Business Development MARKETERS
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e-Book Series - ***Sales materials for B2B sales reps.***

The Sell Sheet

Using infographics in face to face meetings

Author:

Scott Jorgens, Business Development Marketers Group (BD Marketers)

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Introduction

In this e-Book we talk about the Sell Sheet, a single-page sales tool with one or two prominent infographics, diagrams or charts. The Sell Sheet may be a printed 8.5x11 letter-size page or may be printed as a larger 'placemat' tabloid-size 11x17 spread. Regardless of the size or whether the Sell Sheet is single or double sided, the goal is to create a piece of sales collateral that is flexible enough to support and enable a variety of stories, analogies and sales conversations on the part of your business-to-business (B2B) sales professionals.

A Sell Sheet is NOT a brochure, as its purpose is to be used in face to face meetings and as part of a broader sales process (series of discussions), not preceding the sales process as a stand-alone piece of marketing collateral used for blind or mildly targeted lead generation campaigns.

Who should read this e-Book

If you are reading this e-Book, odds are you were interested in the title and may have already come across the Business Development Marketers Group (BD Marketers) website **http://www.BDMarketers.com** and are thus interested in increasing the success of your B2B sales. That being said, the purpose and use of Sell Sheets is best applied to moderate and complex B2B sales situations requiring face to face or other one-on-one sales discussions.

Your organization may be selling a product with multiple options, configurations and services tied to it, or you may be selling consulting services, which by their very nature require the sale of trust, competence and creativity. Each of these require your sales professionals to streamline and simplify their conversations into small, digestible bites of knowledge, while at the same time bringing tangibility to potentially intangible concepts and services.

If you're looking to increase the success of your B2B sales professionals by supporting them with the tools they need, then this e-Book is for you.

Why we are passionate about Sell Sheets

Through years in B2B sales and working with a broad array of sales professionals, BD Marketers and its founder Scott Jorgens have found, time and time again, that top B2B sales reps are able to distill complex and variable data into short easy to digest concepts and conversations. When developed for the specific purpose of supporting direct sales efforts, the use of Sell Sheets with infographics or other diagrams can greatly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of your B2B sales professionals.

The success in using a Sell Sheet for B2B sales is due to its flexibility in supporting a variety of custom tailored sales conversations, because at the end of the day: **"Sales people exist to sell what doesn't easily sell itself"**.

The flexibility inherent in a Sell Sheet is one of the benefits that differentiate it from direct mail and marketing brochures, which sales reps typically leave back at the office; Why? Because such brochures often lack credibility and relevance, and simply don't work for face to face meetings. Sell Sheets, by contrast, can offer the flexibility to allow your sales professionals to custom tailor their conversations around the Sell Sheet, focusing on only the points relevant to their customer's specific business situation, context and level of understanding.

Earlier in his career, while selling consulting services as a Business Development Manager at IBM, Scott saw firsthand, a new trend emerge in B2B sales to combat what periodically became extremely long sales presentations filled with reams of thought leadership and intellectual capital, in short, "death by PowerPoint". As the proverbial pendulum swung in the opposite direction, the new trend was coined "going deck-less". This didn't mean going to a meeting unprepared or with nothing at all; what emerged was printing two or three key slides of the larger deck and using them as discussion points. These slides were, in fact, infographics that talked about a key point of view, or process, or represented a key summary chart outlining the findings of a recent study.

It was quickly discovered that executive meetings could be held using only one or two simple Sell Sheets, or sometimes none at all, and rather hand-drawing a simple diagram on a piece of paper or whiteboard to serve as the foundation for the conversation, centered around a piece of thought-leadership, new concept or point of view.

Pulling from adult learning theory, adults learn new concepts in a variety of ways. The three main learning styles are visual, auditory (hearing) and tactile-kinesthetic (touch, movement, trying for themselves). In a sales meeting, typically the majority of the discussions are verbal, thus the prospects are forced to leverage only their auditory learning abilities; however, studies have shown that up to 65 percent of the population consists of visual learners (those who prefer visual learning slightly more than other styles), thus using Sell Sheets with prominent infographics satisfies this dominant learning style in an efficient and effective manner.

What makes a good Sell Sheet

It is often said that “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder”. Similarly, the success of a good Sell Sheet is RELEVANCE, as in whether your targeted client sees the Sell Sheet and your sales professional’s storyline and business context as RELEVANT to their interests and needs. Although the sales conversation may be individualized to each client, the Sell Sheet itself is a static piece of sales collateral and should be broad and flexible enough that it can be used in a number of different sales situations. The following are some high level guidance points for creating Sell Sheets and using infographics for face to face meetings.

Flexibility

We truly believe that the Sell Sheet is an enabler and supports your sales professionals in their sales discussions; whether they are strategic, reactive, or if the rep is just ‘winging-it’, the Sell Sheet should help to bring clarity and attention to the topic at hand. A good Sell Sheet should also be able to support multiple discussion points and provide the sales professional with the ability to cover the topic in 60 seconds or less, or expand into a variety of relevant “deeper dives” on the subject, allowing the sales discussion to expand to 5, 10 or even 60 minutes based on the level of client interest and engagement.

Clarity

A key component of a Sell Sheet and something that should be central to its design is incorporating one or two prominent infographics, diagrams or charts. “A picture is worth a thousand words” and these infographics are one of the central purposes of creating the Sell Sheet in support of face to face meetings. Infographics support your sales professional’s ability to custom tailor their educational messages, providing additional context, proof-points and analogies to further increase the relevance and efficiency of their sales discussions. In addition to the infographic, the Sell Sheet should follow a clear flow of logic from beginning to end, and if warranted, include a subtle pre-amble and context to complement the storyline so that your clients can review the Sell Sheet at a later date and recall the central theme and message. The infographic itself should also be designed to bring clarity, not confusion, to the discussion. A key element to consider within the infographic is whether it is best read left-to-right, top-down, or bottom-up. Often a numbering scheme or strategic use of arrows or shading can help to draw the reader’s eye in a logical manner.

Professional Design

A logical layout and design can also greatly improve the clarity of the message. The use of different highlighting, boxes or shading can help to either separate or link different concepts or storylines. The graphics and layout need to be at an appropriate level of quality in order to portray a high level of professionalism. Of critical importance, is to use a design and layout that positions the Sell Sheet as a key concept, illustration, or belief that is engrained within the organization, thus, why it was created as a Sell Sheet, and not something that the sales rep just whipped up the night before. In certain situations, commercial printing on thick glossy paper can add to the professional appeal (respect and credibility) of the Sell Sheet.

Things to avoid

There are a number of things to avoid when making a Sell Sheet. Any one of these can instantly reduce the credibility of your Sell Sheet, your sales professional, or even your company down to zero. Such evils include:

- **Spelling mistakes** – It goes without saying, if you don't have the attention to detail for your internal projects, who is to say, that you won't do sloppy work for your clients.
- **Too many acronyms** – Which pose a risk of distracting or confusing your clients. Clients don't like feeling stupid.
- **Industry pet-peeves** – Unless you are purposefully launching a shock-and-awe campaign and want to knock people off their seats; to be seen as an insider, be sure to avoid generalizations about the industry, highly controversial subjects or jokes at the expense of your client or their profession. At minimum, you risk distracting from your core sales message and spending valuable time defending your misstep. At the worst, you risk insulting your client and having them dismiss your sales professional's attempt to connect with them.
- **Misrepresentations** – Any blatant misrepresentations, competitive slander, or overzealous claims will cause you to lose credibility and trust. If the misrepresentations don't bite you now, they may come back to haunt you later.
- **Irrelevant information** – Too much irrelevant information greatly reduces the authenticity of the Sell Sheet and related sales discussion. For example, long-winded 'about us' type information is not relevant as the client should already know who the company is based on the sales professional's discussions.

In summary, a good Sell Sheet is designed with a specific purpose in mind and should be seen as a professional, credible and authentic enabler to support the sales process. It is important to note that Sell Sheets are used within a specific sales context, in conjunction with face to face meetings and discussions hosted by your sales professional. Thus by stripping out much of the unnecessary and irrelevant information, the Sell Sheet gains relevance and credibility, and ultimately helps to move the sale forward by helping to educate and inspire your prospective customers.

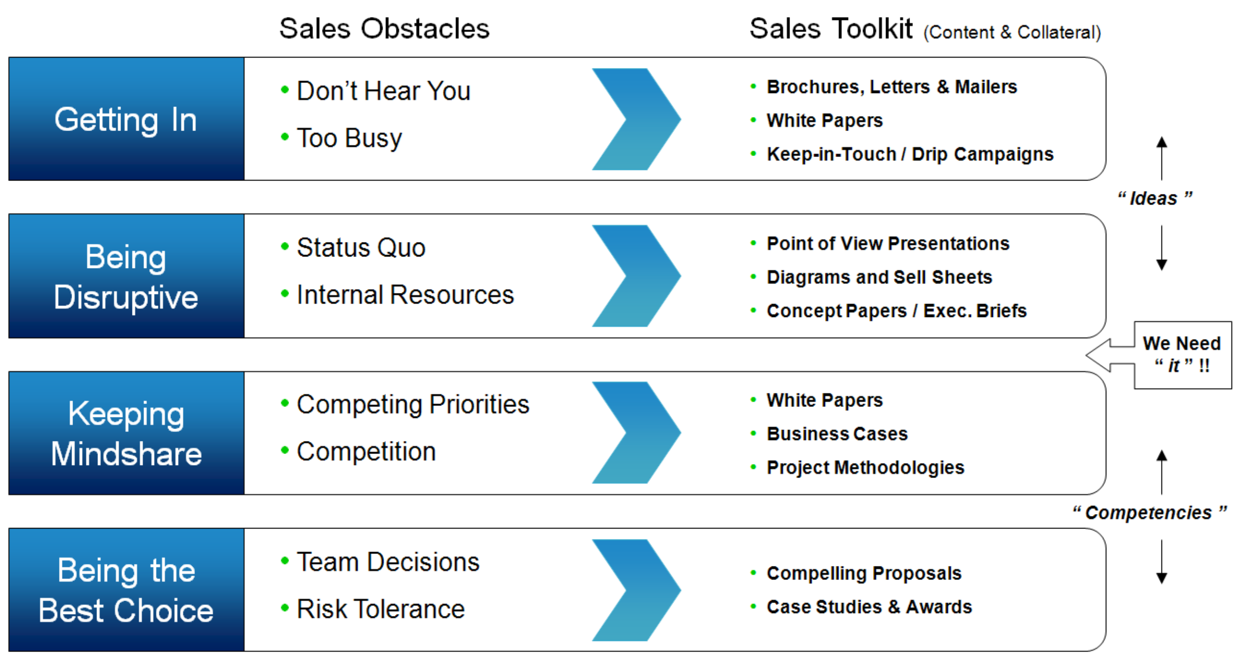
Our sales vision

At BD Marketers, we believe that the key to success in B2B sales is finding unique ways to create and communicate compelling stories at various stages of a sales cycle. Based on our experience, the following is our view of the four stages that are common to most B2B sales cycles (and B2B sales methodologies).

Sales and business relationships are a fluid process and are continually being evaluated; similar to swimming in the ocean, you are either expending energy to move forward or taking a break by treading water; or you are expending no energy at all and may float for a while before you start to sink. Continuing with this analogy, at each stage within our 4-stage sales cycle, you are either moving forward, treading water, or you risk sinking and starting the sale over again.

The following is a short overview of our 4-stage sales cycle. Look for a future e-Book as part of our "Sales materials for B2B sales reps" series which focuses specifically on the links between the sales cycle and buying cycle, and arming your sales professionals with modern-day Sales Toolkits.

BD Marketers 4-stage sales cycle



Reading the above Infographic

The various sections within the above Infographic help it to support a variety of storylines. Starting at the left, working from the top-down, are the four stages of the sales cycle. The middle column provides a list of two of the many sales obstacles that are faced during each stage; although every sales situation is slightly different, the flexibility of the Infographic allows your sales professionals to add additional points and examples based on your client's interest. The next column talks about the types of content and collateral that can be used to support stories, analogies and to showcase relevant proof-points at various stages of the sales cycle.

Finally, at the far right is a high level view from the customer's buying perspective (re: B2B Buying Cycle) focusing on their receptiveness to hearing new ideas vs. their evaluation of your competencies. Although BD Marketers has full point of view (future e-Book) on the B2B Buying Cycle, for the purposes of this e-Book, let's consider the B2B buying cycle to have three main components:

1) The point in time when your customer generally knows what they need, ("We Need It !!")

2) The time prior to ("We Need It !!"), where your team is educating and inspiring your client to take action; what we've outlined as the sharing of new 'ideas', and

3) The time after ("We Need It !!"), where you switch gears and focus on empowering your client and their decision making team with the proof points needed to showcase your 'competencies', defend against competitors, and ultimately help your client to choose you, your products and your services as the best fit for their needs.

A deeper dive into the 4-stage sales cycle

1 – Getting In

Within today's "time-strapped, busy with back-to-back meetings" market, prospects are often too busy to hear sales pitches based on fluffy promises, or offering a free lunch. The goal here is to secure the meeting with a qualified and creditable decision maker or key influencer. This step may involve short conversations by phone, by e-mail or in person at tradeshows, networking events or other chance encounters.

2 – Being Disruptive

Yes, "Disruptive" is a strong term, but we've chosen it specifically to highlight the need to challenge the status quo. This is a fundamental aspect of complex B2B sales, where your sales professionals are not simply taking orders, but are focused on uncovering latent client needs, positioning unique and differentiated benefits and ultimately selling a new idea, concept and vision for a brighter future. A future which includes: your products, your services, and yields immense value to your clients. If it doesn't, then what incentives do your clients have to purchase?

3 – Keeping Mindshare

Keeping mindshare presumes that you have been able to gain some mindshare in the first place. This phase may be better thought as earning and keeping mindshare. Think back to our swimming in the ocean analogy, this phase is often the time when you take a little break and tread water for a while, as your client's internal wheels of bureaucracy start to turn behind the scenes. At this point in the sales cycle you may have a potential sponsor who is thrilled with the vision for the future that you have jointly created, but now your sales professionals need to confront a new series of sales obstacles, many of which were always there, but are now bubbling to the surface and need to be addressed. With the longer sales cycles seen within B2B markets, this stage of the sales cycle often involves a delicate balance of being reactive in working to your client's schedule and slow pace of decision making, and being proactive in your efforts to follow up, shorten the sales cycle, and facilitate their decision making process.

4 – Being the Best Choice

This seems like a logical goal, but with complex sales come complex decisions, where teams of key influencers and decision makers may come in and out of the picture. Additionally, by this time, evaluation criteria are being reviewed and picked through with a fine tooth comb. Now is the time for your final proposal, or a revised proposal, if your team issued a proposal earlier but has discovered additional customer requirements which should be addressed. This is also the time that you need to have a renewed focus on building trust and confidence and reducing your client's perception of risk.

When to use a Sell Sheet

Sell Sheets are flexible sales tools and are best used to support educating and inspiring a client by walking them through an analogy, story, concept, or specific point of view. In short, they are used to sell ideas. As part of a broader Sales Toolkit, Sell Sheets are best used earlier in the sales cycle when your sales professional's focus is on selling ideas rather than outlining competencies.

Using the Sell Sheet to support "Being Disruptive"

As outlined previously, "Sales people exist to sell what doesn't easily sell itself". Rather than just order taking, the notion of being disruptive is to challenge the status quo. Odds are your clients were doing ok before you came along, but there was something your sales professional said, something they did, or a specific need that arose that encouraged their prospect to make a purchase.

To uncover, qualify, educate, and inspire your clients to change from their status quo, a Sell Sheet can support your sales professional in showcasing your company's unique point of view, potentially differentiating your point of view, from competing points of view, from the average, from your client's current state, or just more clearly articulating it better than others. The Sell Sheet and related business discussions present an opportunity to change perceptions, influence decision criteria and enable your sales professionals to further develop rapport, trust and confidence in their ability to act as trusted business advisors.

Using the Sell Sheet to support "Getting In"

As mentioned, within today's "time-strapped, busy with back-to-back meetings" market, prospects are often too busy to hear sales pitches based on fluffy promises or offers of a free lunch. Thus, to some extent, your initial contact with your prospect may need to be provocative or disruptive enough to get their attention and prove that your sales professional will not show up and waste their time for an hour talking about features and benefits that are not relevant to their needs.

On a side note, if a benefit is not relevant to your client's needs, is it really any benefit to them?

As a precursor to your client setting aside time for a more formal meeting, a Sell Sheet may be sent ahead of time to bait the client with the context of setting up a call to discuss the concepts further. Similarly, the Sell Sheet can support short, impromptu conversations at tradeshows, conferences and networking events. Leveraging the flexibility of the Sell Sheet, your sales professionals can quickly cover the high-level points, and take a deeper dive on a variety of tangents based on their evaluation of their client's areas of interest.

In the Appendix, we have included an example of a BD Marketers' Sell Sheet used by our team earlier this year to support our sales efforts at a local networking event. In this Sell Sheet we modified one of our standard Sell Sheets and focused primarily on the infographic by removing the pre-amble and replacing the text with a copy of Scott's business card and a quote. The strategy behind this modification was to not only streamline and simplify the visual appeal of the page, but to also align with the practice of exchanging business cards at networking functions.

How to get started in creating your own Sell Sheet

Getting started is fairly straightforward and is a process that we can take our clients through in one or two short meetings. With the concept of what a Sell Sheet is, and what it isn't, we typically use an iterative three-step process performing a quick analysis of:

1) Where in the sales cycle the Sell Sheet can yield the greatest benefits,
2) Where the clients are in their respective buying cycle, and
3) A key infographic, process map or diagram that supports an interesting point of view, process or unique offering worth educating your clients on.

The iterative nature of narrowing-in on the content, design and subject matter of the Sell Sheet is based on continually taking a deeper dive into the sales cycle (proactive sales messages) and the buying cycle (messages relevant to the buyer) combined with your intellectual capital and creative ideas to support your sales professional's face to face meetings.

When looking at the buying cycle, your efforts to anticipate what your clients consider relevant can be characterized as "trying to get into their heads", understanding what they care about, their day-to-day context, how they plan, how they make decisions and overall what matters to them. The development of such buyer profiles can start with an attempt to answer "why not". Most ideas have many reasons why they might fail; thinking through the risks, flaws, and alternate options ahead of time can often yield a compelling storyline, diagram and flow for a Sell-Sheet-enhanced sales discussion.

The development of buyer profiles may also include different buyer segmentations by level of decision making authority, degree of subject matter expertise, and their alignment to broader performance objectives and goals such as, increased sales, reduced costs or operational efficiencies.

From a sales cycle perspective and specifically from your sales professional's perspective, your Sell Sheet should be designed to support two inter-related storylines: the story within the Sell Sheet, and the broader story and business context told by your sales professional. Again, your sales professionals and their sales processes should be the focal point, the Sell Sheet being an enabler, supporting their business discussions. Based on this concept, certain relevant information can be purposefully left off the Sell Sheet so that your sales professional has additional relevant points to make, further showcasing their passion, excitement and enthusiasm for your client's success.

Launching the Sell Sheet with your team

B2B sales is much like the game of chess, where you try to anticipate every move, back and forth, question and answer, that is played-out during the sales cycle. Thus, when launching your Sell Sheet and infographic, you should outline the vision and purpose of the Sell Sheet and share some of the research (buyer profiles) that you conducted in order to seed the various types of conversations and sales situations (context) for which the Sell Sheet will be useful in helping to educate and inspire your clients with relevant and engaging storylines.

If the use of Sell Sheets and infographics is new to your sales team, then it may be worth showcasing the flexibility in storytelling while using the Sell Sheet. As discussed, the same infographic and Sell Sheet can be used to host sales conversations ranging from a minute to an hour or more. For larger sales organizations a short candid YouTube-style video of two or three different sales presentations / pitches / engaged discussions can be recorded and shown to your team to further showcase the flexibility, creativity and potential that the Sell Sheets provide.

As with all launches, incorporating a feedback-loop to promote and support the continuous improvement and refinement of your B2B marketing materials based on feedback from the field is often a good investment. If there is hesitation on setting up a larger launch, a soft launch with a select few reps may be a logical stepping stone to test the waters and incorporate any last minute enhancements based on feedback from the field.

We hope this e-Book will turn out to be an invaluable resource for you and your team. We look forward to your feedback and wish you all the best in your sales endeavors.

Best regards,

Scott Jorgens

About the Author

Business Development Marketers Group (BD Marketers) was founded by Scott Jorgens, who holds an MBA in Marketing from Wilfrid Laurier University, a business degree in Finance and a wealth of experience in sales, marketing and business development for a range of small, medium and large technology-based software and consulting firms, including IBM Global Business Services.

Located in Markham, Ontario, Canada, BD Marketers is a team of highly qualified management consultants, professional writers, and graphic designers. They work with clients by providing an outside perspective for the enhancement and development of 'sales tools' to complement current B2B business development strategies, marketing content and sales collateral.

Our mission

BD Marketers will:

Offer a pragmatic approach to the creation of business development marketing materials;

Provide thought leadership, creativity and professional advice;

Increase the sales success for our B2B clients.

Contact us

Thank you for your interest in our "Sales materials for B2B sales reps." series - The Sell Sheet, using infographics in face to face meetings.

To be added to our mailing list, or if you need assistance in further enhancing your B2B sales materials we can be reached via the following channels.

Phone: +1-416-219-4523

e-mail: marketing@bdmarketers.com

Mail: Business Development Marketers Group
7030 Woodbine Avenue, Suite 500
Markham, Ontario, Canada
L3R 6G2

Website: http://www.bdmarketers.com

Appendix – Sample Sell Sheet

The following is a sell sheet that our team used for networking at an event hosted by local technology group. Note the large infographic and arrows to illustrate the flow of logic, and the business card and quotes to help clients recall the short discussion.