

Trends Don't Lead to Solutions ...or DO They?

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"Trends don't lead to solutions."

This is a statement that Joe and I hear fairly regularly from people we speak to in professional sales organizations. And while it is sometimes difficult to discern the path, they DO in fact lead to a solution. Let me explain.

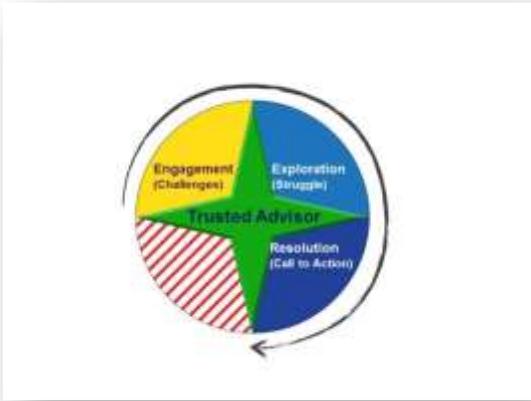
Remember, a trend is a series of data points that indicate that something is in the process of changing, a change that will ultimately lead to a change in the market. Consider the following examples:

- The growing amount of data in large data stores leads companies to recognize, over time, that there may be insight and market intelligence hidden in the data that could lead to a competitive advantage.
- Whether they like it or not, executives must accept the fact that employees ARE bringing their own devices to work and ARE using those devices to do their jobs and ARE using non-sanctioned applications on those devices to do their jobs better, faster and more efficiently.
- The growing noise around BYOD is not so much an issue of security as it is an issue about control.
- The era of the PC, whether we like it or not, is rapidly ending. Sales of those devices are flattening, while the sale of tablets and increasingly capable mobile devices is increasing.

Each of these trends indicates that a sea change is underway, and the result of this sea change is one of two scenarios: Customers can ride the wave like a talented surfer and end up safely on the beach after an exhilarating ride, or they can pretend the trend doesn't exist or is irrelevant to their world and end up being buried by a tsunami of industrial change.

Our job as professional sales people is to help the customer understand that (1) the trend is real; (2) the trend will, one way or another, affect the business in a variety of organizationally-specific (and often unanticipated) ways; and (3) will have a direct and powerful impact on their business. That impact may be positive or negative, but it will be an impact, either way.

If we can take the customer from a point of skepticism to a point where they understand the pain that may be coming their way, we have opened the door to a view of a possible solution that might mitigate the pain or catalyze and accelerate the positive impact of the trend on their business.



Is there a direct link between a trend and a solution? No. But there is a straight line between the two, punctuated by brief stops along the way at Business Issues and Impacts. In many ways the Trusted Advisor Star that we talk about is a trend itself: A trend that demonstrates the evolution of the relationship between a strategically focused sales person and a customer who wants to be on top of their game. And that is an impact with real, discernible value.

Thanks for reading.