



The Creating Competitive Distinction Series:

Part One

The Seven Deadly Sales Dilemmas

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No matter your size, sales effectiveness often hinges on how well you handle seven sales dilemmas - the tensions between “*what is*” and “*what should be*”. They arise from your culture and are exaggerated by market conditions, mergers, reorganizations, etc. How you address them will predict how effective your sales force will be.

Handling these dilemmas relies on gradual and thoughtful changes in the way people work, their roles and accountabilities. Given that resources are limited, leaders need to remove the distractions that create these dilemmas.

Which side of the continuum are you on below? Why is it so hard to create “competitive distinction?”

1: Deploying Sales Strategies

Using Isolated Sales Tactics  Linking Tactics to sales strategies

This is the capacity to link sales force tactics to your company’s sales strategy in a way that advances your competitive position. Only by understanding these strategic links can competitive moves and resources be focused to confuse competitors and differentiate your value position.

Essential Questions:

- What are the key competitor’s value vulnerabilities?
- What resources must be used to baffle or counter the competitors’ actions?
- What products and services can be used to create a better value strategy?

2: Discovering & Delivering Value

Using Generic Knowledge  Linking Specific Value

This is the capacity to link account sales with a key influencers’ business, financial, technical and personal values. It includes how well sales teams show specific evidence to customers that their values are understood in a *quantifiable way*.

Essential Questions

- What impact do your competitive strategies have on people development, product development, market share, etc?
- How well do sales people, marketing materials and support personnel continue to emphasize value delivery in customer interactions?
- How do you change the behavior of those unable to articulate and demonstrate value in the customer’s world?

3: Competing:

Vulnerable ←————→ Differentiated

This is the capacity to expose competitors' vulnerabilities *and create* opportunities to bring value that isn't in a competitor's arsenal.

Essential Questions

- How well does value discovery and delivery create differentiation opportunities?
- How can sales and marketing build better differentiation?
- What different differentiators are used for influencers, e.g. Purchasing Manager, Project Engineer or General Manager?

4: Integrating Products & Application

Fragmented ←————→ Integrated

This is the capacity to leverage existing products, new products and customer preferred applications in a way that leads to the development of coherent value-based product packages. These "packages" establish a distinct brand image and stimulate on-going relationships and customer loyalty over-time.

Essential Questions:

- How much more loyalty could be built if products were packaged in a value based way?
- What thought goes into developing products/service that can be linked to sales strengths and processes?
- What does the customer want you to develop and apply?

5: Selling - Activities & Competencies

Diffused ←————→ Focused

This is the extent to how well people describe: how and why a sale is pursued; where resources are dedicated; what values are most frequently addressed; how progress is measured; what competitive strategies are used, and what factors create wins.

Essential Questions:

- What competencies do your people need to drive new business?
- How are the competencies different when getting repeat business?
- Who creates opportunities, who customizes the sales approach, who supports the sale, and who delivers "the good?"

6: Repeating Success

None Identified ←————→ Identified and Systemic

This is identifying what works and what distracts from sales success; the “sales language” used to describe sales, customer conditions, steps and actions; and a “coaching cascade” - executives to sales managers - that embeds success.

Essential Questions:

- Do you reward those who replicate success and coach those who don't?
- What “leading indicators” will replace “lagging indicators” in measuring sales progress?
- How will you implant a “language of the leaders” in your sales and support organizations?

7: Managing Customer Demand

Respond ←————→ Create

This is the extent in which you select opportunities which drive and create demand. This is about educating customers to “want to see” your exciting capabilities. This focus allows innovation without diffusion of resources.

Essential Questions

- How will you customize solutions to align with customer needs?
- How will you qualify opportunities that move you closer to creating demand?
- How will you create a select group of customers that can advance your image?

Where do you go from here? Two Themes

These dilemmas are linked and critical in achieving competitive success. Improving one requires coordination of others. You can start by addressing two themes.

- **Measurement:** Common measurement protocols are needed for improvement. Getting contracts is only one measure. You need two measurements sets - front-view and rear-view measures.
- **Language:** Success needs to be translated into what different things people need to do. Managers need to coach for and evidence success.

Where can you begin?

Ask customers, salespeople, managers - **essential questions**. Map your position for each dilemma. Know where you are. Gain your leadership's commitment to base plans on images like:

- **Paint the Train** - Try new things, learn from them, and move forward with a “brush in hand.” View planning and implementation as the same action.
- **Do Different Things** - Focus on “doing different things.” If you always do what you've always done, you will always get what you always got.
- **Replicate** - Identify, coach and manage things that can be duplicated and replicated. Don't hold up the “lone-wolf” as an example. Don't say, “Just do it”. Find what can be practiced, shared, and measured.

Competitively speaking, predictability occurs when you keep doing what your competitor expects. Perhaps expecting different things will lead your organization to do different things.