

Selling vs. Marketing



Professional Selling

What is the difference between Selling and Marketing?

For many years, sales organizations have debated the difference between selling and marketing. Some have argued that ‘marketing’ is the role of the organization’s head office and that ‘selling’ is the job of the front line salesperson.

More recently, the term ‘Field Marketing’ has come into vogue.

Many farm organizations are placing considerable effort on helping their field staff move beyond the traditional role of the salesperson (one who goes up and down the road ‘selling stuff’) to broader responsibilities as consultants and business partners.

One logical question you may ask, ‘Is this simply putting old wine into a new bottle?’ Or, is there something fundamentally different about the work of a Field Marketer when compared to the role of the traditional salesperson?

Dr. David Downey, with the *Center for Agricultural Business* at Purdue University reports, “Field Marketers have unique perspectives on selling and emphasize different selling activities that set them apart from more traditional salespeople.



“Field Marketers perform well beyond more traditional salespeople.

They are especially proficient in gaining market share with the larger or more sophisticated customers who expect more.

“Field Marketers have a fundamentally different view of their job and a substantially more impressive set of skills to do the

job.”

Gary Heckman, Director of Sales and Marketing, Mechanicsburg, PA., tells us, “There are many salespeople who are good at getting people to buy things. But the Field Marketer is exceptional at uncovering problems; some the producer hasn’t even seen yet. He or she is very skilled at finding ways to help customers resolve those problems.

“The Field Marketer goes to the farm with the goal of being a business partner. The salesperson drives onto the farm with the goal of driving out having sold ‘x’ amount of something. Producers today want business partners. They don’t want product suppliers.”

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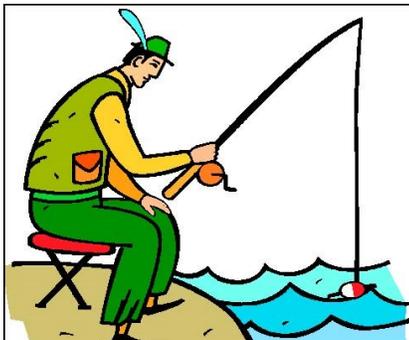
From 'selling stuff' to providing business solutions. Dr. David Galton, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., tells us, "There are so many organizations with so many different perspectives; I don't think our owners and managers are really interested in hearing about everything."

Ed Silba, Asheville, N.C., adds, "We're getting more and more into the realm of advisors and consultants. All of this is important if you are to add value to the business."

Don Bennink, Bell, FL., comments, "We need people with a good knowledge and a good background in the area

that they are marketing to us."

The "good ol' boys" are gone. In days past, people used to say anyone who had the gift to gab, showed up for appoint-



ments, and liked to talk to farmers could make it as a salesperson. However, things have changed. The successful Field Marketer today is a differ-

ent kind of person.

Dr. Galton continues, "The 'good ol' boys' were people who sat and talked. Maybe it's unfortunate but our world is moving a lot faster. Producers today don't have time to talk to everybody that comes along."

John Langford, a Citrus grower from Alturas, FL., put it this way: "Thirty years ago, the top sales guy would come in here and invite me to go fishing. Now, salespeople are highly trained and they have become a deep resource for new techniques and new ideas. They come in here well informed about who we are and what we are trying to do."

We're looking for people who bring ideas!

Producers today are looking for business partners.

Ivan Olinski, Princeton Nurseries, Allentown, N.J., comments, "Salespeople today have to be more than someone who comes in and drops off a price sheet. They need to be almost like employees of the farm."

Steve Isaacson, Dairy Feed Consultant, Cecilton, MD., adds, "When you become a partner with a producer, you become a trusted advisor and a part of the farm's decision making process. Producers today want partnerships that will enhance their business and contribute to their bottom line."

Bring ideas that make me money! John Mueller, Willow Bend Farm, Clifton Springs,

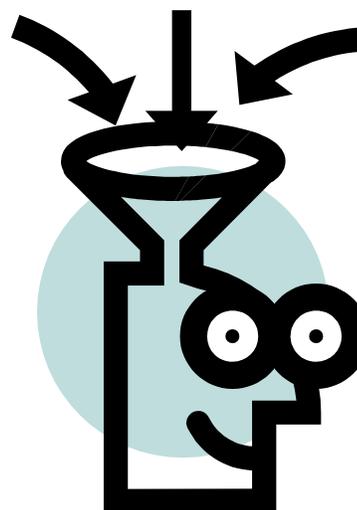
N.Y., comments: "I expect my support people to be cutting edge. They should be pushing us toward the future.

"I expect salespeople to provide leadership saying, 'This is what I have seen done on other farms. This is what you might be able to do here. And this is how I can help you get the results you want.'"

"On our farm," Mueller continues, "We don't seem to get through all the magazines. But we do visit with our farm suppliers. We talk to our lenders and with consultants. It's our hope they have gone through all that information so they will be able to funnel it down to the ideas that will work here. If they will do that for us, the rest is excess fluff and we won't have to bother

with it."

Yes, the bar keeps rising. The salesperson's role on farms



has long since shifted from 'selling stuff' to bringing total business solutions. The good ol' boys have all gone 'fishin'.