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## Guerrilla Sales & Marketing

# Differentiate to Reach Prospects

By Lori Turner-Wilson

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Lori Turner-Wilson

The Information Age is pushing many industries down the path of commoditization, where consumers see little difference between you and your competitors. Purchase decisions become price-centered – a dangerous game.

This shift is due in large part to the depth of information available to prospects before a sales rep is even engaged – forever changing the role sales reps play in closing a sale. Gone are the days where sharing features and benefits is enough. Sales reps must take on a more strategic role to maintain relevance and shift consumer decisions away from price.

Real, individualized value must be created to differentiate and break through the barriers of commoditization. Real value isn't built on clichés such as "great customer service." The differentiator must be significant and vital to your customer.

A recent Huthwaite study uncovered an unexpected consumer behavior, shedding light onto how sales reps can create this value. Thousands of customers reported being faced with several competitor choices with no strong differentiators. Interestingly, customers did not select the low-cost offering in most instances.

Skilled sales reps offered insight the buyer couldn't achieve on his own, which is challenging given the depth of information a prospect has about your company before you ever set foot in the door, compliments of the internet.

You will lose the value-creation battle unless you can convince a prospect you are both strategically important and difficult to substitute with another competitor. What is your sales team doing, independent of the products and services you sell, to convince customers you are a vital strategic partner, one that is difficult to replace in the marketplace? If nothing, you're encouraging customers to price shop, which could ultimately cause lower margins and the inability to cost-justify a skilled sales force. The very behavior of many salespeople could ultimately work them out of a job.

The solution begins with asking the right questions. Customers place more value on what they say than what they are told. Your objective, with any new prospect, is to conduct a thorough needs assessment by asking leading questions that will help the buyer realize a need – possibly one they hadn't previously recognized. The ultimate goal is to elevate your prospect's awareness of their need (the one your product/service can address) to the point they are willing to take action.

Then position yourself as an indispensable strategic partner by identifying an unanticipated solution for the buyer's problem or revealing an unexpected opportunity the buyer wasn't aware of. Or establish yourself

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MORTGAGES	63	208	22,318
FORECLOSURE NOTICES	0	40	9,361
BUILDING PERMITS	0	219	37,868
BANKRUPTCIES	70	203	18,086
BUSINESS LICENSES	27	62	5,644
UTILITY CONNECTIONS	88	331	26,555
MARRIAGE LICENSES	17	78	5,560

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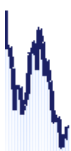
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Morningstar	-40	-0.9	4,649
Small Cap			

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as a solutions broker, serving as a broader resource. You might partner with a non-competing vendor to offer your prospect a broader soup-to-nuts solution to their problem.

When your objective is to create individualized value, no two sales will look alike. While more effort is required, you are more likely to generate higher margins and longer-term customers that aren't regularly price shopping.

*Lori Turner-Wilson is an award-winning columnist and managing partner of RedRover Sales & Marketing, [www.redrovercompany.com](http://www.redrovercompany.com). You can follow RedRover on Twitter (@redrovercompany and @loriturner) and Facebook ([facebook.com/redrovercompany](http://facebook.com/redrovercompany)).*



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by Andy Meek on Dec 21 @ 1:12A
2. [Smith & Nephew Lays Off 80 in Memphis](#) by Aisling Maki on Dec 14
3. [Touch and Go](#) by Bill Dries on Dec 19
4. [Unfriendly Skies Looming at MEM](#)  
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