

The #1 Way to Enable Greater Market Success: Messaging Breakthrough Accelerates Each Phase of the Technology Adoption Life Cycle

By Michael Cannon

A great go-to-market strategy, poorly executed, is destined to fall short of expected results.

Geoffrey Moore's book, *Crossing the Chasm*, is one of the best strategy books ever on how to market and sell both disruptive and continuous innovation via the Technology Adoption Life Cycle ([TALC](#)). There is no doubt that those who implement Moore's concepts and frameworks are much more successful. There is also a lot of agreement that a great strategy is necessary but not sufficient.

One of the biggest points of execution failure when launching a new product is Marketing's inability to successfully enable Sales (inside, outside, channel) to have an effective conversation with potential customers. Marketing has not figured out how to provide Sales with effective messaging, collateral, sales tools, and sales support training -- vital tools that Sales must have in order to successfully persuade a prospective customer to buy.

One of the biggest points of execution failure when launching a new product is Marketing's inability to successfully enable Sales (inside, outside, channel) to have an effective conversation with potential customers.

You can see this failure point exposed year after year in [market research studies](#) like these:

- "58% of a vendor's marketing content is not relevant to potential buyers and reduces the vendor's chance of closing a sale by 45%." -- IT Buyer Survey, International Data Group, 2008
- "Over 65% of sales leaders feel they're losing business because they don't have a compelling value proposition." -- Miller Heiman, Sales Best Practice Study, 2006
- "As much as 40% of a sales rep's time is spent creating presentations, customizing messaging and preparing for pitches." -- CMO Council Study, 2004
- "80 to 90% of marketing collateral is considered useless by sales." -- Proceedings of the Customer Message Management Forums, published by the American Marketing Association (2002 and 2003)

In addition to developing a great go-to-market strategy and a great product, Marketing must provide Sales, and customers, with more effective messaging and tools that are in alignment with the key teachings contained in the TALC.

One of the TALC's major contributions is that it identifies specific market dynamics that must be addressed in order to achieve market success. They are:

Technology Adoption Life Cycle Overview

Market Phases	 Early Market	 Bowling Alley	 Tornado	 Main Street
Buyer Types	Visionaries	Early Pragmatists	Late Pragmatists	Conservatives
Buyer's Compelling Reason for Buying, a.k.a. Messaging Theme	Gain a competitive advantage	Fix a broken business process	Adopt the right solution: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gorilla – lowest risk • Chimp – best of breed • Monkey – best value 	The best solution for maintaining and leveraging your investment

© 2009 Chasm Institute LLC. All rights in all media reserved

These market dynamics are crucial to understand in order to develop a successful go-to-market plan. Of particular importance, the TALC provides a solid indication of the key messaging themes needed in order to translate these strategic insights into greater market success.

To complete the translation from high-level messaging themes to highly effective messaging and tools, we need a breakthrough in the way we think about customer messaging. We need a better way to identify the [categories and types of messaging that Marketing must create](#) and integrate into the collateral, sales tools, and training provided to Sales.

Typical Customer Messaging Map

	Message Categories	Distance to Customer	Message Types	Primary Questions to Answer	Message Goals
Lesser Influence on Customer Buying Decision ↑ GAP ↓ Greater Influence on Customer Buying Decision	Corporate Messaging (Mostly Descriptive)	30,000 feet	Brand Company	What does the company stand for? What products, services, and benefits does the company offer to whom?	Trust-Relationships Interest
	Market Messaging (Mostly Descriptive)	20,000 feet	Industry, Market, Market Segment	What solutions (products and services) and value do you offer?	Distinctions
	Product Messaging (Mostly Descriptive)	10,000 feet	Product Positioning Statement	How do target customers distinguish the offering from other company offerings and all primary competitors?	Distinctions
			Product Overview Demand Generation	What does this offering do and include, how does it work and what are the key benefits? Why should I consider your offering?	Distinctions Leads
	Sales Messaging (Mostly Persuasive)	10 feet	Business Creation	Why should I change-out my current solution for a new solution?	Opportunities
Competitive Meeting Creation			Why should I buy the solution from your company rather than from the competition? Why should I meet with you?	Orders Meetings	
Sales Conversation (Highly Persuasive)	3 feet	Persuasive Conversation	"Why consider?", "Why meet?", "Why change-out?", and "Why buy from you?" for all opportunities	Create Consideration / Meetings, Opportunities, and Orders	



© 2009-2010 Silver Bullet Group, Inc. All rights reserved.

Marketing must close the sales messaging gap in order to eliminate one of the biggest points of execution failure and achieve greater market success.

As the map above indicates, the primary reason Marketing is not successful in enabling Sales to have an effective conversation with potential customers is that the marketing team does not create sales messaging. Instead, it creates corporate, market, and product messaging, and then it tries unsuccessfully to use these categories of messaging to enable the sales conversation. The map makes it obvious why the current approach does not work. The messaging and the tools into which the messaging is integrated are not in alignment with the types of real-world questions potential customers are asking Sales -- and Marketing, for that matter -- to answer. Marketing must close the sales messaging gap in order to eliminate one of the biggest points of execution failure and to achieve greater market success.

Before we align sales messaging with the TALC, let's take a closer look at the business creation and competitive sales messaging types. Business creation messaging is mandatory in the early stages of the life cycle, when the most important customer question is, "Why should I change-out my current solution for a new solution?". The answer to this question has little to do with your company, per se. The primary goal of business creation sales messaging is to create *demand* for the product or service category by stating a *compelling reason to change*, convincing buyers that there is great value (Business Case) to be gained in changing from their current solution to a new or better solution.

The primary goal of business creation sales messaging is to create demand by stating a compelling reason to change.

Competitive messaging is mandatory in the late-market stage of the life cycle, when market demand is more established. The most important customer question then shifts to, “Why should I buy the solution from *your* company rather than the competition?”. The answer to this question must focus on competitive differentiation. The primary goal of competitive sales messaging is to create orders for your company, convincing buyers that your product is their best choice.

Now let’s look at how these two sales messaging types align with, and support, the TALC.

Sales Messaging Alignment to Technology Adoption Life Cycle

Market Phases	 Early Market	 Bowling Alley	 Tornado	 Main Street
Buyer Types	Visionaries	Early Pragmatists	Late Pragmatists	Conservatives
Sales Messaging Types/ Priority	1) Business Creation	1) Business Creation	1) Competitive 2) Business Creation	1) Competitive

© 2009 Chasm Institute LLC and Silver Bullet Group, Inc. All rights in all media reserved.

In the Early Market and Bowling Alley phases, it’s all about business creation sales messaging. The primary reason the buyer is going to spend money, time, and resources to change is that it will help him or her gain a competitive advantage or because it will help fix a broken business process. These are the two high-level business case themes for change.

In a Tornado market, many buyers have decided to change, but some have not. This means that you need both types of sales messaging: highly differentiated competitive sales messaging to get orders from those buyers who are ready to change and business creation sales messaging to get more of the fence-sitters to agree to change. From a competitive messaging perspective, key themes are lowest-risk, best-of-breed, or best value.

On Main Street, it’s all about competitive sales messaging. Your company must find a meaningful way to differentiate itself as being able to provide the best whole-product solution.

The role sales messaging plays is to help tune these high-level TALC messaging themes into highly persuasive reasons for the potential customer to spend money -- and to spend it with your company. The more persuasive the reasons, the greater your market success. It’s that simple.

“Our win rate increased by 30% and the time we spend supporting the field reduced by around 50% for the product family I support.” -- Nigel Mott, Product Sales Manager, Agilent Technologies, Inc.

As the quote above indicates, making this one change -- creating TALC-aligned sales messaging, and then integrating the sales messaging into the collateral, sales tools, sales training, etc., delivered to Sales and, ultimately, to customers -- enables Sales and Marketing to increase their win rates by 15-20% or more. Now that’s greater market success.

Recommended Resources to Improve Sales and Marketing Effectiveness

- Read free articles about sales messaging at SBG’s [Resources Center](http://www.silverbulletgroup.com/resources-center) at www.silverbulletgroup.com
 - Learn a methodology for implementing great sales messaging with the 10-page eBriefing, [The Best Way to Increase Your Sales](#)
 - Learn more about using the TALC model to enable greater market success at www.chasminstitute.com and www.chasmforum.com

Michael Cannon is an internationally renowned sales and marketing effectiveness expert and best-selling author on topics related to sales messaging and sales planning. For more information, visit www.silverbulletgroup.com or call 925-930-9436.