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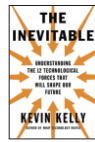
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IN THIS ISSUE:

Vintage



How to Buy/Sell
Professional Services
-By Warren J. Wittreich
Harvard Business Review
March–April 1966



Must Read

The 12 Technological
Forces that will Shape
our Future



Are you a future
proof Salesperson?

Vintage



How to Buy/Sell Professional Services

By Warren J. Wittreich

HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW March–April 1966

In this article I have set forth three key concepts that are fundamental to buying and selling professional or advisory services. The validity of these three concepts leads to three very simple, yet powerful and effective, rules for the purchaser of professional services. By the same token, these become major considerations for the seller of professional services.

First, it should be recognized that the ultimate goal of considering what a professional service organization has to offer is to bring about a degree of increased certainty for the client in an area where uncertainty is felt. If this objective is not held out as a goal, then whether the purchase of the service makes any sense at all should be questioned seriously. **Sellers of services who recognize the need to identify and reduce uncertainty have taken a major step toward winning a client.**

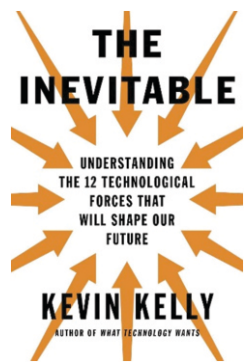
Second, when management is considering the purchase of a professional service, it should insist that the representative of any professional service firm be able to address himself directly to a substantive problem. Similarly, these representatives should seek information from prospective clients on what the latter's substantive problems are. It makes little sense to dissipate precious management time listening to a lot of extrinsic selling when **the acid test of the representative's competence is the degree to which he can talk to the issues of relevance.** The fact that there is no better test of his right to represent a professional service firm and to take up valuable management time means in turn that management should not be reluctant to present a concrete problem to the representative.

Third, management should insist on dealing directly with individuals of true professional competence. The professional salesman may be fine and dandy for tangible goods, but he has little or no place in the selling of professional services. He can only function as a middleman. **Only by insisting that the people you are talking to can render a service to you as well as sell it, can you be assured that what you are buying will be of genuine value and use.**

There are some few companies today that buy and use professional advisory services in a far different manner from the great majority of corporate clients. These companies recognize that **in an era when the usual sources of competitive advantage (production, distribution, sales) have become blurred, skillful employment of professional or advisory services can constitute a major competitive edge.** On this basis, such services can make a significant contribution to the way the business is run and its net results as they show up in the annual statement.

The full article is [here](#)

Must Read



Blurbs do not define books. There are exceptions. The Inevitable is one.

"It's 2046. You don't own a car, or much of anything else, paying instead to subscribe to items as you need them. Virtual reality is as common place as cell phones. You talk to your devices with a common set of hand gestures. Practically all surfaces have become screens, and each screen watches you back. Every aspect of your daily life is tracked by you or someone else. Advertisers pay you to watch their ads. Robots and AI took over your old jobs and created new ones for you, doing work you could not have imagined back in 2016".

The book lives up to the promise of that riveting intro, as it shows the reader how the coming changes would be consequences of the 12 technological forces that are already in motion.

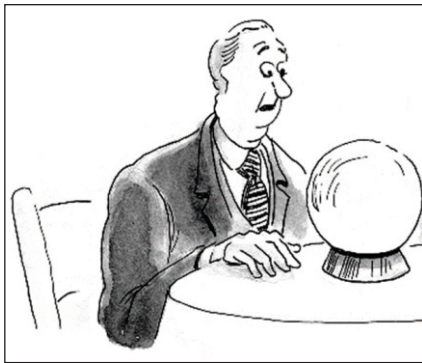
Wikipedia summarizes these forces as follows:

1. **Becoming:** Moving from fixed products to always upgrading services and subscriptions
2. **Cognifying:** Making everything much smarter using cheap powerful AI that we get from the cloud
3. **Flowing:** Depending on unstoppable streams in real-time for everything
4. **Screening:** Turning all surfaces into screens
5. **Accessing:** Shifting society from one where we own assets, to one where instead we will have access to services at all times.
6. **Sharing:** Collaboration at mass-scale. Kelly writes, "On my imaginary Sharing Meter Index we are still at 2 out of 10."
7. **Filtering:** Harnessing intense personalization in order to anticipate our desires
8. **Remixing:** Unbundling existing products into their most primitive parts and then recombining in all possible ways
9. **Interacting:** Immersing ourselves inside our computers to maximize engagement
10. **Tracking:** Employing total surveillance for the benefit of citizens and consumers
11. **Questioning:** Promoting good questions being far more valuable than good answers
12. **Beginning:** Constructing a planetary system connecting all humans and machines into a global matrix

The way business is done, buying, selling and exchange of value will all be inevitably impacted by these forces.

This book is a must read if you want to do some meaningful crystal gazing. Kevin Kelly's writing has the diligent rigor of an analyst, the sweeping width of a philosopher and the lyrical quality of a poet. Consider this excerpt in the context of the 2 trillion questions that humans ask the internet every year: "Answers become cheap and questions become valuable – the inverse of the situation now. Pablo Picasso brilliantly anticipated this inversion in 1964 when he told the writer William Fitfield, 'Computers are useless. They only give you answers'. So at the end of the day, a world of supersmart ubiquitous answers encourages a quest for the perfect question". Kelly observes "A good question may be the last job a machine will learn to do. A good question is what humans are for". And salespeople are for more.





Are you a future proof Salesperson?

You hear it all the time. Buyers are more informed and self-sufficient than ever before. They do all the research about a product or service and can even buy online if the option is available. So where does this leave the sales professional of today?

Well, good news and some not so good news. Andy Hoar, principal analyst at Forrester Research quoted in Hub Spot estimates **that one million jobs out of the 4.5 million B2B sales people will be net displaced by 2020.**

The comforting news however is that not all B2B salespeople will be impacted equally. Here is a list of the archetypes in terms of impact

Archetype of Salesperson	Nature of Work		Impact
	Buyer Dynamic	Product/Service type	
Order takers	Non complex	Non complex	These salespeople stand to be displaced by self-service portals
Navigators	Complex	Non complex	Navigators will take a small hit due to the rise of tools and integrations that streamline procurement
Explainers	Non complex	Complex	This is an 'at-risk' group, thanks to sophisticated company websites with things like how-to videos, detailed facts, and user-generated content
Consultants	Complex	Complex	One bright spot. The consultant category is expected to grow instead of shrink. Reason is that consultants can explain abstract concepts; they can solution sell; they can build relationships; they can ask the right questions.

HubSpot makes a painfully candid point - "So while this research doesn't spell the demise of all salespeople, it certainly puts a date on the death of the traditional salesman"

Strategies for future proofing

So what can a sales person do to future proof his job and career? An article on "Are Salespeople becoming obsolete?" carried by Fortune's website suggests helpfully: "Make yourself indispensable". It lists three ways to do this:

- **Learn to love the phone** – The old stereotype of a salesperson 'smiling and dialing' indeed has some basis in fact. Gryphon Networks' data shows that bringing in a new client takes an average of eight phone calls to reach the right person and set up a meeting. By contrast less stellar people give up after two phone calls. "A big lucrative deal will never start with an email. You have to pick up the phone"
- **Model yourself on the top salespeople in your company or industry** – Adopting what works for best practitioners is always a good way to learn any craft, but according to the article it makes even more sense in sales right now. The writing on the wall is unmistakable - "The coming shakeout will probably leave only the most productive salespeople standing, and no one has the time to reinvent the wheel"
- **Get even better at things a website or a robot cannot do** – There's little doubt that the skills employers will need most in the years ahead are all about interacting with other people. Some suggestions from the article - Study how to engage people and how to read things they don't say. How do you defuse an angry client? How do you up-sell or cross-sell and introduce an additional product or service into the conversation?

"The more expertise you can develop in empathy, teamwork and communication, the more future proof you'll be" concludes the article. Sales basics, anyone?

Ravi's Corner

You & Me

Have travelled a long way
Shared secrets, been happy, sad, angry
We always make up
A routine is set
Boring, yet comfortable
Looks don't matter
Feeling good matters
No simmering discontent
Love conquers all
The journey continues
Three is a crowd

Future Speak

There was a wise man in the East whose constant prayer was that he might see today with the eyes of tomorrow.

.Alfred Mercier

I never think of the future. It comes soon enough..**Albert Einstein**

Customers need your help to filter out the noise and find the value..**Zero Time Selling**

Everyone wants to live on top of the mountain but all the happiness and growth occurs when you're climbing it..**Andy Rooney**

The first step toward creating an improved future is developing the ability to envision it..**Tony Dungy**

In the future, it will become increasingly obvious that your competitors are just as clueless as you are..**Scott Adams – Dilbert Future**

Immutable Social Selling Rule 1: Stop pitching and start connecting..**Shane Gibson**

Change on important fronts

The market forces of digitization, mobilization and purchasing governance are going to dramatically change the ways in which buying and selling occur. Less prospecting, fewer client meetings, more structured purchases, disintermediation and levelling the playing field..**Tom Searcy, Founder/Hunt Big Sales**

Fragmented Time

People just don't have time to have lunch and play golf and all those kinds of things that used to go with being a field sales rep. Time is very fragmented. I've got 15 minutes where I'm going to be thinking about the next piece of software or the billing system, or whatever it is that I want to buy, and I want to engage with someone right now..**Nick Hedges, President/CEO of Sales Acceleration Software Co**

TRIBUTE

Alvin Toffler (1928 – 2016), futurologist and author of "Future Shock", a seminal introduction to the impact of change on human civilization, died on June 27, 2016. "Future Shock" sold over 6 million copies, making it the fourth best-selling book in the 1970s. His other famous works include The Third Wave, and Powershift.



Toffler was a wellspring. He inspired us all by predicting the impact of technology on our world and enabling us to think about the future in a unique and courageous way.

As we remember Toffler on his birthday October 3rd, we recall his signature quote “The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn”. Sage counsel for the career savvy, in decades ahead!

Inputs from *Legacy.com* and *Huffington Post*

THE DOG THAT SAID MEOW

One day, a sign appeared in an office window: "Help wanted. Must type 70 words a minute. Must be computer literate. Must be bilingual. An equal opportunity employer."

A dog ambling down the street saw the sign, walked in and applied for the job. The office manager said, "I can't hire a dog for this job." The dog pointed to the line: "An equal opportunity employer."

The manager said, "Take this letter and type it."

The dog went off to the typewriter and returned a minute later with the finished letter perfectly typed.

So the manager said, "Here's a problem. Write a computer program for it and run it." Fifteen minutes later, the dog came back with the correct answer. The manager still wasn't convinced. "But I can't hire a dog for this position," he said. "You've got to be bilingual."

The dog looked up at the manager and replied, "Meow."..**The Executive Speech writer Newsletter**



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