

## Cause Level Model

Hello, my name is Bob Schmonsees and I am going to spend the next few minutes describing how marketing can increase both its strategic relevance and impact on sales by adopting a cause-level value model.

Value models, like the feature-function-benefit model that we all know and love, are the foundation of every messaging strategy. They provide a consistent logical structure for communicating a company's value and differentiation and they're the raw materials for three critical marketing deliverables: the customer-facing content, the lead generation and nurturing programs, and finally, the sales enablement content.

So when companies make the products-to-solutions transition, they have to change their underlying value model. Unfortunately, few marketing executives realize that there are two models they can choose from: the hybrid model that primarily reflects the inside-out perspective of the seller, or a cause-level model, that's more focused on the outside-in perspective of the buyer. Unfortunately, an overwhelming majority of marketing organizations blindly adopt the hybrid model.

The hybrid model is a combination of product- and solution-centric messaging. It reflects a superficial perspective of the customer's problem, but it's mostly focused on the product that the seller provides. As this flow diagram shows, it's based upon the seller's feature-function-benefit list. And all you do is add a problem statement on the front end, and change the terminology from "product" to "solution." The resulting flow the message is, "you have a problem, we have a solution--here's its features, here's how they work, here's how they're different, and here's the benefits." The hybrid model is often called "marketecture" because it's really just a cosmetic makeover of the existing product-messaging model. As a result, the problem-solution component of the message tends to be overly simplistic and superficial from the customer's perspective. Marketing organizations adopt the hybrid model because it comes naturally. It's expedient, it doesn't require much intellectual lifting, and it doesn't force them out of their feature-function comfort zone.

In contrast, the cause level model is based on a clearly defined problem-solution map. And as such, it's explicitly focused on what the customer is trying to accomplish. The problem-solution mapping process starts by breaking down the customer problems into their key underlying causes. Then the company's solutions and key capabilities are explicitly linked to those problems and causes. As a result, the flow of the message is more about solving the customer's problem and it goes something like this, "You have a problem, we really understand that problem as well as its underlying causes, here's how our capabilities solve those causes, and here's how we solve them better than our competitors. And finally, here's the generic and differentiated value we deliver to your business."

Cause level value models are not exactly a new idea. They are a common best practice in the pharmaceutical industry and for the last several decades, most sales training companies have

taught sales people how to frame their company's value and differentiation using problem-cause-capability conversations. This is why the hybrid value model is one of the biggest causes of the marketing-sales disconnect. And it's why a lot of sales enablement initiatives fail to produce meaningful results.

Adopting a cause level value model is not rocket science but it does require management vision, sustained commitment and process. You start by implementing a formal problem-solution mapping and sales validation process, so that everybody's on the same page. This should only take a couple of hours over a few days. And while it may push some people out of their comfort zone a bit, everybody involved will learn a lot about their company's true value and their organization's ability to sell solutions in the process. Once the map is validated, it needs to be institutionalized and then become the foundation for creating more customer-relevant content, implementing more effective lead generation and nurturing programs, and finally for delivering tools that increase the situational fluency of the sales force and help them have the kind of conversations that help sales people evolve from product sellers to problem solvers to trusted partners in the eyes of their customers.

So let's summarize, it's time for marketing executives to get serious about supporting a solution-centric sales strategy. To do this, they need to adopt a cause-level value model and implement a formal problem-solution mapping process.

Thanks for your time. I hope you found this session valuable.

We invite you to forward this vignette to colleagues that might be interested in these topics. To access the microsite, simply click on the screen and with a simple log-in, get access to all of this content.

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