

# ONE WAY MARKETERS CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR OWN DEMISE.

One thing we all understand as marketers is that no matter how brilliant our strategies are, how intriguing our brand stories and compelling our promotions are, they must reach the market in order to have any effect. And one of the main pathways to the market in any business is through the salesforce. Sales carries our stories and our programs out into the world. Yet there is a lot of “heat loss” between our office and the point of contact. We accept—and actually expect—half-hearted support, low participation rates and inefficiency. Who among us has not lamented at one time or another that “Sales didn’t execute?” But I believe our thinking is backward when we blame the audience. Perhaps marketers contribute to our own demise in the way we interact with Sales.



By  
Don Drews

## Pushing five inches of stuff through a one inch pipe

Like all human beings, salespeople have a limited capacity to absorb and act on ideas. It’s called attention span. But way too often, marketers overload the salesforce with too much complexity: too many programs, too many objectives, and too much information. (We do the same thing with our consumers, by the way. With the same results: clutter and disengagement.) We compete with each other for salesforce attention. And when Sales doesn’t pay enough attention to our brand, we dial up the programming and the razzle-dazzle.

Then so does the next guy. We start talking louder. Then so does he. We add a special incentive. He follows suit. The cumulative effect is to accelerate the problem.

## Consider the Sales point of view

The average hardworking salesperson has to hit a quota +5-10% higher than last year, bird dog late shipments and billing issues, address customer questions, prepare his/her own presentations, keep the CRM system up to date, submit reasonably regular expense reports, bring in new business, and respond to ad hoc management requests. On top of that, he/she has to wade through the torrent of marketing programs and communication. Most often they’re left to sort it all out on their own. It’s a handful.

---

## Marketers who work with the grain instead of against it are the ones who will succeed.

---

## What if we worked with the one inch pipe, instead of against it?

Let’s assume the average hardworking salesperson can effectively present no more than three ideas per call (customers have limited attention

spans too, you know!). If the salesperson has a monthly call cycle, that creates a limit of 36 topic slots per year. Subtract two for an annual business review and a mid-year update, four for a quarterly initiative from Sales Management, a couple a quarter for customer agenda items, and you’re left with 22 ideas that can realistically be carried to the market through the salesforce. With a quarterly call cycle, you would have as few as 6-8 slots. What if we, as marketers, accepted the reality of that capacity instead of wishing or pretending it didn’t exist?

If I managed the big mothership brand, I might organize my programming and my sales messages into 4-8 tight packages (1-2 per quarter). If I managed one of several mid-sized brands, I might plan for one major sales push per half. And if I managed a small afterthought of a brand, I might look to aggregate with the other “stepchildren” for sales attention once a year. In all cases, we would probably look for ways to communicate with our consumers and the channel outside of the salesforce conduit. There are lots of tools and techniques to do that today.

If we accept the reality of limited salesforce capacity and work within that reality, salespeople will respond. They will feel understood, and consciously or unconsciously, they will be grateful. They will work with those marketers. And we will actually



achieve our goal: we will have more Sales’ attention.

## OK, but what if I play nice and my colleagues continue to pour it on?

I believe the marketers who work with the grain instead of against it are the ones who will succeed. This holds whether the audience is the salesforce, the channel or the consumer. All of those groups are overloaded and oversaturated with too many messages. All those groups are shutting out the increasingly shrill barrage of inbound interruption marketing, and seeking information and relationships on their own terms.

## Respect your audiences and they will respond.

If you respect your audiences, demonstrate that you understand their world and make things easy for them, they will respond. They will find your calm, clear, organized, reasonable and easy-to-do-business-with voice among the raucous din of the screamers and the flailers. And they will reward you. That’s not a new, 21st century discovery. That’s an eternal marketing truth. Good luck!

---

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Don Drews is President and Founder of Courageous Marketing. Courageous Marketing helps established companies accelerate growth and new ventures enter the marketplace with momentum.

This article originally appeared as a guest blog post on [1to1media.com](http://1to1media.com).