

The Hidden Buyer Journey

How Personality, Culture, and Hidden Stakeholders Decide Your Deals

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Foreword by Pat Spenner

Part One: How We Got Here

Chapter One: A History of How We Sell and Market

Chapter Two: A History of How We Buy

Chapter Three: How Our Enablers Went Too Far

Chapter Four: If It's Broke, Learn to Fix It

Part Two: Building a Better Way

Chapter Five: The Hard Truth About the Softer Side of Selling

Chapter Six : Selling to People, Not Just Professionals

Chapter Seven: Marketing to Emotions, and the Humans Who Feel Them

Chapter Eight: Fixing Personas to Uncover the Hidden Human

Part Three: Making it Happen

Chapter Nine: Scaling Deep and Real Personalization for Marketing

Chapter Ten: The Cheat Code that's on Every Corporate Website

Chapter Eleven: The Sales Chameleon

Chapter Twelve: The Buyers You Can't See (But Should)

Chapter Thirteen: How to Harness the Power of Hidden Buyer Behavior

Chapter Fourteen: Final Thoughts

Introduction: The Why?

Why read this book?

Here's what nobody in sales wants to admit: the buyer journey we've built our entire industry around — the funnels, the stages, the CRM fields, the lead scores — is a story we told ourselves.

Because the real buyer journey? It's happening somewhere we can't see, in conversations we're not part of, driven by motivations our tools were never designed to measure.

That's what this book is about. Not the journey you can track. The one you can't.

I'm not going to promise you a magic framework or a five-step fix. What I will give you is something more valuable — a clear-eyed look at why the system is broken, who the real players are in any buying decision, and what it actually takes to navigate the hidden side of the journey that determines whether you win or lose.

If you're reading this because you sense something is off and you're ready to find out what — we're already on the same page.

So, let's get into it.

We Now Live in a World that Consists of Four Different Types of Selling Relationships

[INSERT GRAPHIC DEPICTING THE BELOW]

1. Human to human
2. Human to machine
3. Machine to human
4. Machine to machine

As AI integrates into every aspect of our daily lives, machine to machine selling is only going to become more prevalent (just take a look at your LinkedIn feed and you'll see what I mean). And that's not necessarily a good thing — at least, not for the salespeople of the future who want to succeed.

Of those four relationships, only one is quietly disappearing: the human-to-human interaction that actually closes deals. Everything else is scaling. That one is shrinking. And nobody is talking about it. This book is.

That brings me to my “why”. The main reason I’m writing this book is because if you are in sales (and that includes you, marketers – we’re *all* sellers) now, or plan to be in sales in the

future, you should have two main goals: harnessing the power of AI to enable yourself and your team, and elevating and protecting the human-to-human interactions that *really* close a deal.

As it happens, there is a fundamental gap when it comes to books on sales and marketing that cover the human-to-human side of the equation, with *real data* to back up their claims.

In fact, pick up any business book or book written about selling and see if you can find any evidence of a human on the cover. I would say I'll wait while you look, but you'd be looking for a very, very long time.

Enter: this book.

So, on to the next important question: *Why now?*

A little context on why I'm the one telling you this. I've spent 30 years working at the intersection of sales, marketing, and human behavior — leading teams, advising companies, and watching the same preventable mistakes play out across industries.

In 2019, frustrated by the gap between what our tools told us about buyers and what was actually driving their decisions, my team and I began a research effort using AI to profile personality types across thousands of real buying journeys.

What we found was equal parts fascinating and sobering. The data didn't just confirm our instincts — it challenged assumptions that the entire industry has accepted as gospel. This book is the result of that work.

There are definitive, clear-cut ways to improve sales and marketing at every stage of the buyer's journey, and our discoveries uncovered a lot about how humans think, plan, and make decisions in an increasingly AI-driven world.

At times, the material will counter many long established beliefs of what is considered to be “common knowledge.” Some of it will be incredibly logical. In fact, after reading certain chapters, you will likely ask yourself, “why aren't we doing this already?”

Funny enough, part of this book will dig more deeply into why, even though we may know and/or believe certain things to be true, we still are reluctant in changing our behaviors.

Ultimately, that is what this book is really about. Breaking down existing mindsets using data and research, and rebuilding them using a new way of thinking. It will be up to you, the reader, to make the change.

How was the book constructed?

The book is constructed in three parts. The first section sets up illustrating the challenges and issues facing sales and marketing, with the second part of the book addressing the solutions. The last section provides action items to take the insights shared in the book and apply them directly to your professional situation.

It's important to note here that I don't play favorites, which is why we'll be taking a look at insights, research and recommendations for both sales *and* marketing. After all, selling to a buying group involves both sales and marketing.

Parts of this book may be familiar to you, as we pull from previous insights and research shared in other sales and marketing books, in particular, research from the book *The Challenger Customer*. In fact, those authors will show up periodically throughout this book. They were on to something, and our research continues to push forward what they started.

What's in it for you?

The Hidden Buyer Journey fills a gap in the world of books on buying and selling. Although there are many books that cover how to identify buyers, what role they play, and different approaches to selling to them, we're pushing through theory into the discussion of learned misconceptions and valuable discoveries that apply to all levels of sales and marketing.

Now, the main thing that many of the aforementioned books have in common is a shared belief that the buying process is, for the most part, rational. Let's get one thing clear from the start:

It is not.

People make decisions. Titles and roles do not. The books of the past assume that we make business decisions without influence from our own personal experiences, motivations and beliefs.

It's an invisible part of the buying process that dramatically impacts our success, yet we don't consider it, even though we know it's there. And because it has been historically unstudied with little data presented to prove it out, it is also not something an AI model can be trained on as part of the selling process.

The treasure trove of information that lies in that gap is the missing piece of our current sales and marketing practices, which are increasingly centered around AI. It's one of the reasons why,

despite millions of dollars being spent on new marketing and sales technology, our performance has not improved.

This book is written to explain – with clear, data-driven insights – why things you believe about buyers are incomplete, or in some cases and situations, just plain wrong. The B2B sales and marketing landscape has utterly transformed: at the dawn of modern selling, humans sold to other humans.

Now machines sell to machines. Sales used to be dependent upon proximity. Now we can buy and sell from anywhere. Information used to be controlled by a single source. Now information (and misinformation) has been democratized. We know all of these things to be true, the purpose of this book is to answer the question: what *do we do about it?*

One quick anecdote before we dive in: a few years ago, the CFO of our consulting firm stopped by my office to say good morning. He was holding a coffee mug that said, “Everyone Sells.” I found it funny that a finance guy had a mug imprinted with that quote, but his mug wasn’t wrong. We all sell, and we do it in our everyday lives.

From convincing a significant other to go to a movie, or our kids to do their homework, or eat their vegetables.... we are constantly using our powers of persuasion, perception, and occasionally (we hope) charm, to convince others to take action. It’s a natural part of who we are, but when we insert methodologies, processes and technologies, it becomes unnatural and incomplete.

The Hidden Buyer Journey exists to bring back the human side of selling, with the hard numbers to back up the value. It also seeks to understand where and how the truth of buyer intentions gets lost along the journey.

If you’re ready to have a better answer to improving your odds of success in the age of AI than “let’s try adding another tool to our tech stack”, then this book is for you.