additive. It provides new perspectives or data that teaches, and doesn't just confirm. The real limitation of traditional thought leadership is that it doesn't drive action, because it's focused on presenting a new idea rather than undermining an existing one. Thought leadership fails to have much commercial impact as it provides only a very weak means, at best, for driving customer behavior change.

COMPARISON OF COMMERCIAL INFORMATION TYPES



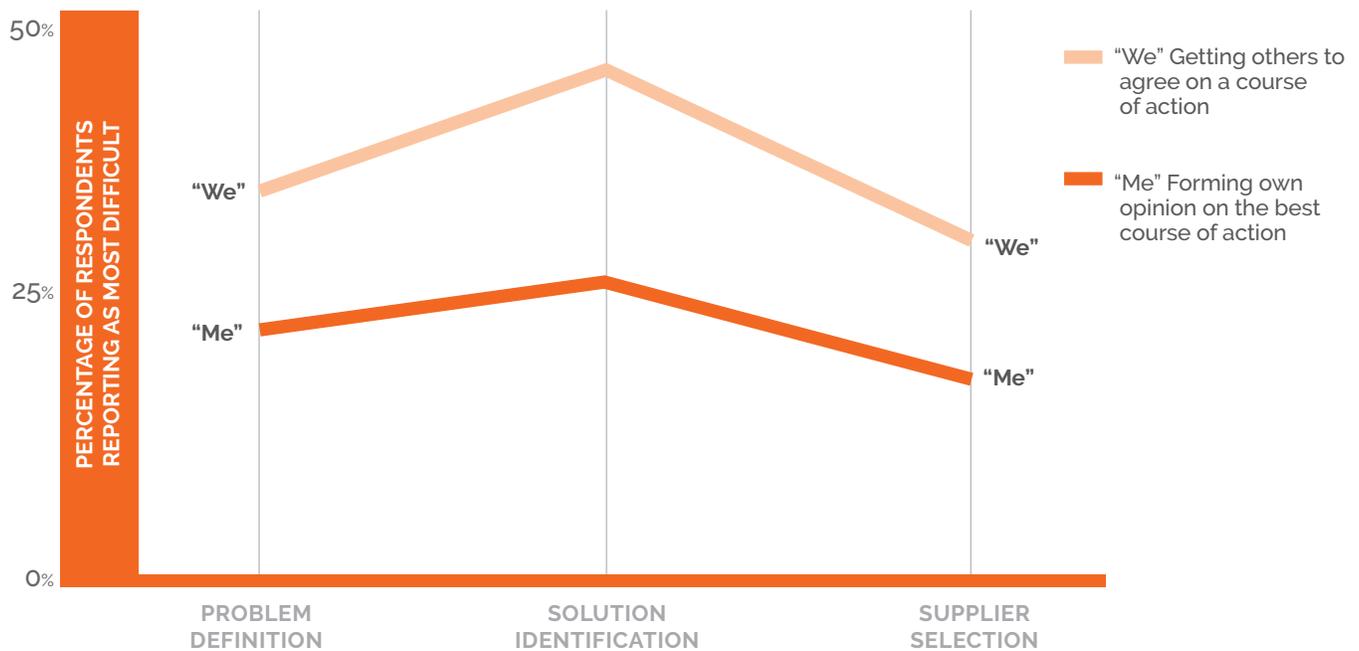
Once you have an idea of which categories your content fits into, the marketing team can refresh or create new content that mobilizes your customers around Commercial Insight.

EIGHT // SELLING REQUIRES AN APPROACH THAT IS FOCUSED ON CONNECTING STAKEHOLDERS TO ONE ANOTHER

CEB uncovered a three-phase purchasing process that moves from Problem Identification to Solution Identification to Supplier Selection—in that order.

Group decisions are nearly twice as difficult to make as individual ones. Even if groups can agree on the problem they're trying to solve, an even more difficult challenge is for them to agree on *how* to solve the problem.

PERCEIVED DIFFICULTY OF DECISION MAKING AT EACH PURCHASE STAGE



CEB's research shows that the best way for you to help buying groups is to first create consensus around solution identification—not supplier selection. And solution identification is about selecting a solution category, not a specific solution within it.

ACTION ITEM // Tailor for convergence

In the world of the 5.4 person buying group, tailoring isn't only about helping stakeholders see *themselves* in your Commercial Insight. It's just as important that you help them see *each other*. It's about creating *convergence*.

You can do the following to create convergence:

- Create a common language.
- Encourage collective understanding of individual preferences and goals.
- Clarify group objectives.
- Overcome biases that might stand in the way of establishing higher-order agreement.

Tailoring to Mobilizers is far more important than tailoring to stakeholders more generally.

There is also a dark side to personalization. If a seller personalizes too much, the 5.4 members of the buying group may feel tempted to shoot the deal down once they compare notes and see how different their expectations are. You need to help these buyers appreciate their alignment across their decision-making criteria. The bottom line is that if you don't create convergence, your customers will—even if that means choosing to do nothing.

NINE // COLLECTIVE LEARNING DRIVES CONSENSUS AND HIGHER DEAL QUALITY

In our introduction to *The Challenger Customer*, we identified that winning today requires equipping Challengers inside customer organizations with the insights and tools they need to drive buying consensus. That winning strategy is boiled down to a principle CEB calls Collective Learning. Collective Learning is the ability of a group of customer stakeholders to overcome their natural disconnects and learn *together*. Collective Learning is a powerful driver of deal quality, because it dramatically drives down group dysfunction.

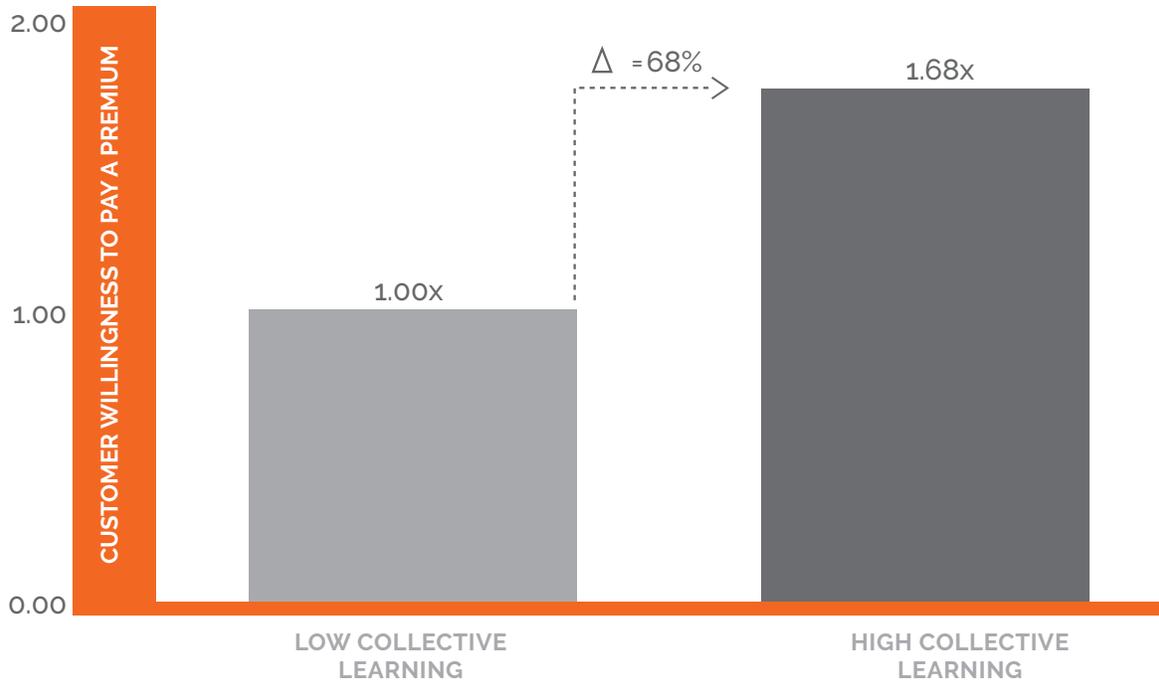
Suppliers who understand Collective Learning can better facilitate the consensus-building process by offering a framework that functions as a new, collective Mental Model. The best frameworks anchor a diverse (and dysfunctional) buying group around a common vision, from a “collection of yeses” to a *Collective Yes* from the group.

Collective Learning includes the following behaviors:

- Thoroughly exploring concerns and uncertainties across the buying group
- Honestly surfacing disconnects and competing ideas
- Having a mutual willingness to explore problems and consider alternative views
- Actively probing for potentially overlooked interdependencies
- Establishing joint resolution

CEB research suggests that, by bringing diverse customer groups together to learn before they buy, you can boost customer willingness to pay a premium by over two thirds—nearly 70 percent.

IMPACT OF COLLECTIVE LEARNING ON LIKELIHOOD OF HIGHER-COST SUPPLIER WINNING A DEAL



ACTION ITEM // Purchase *The Challenger Customer* and practice Collective Learning principles

Collective Learning is *the* big takeaway from this book. In order to fully grasp and put into practice these principles, you need to buy *The Challenger Customer*. Today.

In today's consensus-driven purchase process, where divergent views and dysfunction reign supreme and deals get compressed to the lowest common denominator, Collective Learning is the clearest means by which customers can agree on high-quality purchases. There are three key operating principles that define world-class, supplier-led Collective Learning, which you can review in detail within *The Challenger Customer*:

Collective Learning Principle 1:

Supplier-led collective learning requires facilitation, not just presentation.

Collective Learning Principle 2:

Be sure to bound, not just prompt.

Collective Learning Principle 3:

Coach, don't sell.

Intelligent Demo Automation is a Challenger solution.

Progressive sales and marketing organizations have proven intelligent demo automation to be an effective way to attract, engage and partner with Challenger Customers. From small startups to large enterprises, intelligent demo automation

facilitates Collective Learning at scale. It has the unique ability to tailor a value proposition to the specific interests of each member of a customer buying group—while driving profitable agreement among them.

When combined with demo analytics, automated intelligent demos reveal who has watched your demo, what is important to them, and with whom they've shared it. These insights connect buyers to one another by prompting them to learn about their problem in a shared context—and, at the same time, providing ideas for possible solutions

within certain bounds. Demo analytics also enable Challenger sales and marketing people to equip Mobilizers with insights into where their fellow buyers agree and where alignment is still needed.

Outcomes for companies that are using intelligent demo automation have been significant: up to 44 percent higher close rates and 68 percent shorter sales cycles.

To learn how intelligent demo automation can help you achieve your Challenger outcomes, watch the automated personalized demo at

www.demochimp.com.

APPENDIX

Dentsply Case Study

Dentsply manufactures dental and other consumable health products. The company's sales reps call dentists and educate them about Dentsply's wide range of products, including innovative instruments.

After a great deal of research and development, Dentsply introduced a cordless dental instrument. This was lighter and more ergonomic than anything else on the market. Yet, dentists weren't buying the new instrument. They believed that the instruments they were already using were "good enough."

Dentsply discovered that the only way to get dentists to think differently about their instrument was to get them to think differently about the economics of the business they were running. Dentsply helped dentists make that connection by linking the value of its new instrument to a problem that all dentists know: hygienist absenteeism.

Many practices suffer high rates of absenteeism among their dental hygienists because of the physical wear it puts on them. Their work leads to soreness, carpal tunnel syndrome, and early retirement. Dentsply helped dentists understand that the problem is worse—and more costly—than they realized.

With this finding, Dentsply reps will talk with a dentist about the findings, asking probing questions and digging deeper with the dentist. The rep walks the dentist through a step-by-step calculation of just how much money the absenteeism problem is costing them. With the dentist's input, they use that practice's actual wages, overtime costs, number of hygienists on staff, and

absenteeism rates. It's a powerful exercise that dentists themselves would likely never have done on their own.

When it's laid out step-by-step with actual costs, the dentist can't help but feel a little overwhelmed by the time the discussion is over. And that's the point. The rep's goal is to prove to the dentist (empathetically and professionally) that this problem is worse and more expensive than they'd ever realized on their own. This is highly credible and backed by data-driven industry research, experience with hundreds of other practices, and the dentist's own numbers.

At this point, the rep shares with the dentist credible research conducted by third-party sources. This proves that a large part of hygienists' work-related injuries aren't the result of the job itself, but rather the instruments used on the job. That's a connection that dentist themselves had never made on their own. The rep explains that there are several issues with instrument design that contribute to this problem—weight, shape, and the cord—that only their instrument can solve.

It's important to note that the conversation isn't about Dentsply at all. It's about the dentist and their practice. More specifically, it's about a problem they knew they had, but never appreciated its cost and impact.

The story of Dentsply's new instrument comes into the conversation at the very end. Don't lead *with* what makes you unique; lead *to* what makes you unique. The results for Dentsply have been dramatic. They're selling more instruments at higher margins in less time than ever before.

Xerox Case Study

Xerox developed a technology that makes color printing costs almost the same as black-and-white printing.

The company identified the K-12 education market as a growth area. Schools had a large volume of printing, but declining school budgets made it difficult to sell this premium color-printing solution.

Using CEB's model, the Xerox team came up with a Commercial Insight. This changed the conversations Xerox was having with customers. It also changed the stakeholders with whom they were having those conversations. With this, the Xerox team uncovered a surprising connection between vibrant color and improved learning. They verified it as being a highly valuable reframe by answering questions like:

- Can we prove the validity of this idea and the new approach?
- Can we energize customer stakeholders to act on this idea?
- Will this idea require the involvement of new stakeholders?
- Does this idea surface any major risk or objections?
- Does this idea carry any new change management concerns?

To check their hypothesis, the Xerox team surveyed its customers' customers. They talked with students. They verified that 77 percent of students agreed color documents enhanced their focus, interest, and memory.

Xerox also surveyed education decision makers—superintendents, principals, business managers, heads of curriculum development—beyond those with whom Xerox traditionally engaged in the technology offices of school districts.

The insights the Xerox team gleaned from talking with this new set of stakeholders revealed a different kind of conversation. It was one focused not on printing performance, but student performance (*see illustration on next page*).

Xerox tested a set of objections that decision makers have about connections between student performance and color. Namely, they tested the perceived high cost of printing in color. That, of course, played right into Xerox's differentiators. Xerox was the only supplier that could provide a color printing option competitive to black-and-white.

This insight shows the higher-order outcomes that motivate Mobilizers to drive in their organizations. If you can win over that Mobilizer through Commercial Insight that redefines how they and their organizations assign value to what you do best, that's the key to sidestepping commoditization and price-based competition.

As one of Xerox's sales agents put it, "Once I reframe the conversation around student learning and how Xerox can help, there's no more talk of competition. It's as if the door closes. I'm on the inside and everyone else is on the outside."

XEROX'S SHIFT FROM PRODUCT-CENTRIC TO INSIGHT-LED SALES INTERACTIONS (ILLUSTRATIVE)

Our leading-edge cartridge-free technology produces 90% less waste than laser, and creates vibrant, smooth images quickly...and we can integrate that with one of six software options and other education solutions to fit your needs..."

Xerox Solutions

- Hardware Options
- Software Options
- Hardware Options

Sales Rep

- Leads with value of features and options
- Focuses conversation on known customer needs

Before
Leading *with* Unique Benefits

"I'd like to talk to you about the impact of color on student performance"

Student Performance

- Comprehension issues
- Lack of engagement

In 77% of children — color improves focus and interest

Sales Rep

- Leads with issues affecting customers' top priorities and economic concerns
- Tells customers something they don't know about themselves

After
Leading *to* Unique Benefits

