

The Solution-Sell is a Myth!

By: [Paul Shearstone](#)

Who among us is not already up to here with the omni-smarts who wax poetic the benefits of "Solution Selling." Now it may seem strange for me, the author of the book "Up Your Income! Solution Selling for Profitability" to cast aspersions on the merits of this approach. Nevertheless like so many things in the real world, theory is one thing, application thereof is quite another.

The question then becomes; what are the differences between theory and reality for the Solution Sell, and, is there credibility in either?

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It's well known the solution selling strategy was designed to meet the challenges of the 1980s new Technological Era. The computer not only changed the way we did business, it also changed the philosophy by which we sell. The fact that few industries were untouched by the computer meant there was fertile ground for this new selling style to quickly take root.

The solution sell dealt with the 'Multi-Box' challenge ostensibly needed to address more complex products and solutions in a more competitive marketplace involving more players than ever providing exactly the same or similar merchandise.

This new approach took a longer view of the selling process and was expressly designed to garner long-term customer loyalty. If companies were to survive and remain profitable, customers had to buy into the idea there was added value in long-term relationships that refocused purchasing criteria on Value and not strictly on Price.

The strategy certainly made sense then and still does today. So one might then ask, Where's the problem?

Like so many companies hoodwinked into believing the way to success was through a good corporate 'Mission Statement', the solution sell approach – much like a mission statement – was and still is, a simple strategy. It is only in its successful application that success of any kind can be realized.

Looking at it differently, the way to win a hockey game is to put the puck in the net more times than your opponent and keep doing it until the nightly news comes on...lol.

Who can argue a proven strategy like that? The application, however, always proves to be the litmus test that continues to separate those with only a good plan from those who can actually implement one.

Simply said, too many corporations bet the farm on the Solution-Sell-Strategy at the expense of the most important part of selling – Making the Sale!

Many of the most unsuccessful companies went out of business with some of the best-laid plans and strategies. The fact is, formulating a strategic plan is always easier than actually

implementing one. Disproportionate amounts of time and effort spent designing attractive long-term Solutionist strategies pale in comparison to the skills needed to achieve what really matters in the end – Did you make a sale? Which brings us to why the Solution-Sell-Strategy is a myth.

As much as we'd like to think we have evolved far beyond any selling stratagem from the past, in practice, [regardless of what product or industry], think about the one question asked by all sales managers to all salesreps at the meeting held just before the end of each month. "What orders are you bringing in by month end?"

The BOX-SELL-STRATEGY! That's right, it never really went away and it's what successful companies understand to be the most basic ingredient, germane to any selling strategy.

Lets face it, [using the hockey example again], even the puck that goes in off your helmet still counts and can be the quintessential, deciding factor that determines whether a team moves on or hits the links. In reality, how you got it is never as important as whether you got it.

So is the Solution Sell strategy the wrong approach? No, it is now and for the foreseeable future the right approach. What is wrong, however, is to believe – like so many do – a beautiful plan automatically results in sales. It Doesn't!

Under the microscope it appears we all need to feel we have evolved farther than in reality perhaps we have. It has clouded our view of what's truly required to be successful in sales - Fundamental Selling Skills.

To focus only on a plan is to give short shrift to the Art / Science or Discipline of the Professional Solution Sell.

The fact is, good plan or not, an unskilled seller will not recognize a simple buying signal. Untrained reps don't know how to build Trust and Rapport with potential customers. Where there is no argument today is that Trust and Rapport are the bedrock foundation for success of any kind in sales. Even the basic art of overcoming objections is a learned skill as is knowing when or when not to ask for an order. In every respect, these skills need to be taught and honed as truly professional sellers will attest; the techniques integral to the art or science of the sale are, in the end, the stuff that:

- a. Separates the Sellers from the Tellers,
- b. Emboldens good strategies like the Solution Sell, and,
- c. MAKES SALES!

The Bottom Line:

A clear selling strategy in tandem with a proven skill-set are the Yin and Yang components that make up a well balanced formula that all but ensures greater sales and profitability. To believe or practice one without the other is to believe in MYTHS!

Paul Shearstone aka The 'Pragmatic Persuasionist' is one of North America's foremost experts on Sales and Persuasion. An International Keynote Speaker, Author, Writer, Motivation, Corporate Ethics, / Time & Stress Management, Recruiting Specialist, Paul enlightens and challenges audiences as he informs, motivates and entertains. To comment on this article or to book the Pragmatic Persuasionist for your next successful event we invite you to contact Paul Shearstone directly @ 416-728-5556 or 1-866-855-4590, www.success150.com or www.paulshearstone.ca.