

“Sales Training, A New Model for a New Future”

By Teri Dunn

An adaptation from a conversation between Alice in Wonderland and the Cheshire Cat: “If you don’t know where you’re going, any road will take you there.”¹

If we hope to adopt a new model for our new future it is imperative to recognize some “tipping points” in our industry and the tendency for history to repeat itself.

- In the 1970’s first time copier acquisitions were made by the owner, president or C-Suite with productivity and profits the point of focus
- In the 1980’s when identical features, functions and benefits prevailed along with 2nd and 3rd generation acquisition of copiers the buying decision moved down the corporate ladder to purchasing departments with price the point of focus
- Compatible supplies and alternate channels of distribution spurred new forms of acquisition to protect the dealer
- Decline in margins
- Birth of the MFP brings a new decision influencer (IT)
- Decline of machines in field
- Decline of pages to copiers/MFP’s

It is safe to assume MPS will evolve the same way. As confirmed by a very current study by **IDC²** the current primary influencer in adopting an MPS solution inside corporations today resides in the C-Suite. We know MPS exists due to the availability of reliable compatible supplies AND we’ve already seen alternate channels of distribution.

If we limit MPS to capturing prints and providing service and supplies to increase our aftermarket revenue and profit, MPS will follow the same sequence of events as copier acquisitions including 2nd and 3rd rounds of acquisitions being made by someone lower in the chain of command, namely purchasing agents and material managers, meaning RFP’s and a focus on price.

Will page volume drop off as with copiers/MFP’s? A resounding YES! And why? The answer lies in the work force to come. It’s a generational issue. Can we really see today’s teenagers and college students tolerating paper? iPads, Netbooks, Blackberries and Droids-----the written word becomes virtual. Follow-up that theory with our Nation’s Green movement: Paper has a major environmental green impact. Trees, water, energy, transportation and waste are components of the “paper trail.” Evaluating document requirements to eliminate unnecessary prints and paper can have a huge impact on the environment.

We see history repeating itself. Surely, marks on paper have already begun a decent.

¹ Alice In Wonderland – Lewis Carroll, 1865

² IDC, “Worldwide and U.S. MPS—Decision Makers by Company Size, Vertical Industry and Contract Age” 2010

So, what new model should take us into this new future?

A successful model matches what the customer wants and where the customer is going as it relates to the products, solutions and services we can offer today and can become proficient at offering in the future.

What do executives want from today's salesperson? As it relates to MPS, top level executives won't consider seeing the legacy salesperson of the past. You know the type. While he might not be the station wagon driving, gurney pushing, demo wheeling flash of the past; he is the fast talking, deal maker who can "save money" type today who has acquired some basic technology vocabulary.

Howard Stevens, Chairman and CEO of the HR Chally Group, reports after an exhaustive 14 year study of over 300,000 salespeople in 15 industries and the over 80,000 customers they serve, it all boils down to this:

- **"They want to outsource everything except their core competencies."**
- **"They want solutions, not just products and services."**
- **"They want substantiated value."**

And the rules for the salesperson they will work with:

- **"You must be personally accountable for our desired results."**
- **"You must understand our business."**
- **"You must design the right applications."**
- **"You must be easily accessible."**
- **"You must solve our problems."**
- **"You must be creative in responding to our needs."³**

If we can take what the customer wants and embrace a sales training and development program that marries these characteristics to a value proposition for what our customers need that we have.....we suddenly have a new model for a much brighter future.

For the last few years, there's been much chatter about MPS. To the average dealer this has meant snatching the prints on a customer's current printers and turning them into aftermarket revenue and profit to make up for the decline of MFP placements and the prints that have left their base of MFP's. The sharpest dealers recognize that MPS is much more than that. If we reach to what the **Photizo Group identifies as the "Three Stage MPS Customer Adoption Model,"**

- **Stage One: Control, which includes assessment, understanding user requirements and planning**
- **Stage Two: Optimize and Ongoing Management**
- **Stage Three: Enhance and Business Process Optimization, which includes process analysis, consulting, workflow analysis and business process improvement⁴**

³ "Achieve Sales Excellence" by Howard Stevens and Theodore Kinni, 2007

⁴ "Best Practices for Starting an MPS Program" Photizo Group, 2010

it becomes clear that we have the products, solutions and services to match where today's customer needs to go in the future.

However, while we might have all the components in our sack of offerings, the vast majority of our sales people are not yet prepared with the current business acumen to understand how decisions are made in Corporate America today, how to influence that process, nor how to engage their solutions to match where the customer is going. What's needed is a training and development program that can provide a model, a process, a road map if you will, that the salesperson can follow to make the transition and evolve into the ideal match for the priorities of today's corporations, the characteristics that decision making executives want in that salesperson and properly execute the three stages of MPS.

Here's an example of where our industry took a wrong turn twice because we focused on what we want rather than *where the customer was really going* and the results of those wrong turns:

In the late 1990's the MFP brought a new influencer to the table; IT, who didn't have the time or the appetite for anyone resembling a copier salesperson and who could not speak their language. The overzealous salesperson who did attempt to embrace technology over committed what the first MFP's could do. We saw entire networks fail as a result. Furthermore, we alienated users by saying "our MFP's could replace printers." We did not recognize that printers were the place of preference for printing. Thus, adoption of this technology was stalled.

Then again, as salespeople slowly adopt the concept of MPS, they begin to recognize the opportunity for optimization. In their eyes this means equipment revenue and commission and "savings" for the customer. To the customer, instead of hearing "savings," in a challenging economic time they hear "long term commitment." Once again, the big stall. Buying, not moving forward.

Remember, history repeats itself. We must learn from our mistakes. The missing component....a training and development program that prepares the salesperson for the transition our customers need to make and the transition the industry has made.

Print Management Solutions Group is a training and development company that facilitates a learning process that matches what today's customer wants from a salesperson, aligns training with what today's customer sees as their priorities and has a direct link to the products, services and solutions offered thru an MPS Program.

The New Model for a New Future must include:

- An understanding of where the industry has been and where it is going.
- An understanding of the Complex Buying Team we encounter today.
- A mastering of the skills to accelerate the "Buying Process."
- The architecting of a Three Stage MPS Solution.
- Executing that solution.
- And FINALLY, progressing with a review and implementation process that is lock step with the changing customer environment.

Additionally, this new model must include a tool kit and resources to get the job done regardless of the size of the dealership, the customer or the opportunities ahead.

The most important investment an office products dealership can make today starts with the executive leadership embracing a development program that matches this new model. Meaning: understanding the model then hiring, training, developing, compensating and managing to this model. The result: a promising bright new future.

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