



The Challenger Customer: Selling to the Hidden Influencer Who Can Multiply Your Results

Brent Adamson , Matthew Dixon , Pat Spenner , Nick Toman

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Four years ago, the bestselling authors of *The Challenger Sale* overturned decades of conventional wisdom with a bold new approach to sales. Now their latest research reveals something even more surprising: Being a Challenger seller isn't enough. Your success or failure also depends on *who* you challenge.

Picture your ideal customer: friendly, eager to meet, ready to coach you through the sale and champion your products and services across the organization. It turns out that's the last person you need.

Most marketing and sales teams go after low-hanging fruit: buyers who are eager and have clearly articulated needs. That's simply human nature; it's much easier to build a relationship with someone who always makes time for you, engages with your content, and listens attentively. But according to brand-new CEB research—based on data from thousands of B2B marketers, sellers, and buyers around the world—the highest-performing teams focus their time on potential customers who are far more skeptical, far less interested in meeting, and ultimately agnostic as to who wins the deal. How could this be?

The authors of *The Challenger Customer* reveal that high-performing B2B teams grasp something that their average-performing peers don't: Now that big, complex deals increasingly require consensus among a wide range of players across the organization, the limiting factor is rarely the salesperson's inability to get an individual stakeholder to agree to a solution. More often it's that the stakeholders inside the company can't even agree with one another about what the problem is.

It turns out only a very specific type of customer stakeholder has the credibility, persuasive skill, and will to effectively challenge his or her colleagues to pursue anything more ambitious than the status quo. These customers get deals to the finish line far more often than friendlier stakeholders who seem so receptive at first. In other words, Challenger sellers do best when they target Challenger customers.

The Challenger Customer unveils research-based tools that will help you distinguish the "Talkers" from the "Mobilizers" in any organization. It also provides a blueprint for finding them, engaging them with disruptive insight, and equipping them to effectively challenge their own organization.

From the Hardcover edition.

The Challenger Customer: Selling to the Hidden Influencer Who Can Multiply Your Results Details

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John Doyle says

Like its predecessor the Challenger Sale, the insights in this book are based on a premise that the fundamental dynamics between suppliers and buyers have been transformed by the internet and decentralized decision-making frameworks. I accept the premise and the authors' frameworks for marketing and selling complex solutions into large organizations. In most cases, suppliers of these complex solutions are competing with the status quo. This means that job number one is to reframe the buyer's views of their own organization and the urgency of problems they do not even recognize themselves. Without this crucial "commercial insight" the status quo wins even if the suppliers solution is acknowledged to be a major leap forward. Compounding this challenge is the reality that most buyers complete more than half of the buying process before ever speaking to a salesperson. The wide availability of product information, reviews, and research means that the supplier is no longer in control of the message. This reality shifts the focus for a marketing team from "leading with" the company's solution to "leading to" it. Overall, the Challenger Customer is a logical, well-written roadmap for sellers of complex technology solutions.

Siim says

To make a sale, an easy-going, agreeable customer is the last person you need. It is all perfectly logical. Somebody needed to do the rigorous research on it, complete with factor analysis. And write it down in an easy to read book. This is that book.

“To sum it all up, you can’t find Mobilizers on an org chart. They’re not the VP of this or the senior director of that. Role and title don’t matter. They’re individuals who mobilize irrespective of the org chart, not because of it.”

John Daut says

Good research. Great insight.

The CEB team provides more researched insight than 99% of the self proclaimed sales consultants. Having read both books provides a good formula for managing both sellers and buyers.

Sana Vasli says

A lot of interesting concepts at the beginning. The book takes the long route to explain simple things and becomes a struggle to get through

Brian says

Fantastic evolution of B2B marketing and sales framework

Martin Felando says

Excellent follow up to The Challenger Sale. Great for sellers looking for who to target at large companies. Most large sales involve about 5 decision makers; this book helps you identify the best and worst archetypes when it comes to selling.

Lee says

Nothing like being told to read a book for work to stoke a kids enthusiasm!

This book IS insightful, and I benefited from reading it, but shucks, it takes a pop-business book to convert "60% growth" into a full page multi-bar chart with distinctly labeled delta.

This book could have been 40 pages of really sharp and meaningful analysis, but I suppose the publisher would have had trouble justifying the cover price.

PeterBlackCoach says

Demonstrates how much the buying process has changed - and how it affects the sales process. Recommended to read in conjunction with The Challenger Sale

Jared says

Really enjoyed the first half of this book, but felt the second half was quite weak. However, still worth reading as it will change your perspective on your engagement with customers (and redefine who you consider your customer to be).

Andrew says

The Challenger Customer is about selling to bureaucratic organizations. The thesis is that it doesn't matter if you win over an individual - they are going to take the deal to a group who may think your solution is great, but not even agree on the problem being solved. For example, maybe your training offering is fantastic, but they think the problems needs fixed by upgrading the computer system or hiring more. The book shows that you have to get people in the same ball field first by defining the problem together, agreeing it needs solved, reaching consensus on the criteria, and THEN winning that deal. Highly practical information and thought frameworks for B2B complex sales & consulting.

Marques Hollie says

Disclaimer: I am in a sales-adjacent role, but not a salesperson. That said, I think a lot of the content and methodologies described in this book are fantastic; my one gripe is that I feel like this book could have been quite a bit shorter (while still providing the core content).

Andrew says

The Challenger Customer is about selling to bureaucratic organizations. The thesis is that it doesn't matter if you win over an individual - they are going to take the deal to a group who may think your solution is great, but not even agree on the problem being solved. For example, maybe your training offering is fantastic, but they think the problems needs fixed by upgrading the computer system or hiring more. The book shows that you have to get people in the same ball field first by defining the problem together, agreeing it needs solved, reaching consensus on the criteria, and THEN winning that deal. Highly practical information and thought frameworks for B2B complex sales & consulting

Kim Caudill says

Started strong, last chapters on marketing strategy seemed to be a divergence from Challenger Sales model. Marketing materials as commercial education and processes of identifying marketing staff skills that align became a arduous read.

Jeffrey says

Excellent insights. What is your prospective customers desired outcomes not yours? Who are the mobilizers?
