

A Sales Renaissance Requires Change



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BARRY TRAILER
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The Renaissance was a period of significant cultural, artistic, and intellectual development that took place in Europe from the 14th to the 17th century. During this time, major advancements in the arts, science, and philosophy had a profound impact on the way people thought and lived (see below).

RENAISSANCE CREATIONS

HUMANISM: Political Philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli

ART: Leonardo da Vinci with the Mona Lisa and Michelangelo painting Sistine Chapel

SCIENCE: Refracting telescopes, Johannes Kepler works on Planetary Motion; Galileo's telescope discovery of the earth revolving around the sun; Luca Picioli bookkeeping and accounting; Isaac Newton laws of motion; gravity; and calculus.

NAVIGATION: Christopher Columbus voyaging the seas, and returning

SCIENTIFIC METHOD: Sir Francis Bacon outlining a system of process logic based on the René Descartes publication *Discourse on the Method*

MEDICINE: Vesalius' *Trestise on Human Anatomy*; William Harvey discovery of blood circulation to the brain, heart, and body

MUSIC: Printing made wide scale distribution possible

RELIGION: Martin Luther's Reformation gave rise to different Christianity followings

*It's not the strongest
of the species that
survives, nor the most
intelligent. It's the
one most adaptable
to change...*

—DARWIN

are you ready?

As NASA's Artemis 1 mission was launched, circled the moon on a 26-day mission and returned to earth just before year's end, it could be argued this is just another example of technologies and other advancements being part of a second Renaissance (see below).

2ND RENAISSANCE INNOVATION SINCE 1900

AIR CONDITIONING

ARTIFICIAL
INTELLIGENCE

AUTOMOBILES

COMPUTERS

DNA MAPPING

DRIVERLESS CARS

ELECTRIC
REFRIGERATION

MRI

INSULIN

LASERS

NUCLEAR POWER

PENICILLIN

POLIO + OTHER VACCINES

RADAR

RADIO

SMARTPHONES

SPACEFLIGHT

TELEVISION

TRANSISTOR

WIRELESS TECHNOLOGY

XEROGRAPHY

Many of these breakthrough technologies, for example xerography, have already been eclipsed by newer technologies, such as scanned documents, electronic signatures, etc. As innovation initiatives and start-up companies continue to push the envelope of what's now possible, it's easy to become somewhat complacent about the level and rate of change occurring all around us.

Are we in a second Renaissance? If so, what are the implications of this now and going forward?

RENAISSANCE 2.0

Just as there were enormous cultural shifts in the earlier Renaissance—how people worked, how they moved around and communicated, impacts on lifestyle and life expectancy—we see similarly significant impacts with current discoveries and practices.

Quantum computing and gene therapy promise another jump in how, and how long, we live and work. However, these and other promising areas of innovation/exploration are just over the horizon. Many of these new capabilities are here today, already impacting daily lives. Our focus is much simpler and narrower: **SALES**. What changes/innovations have already occurred and how are these impacting sellers today?

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Clearly, the breadth and scope of trade today is vastly different from R1. Companies now compete globally, not just locally or regionally. Goods and services can come from anywhere, not just nearby. Transactions are conducted online, rather than in person. Posters, flyers and letters have been replaced by websites, online communities and social media.

And yet, basic elements remain unchanged, even if the method of establishing these elements has changed. Trust needs to be established and maintained throughout the buy-sell process.

“He’s a man way out there in the blue, riding on a smile and a shoeshine...”

—DEATH OF A SALESMAN

Arthur Miller’s play was written in 1949. What is today’s equivalent of “a handshake and a smile”? What is the equivalent of a firm handshake and solid eye contact, in an increasingly remote, high-speed, Internet-connected world? Authenticity and genuine understanding are two elements that have not gone out of style. How these are established and conveyed in today’s and tomorrow’s markets remain at the heart of sales success.

A solid track record of performance, ease of doing business, and reputation are other elements on the road to sales success. Are you easy to find? Do you accept online payments? Do customer reviews/testimonials support your online presence? Does your omnichannel approach exist, and does it truly support the buyer’s non-linear decision-making process?

One seasoned sales representative recently remarked, “I have not met 80% of my current clients F2F.” This is literally unheard of in most industries, until now. Customers can have 3 competitive bids faster than any time in business history. Reps don’t have the window to “wine and dine”. Yet, perhaps it might be slightly easier to get your foot in the “Zoom” door since it’s faster than most F2F meetings. Remote meetings tend to be more content rich, although trust building is probably more difficult to obtain.

Once the call is ended, there’s no walk to the front door or elevator, it’s just click and gone. Some of the trust building has shifted out of the salesperson’s hands. Trust will

undoubtedly be formed through firm websites as buyers like to self-educate before engaging. The additional marketing content, demonstration/ROI videos, templates, or corporate mission/vision clarity will certainly play a role in trust building. Are you and your firm ready for this marketplace reality?

When telephones and rapid transportation came to be, the sales profession moved away from the Willy Loman (The Death of a Salesman) type of traveling sales “man” with defined routes to visit. Until recently, informational technology helped with processing of communications and data, the decision-making was human. Now, computer technology is also making decisions.

Machine learning and artificial intelligence can harness large volumes of disparate data to create call lists for reps. The process of starting with a written order has certainly given way to ordering on the internet. Going further, cyber systems are changing how humans interact with machines. It’s truly Terminator 2 with young John Connor interacting with the Cyborg (Arnold Schwarzenegger). In fact, humans can even be left out of the equation with the Internet of Things (IoT) where machines interact with machines.

CONCLUSION

If you dislike change, you are going to dislike irrelevance even more, especially since it seems we are in the midst of another Renaissance. Growth usually involves risk and both seem to be accelerating. Darwin said it best, “it’s not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent. It’s the one most adaptable to change”. Very true, yet also true is this old saying, “change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.” But who uses coins in a machine anymore? While vending still exists, the method for interacting has evolved, has your customer engagement kept up? Is trust measured the same way from your customer’s perspective today?

So many questions! The answers will be determined by your intentions and the direction of your actions. Yes, Sales is evolving because how we interact with others as well as with machines is evolving. For better or worse, good or ill, things change. Here is the thing to keep before you:

Change is inevitable, growth is optional.

The question isn’t whether you will experience change, the question only you can answer is:

Will you grow? ▲

