

CANDID LETTER FROM SALES TO MARKETING



Jill Konrath
Chief Sales Officer,
Selling to Big Companies

SECTION:

DEAR Marketing,

I know we haven't always gotten along. In fact, I've been pretty critical of you over the years.

I've complained that you're not doing enough to get us business. I've blamed you when our new offerings fail to achieve projected success. I've accused you of being out of touch with what's really going on with our customers and prospects.

The truth is, I don't want to be the fall guy when I don't reach my numbers. You don't either. You've been just as hard on me as I've been on you.

You've criticized my salespeople's skills, telling everyone in the company that we're incapable of selling value. You've carped about our bonuses, whined about our expenses or grumbled that we weren't working hard enough.

Enough already. **We need to stop this blame game or neither of us will be successful.**

Personally, I'm at wit's end. It's harder than ever to reach our numbers, and I don't see things getting any easier in the future – especially when I talk to the people who buy our products and services.

You may not realize this, but **most of our prospects today suffer from a severe case of Frazzled Customer Syndrome.** This is a debilitating condition brought on by excessive workloads, 24/7 availability, information overload, lack of sleep and job-related stress.

They're good people who are doing their best to survive in a crazy-busy workplace. Their calendars are overflowing and they're constantly falling behind, but they feel powerless to stop the unrelenting, escalating demands on their time.

They can barely focus on important tasks because their days are filled with interruptions and constantly changing activities like email, meetings and online research. This frenetic multitasking fools them into thinking they're accomplishing a lot, but in reality they're falling further behind.

These are the people that my salespeople have to deal with on a regular basis. And it's not easy. They never answer the phone anymore. And, if you leave a message, they never call you back. They get a gazillion emails a day and delete most of them in a nanosecond.

It typically takes my salespeople eight to ten contacts before they have a conversation with a prospective customer. We just can't afford to keep doing this. It's not a good use of our sales force's time.

You know what drives my salespeople nuts? When you send over a ton of unqualified leads that you got at a tradeshow or some other promo event you did. Again, we don't have the time to do this.

But back to these crazy-busy prospects. When we finally uncover a company who can realize significant benefits from our offering, typically

Candid Letter from Sales to Marketing

continued



About the Author

*As a recognized expert in business-to-business sales, Jill Konrath helps sellers crack into new accounts, speed up their sales cycle and win more business. She's the author of the award-winning book, *Selling to Big Companies*—a *Fortune* magazine “must read.” *SNAP SELLING*, her newest book on selling to crazy-busy prospects, was just released to rave reviews.*

Jill is a popular speaker at annual sales meetings, kick-off events and professional conferences where she provides fresh perspectives, provocative insights and rock-solid, practical advice. To learn more, visit www.SellingtoBigCompanies.com.

SECTION:

they're not actively making a purchase decision. Instead, they're trying to determine if it makes good business sense to change.

Do you have any idea how long it takes frazzled people to make that kind of decision? Months. Much longer than ever before – and there are a whole slew more people involved, which makes things even more complicated.

Even our hottest prospects sometimes disappear into a black hole because it's just plain easier to stay with the status quo than to invest all the time and effort into making a change.

That's what we're facing out there every single day. Traditional prospecting and sales strategies don't work anymore with today's crazy-busy buyers. We're spending more time and effort than ever before, but getting diminishing returns.

We desperately need your help or we're not going to make it. It all starts with high quality leads that you've nurtured. Let's get together and agree on what this means – soon. We can't wait any longer. Plus, we need tools to nurture prospects. These are things you can create for us.

Also, we've found that by leveraging the SNAP Rules, we're much better able to capture and keep the attention of today's crazy-busy buyers. If you're not familiar with them, here's a quick overview:

SNAP Rule 1: Keep it Simple

Our overwhelmed prospects grind to a screeching halt whenever they encounter complexity. From their perspective, this means anything that feels difficult to decipher, difficult to decide on or difficult to implement.

We need to ensure maximum simplicity in everything we do – and that's not as easy as it sounds. Sometimes, especially when we're trying to impress new prospects, we get into serious overkill with the amount and depth of information we share. When we keep it simple, it's much easier for prospects to buy from us.

SNAP Rule 2: Be iNvaluable

Now more than ever, our prospects want to work with companies that “know their stuff” and who continually bring them new ways to improve their business. In reality, that's our biggest competitive differentiator today – not our products or services.

That means that every communication we have with them today must be valuable. Otherwise, it'll be deleted or we'll be dismissed. In our experience, prospects love to learn how similar companies address tough issues and the results they attained. They also crave info on industry trends, solving knotty problems, how to decide and successful implementations.

“We desperately need your help or we’re not going to make it. It all starts with high quality leads that you’ve nurtured. Let’s get together and agree on what this means – soon.”

SECTION:

SNAP Rule 3: Always Align

Virtually the first questions our crazy-busy prospects ask is, “Is this relevant?” They don’t have time for anything else. And I hate to be brutal with you, but 90% of our prospects think that information about our products and services is totally irrelevant.

Why? Because they’re not yet at a point where they’re ready to make a decision. Up until then, the only thing that’s relevant is their key business drivers. So we need to ensure that everything we do focuses on our value proposition – the business outcomes they’ll realize from using our offering. When we align with their objectives, prospects will want to work with us.

SNAP Rule 4: Raise Priorities

On a daily basis, our prospects are buffeted by newly arising emergencies, reorganizations, shifting market dynamics, and ever evolving corporate directives. It’s an absolute imperative to work with them on their priority projects.

We need to have “alert systems” in place to notify us of any changes that might impact their satisfaction with the status quo. And, we need relevant content on hand so we can immediately swing into action. You can handle the initiatives from the corporate side, and we’ll handle it with individual companies we’ve targeted. By focusing on these “trigger events,” it’ll really shorten our sales cycle.

So what do you think? I’m offering you a peace pipe and a chance to create a better future. I think it’ll only happen if we’re ready to work together. And I’m ready.

I need you now more than ever. We need to attract those online seekers and get them into our database. Then we need to keep sending them great information until they’re ready to make a change.

We’ve got to use one of those smart marketing automation systems too, but for more than a glorified email system. I’ve been checking into them and have been blown away by what’s possible.

Do you realize how much more productive my salespeople can be if they’re focusing on prospects who have opened their emails, clicked on links, read a white paper, forwarded it to their colleagues and returned again later in the week to listen to a podcast?

Seriously. Think about it. They could be cold calling – or, they could be having in-depth conversations with savvy prospects who have immersed themselves in our educational content.

As far I’m concerned, it’s the way to go. I know decisions like this don’t happen overnight, but let’s get started now.

Looking forward to talking soon,

SALES