

The Successful Sales Organization

Has much in common with a symphony, chiefly — Orchestration!

Fusion White Paper #2



OK Everyone, Go!

That's how it's done in an orchestra, right? Everyone just "plays at once."

Well, not exactly.

First, everyone tunes up to make sure the strings, the woodwinds, and the brass will play in harmony. You've seen it a thousand times. And that all happens before the Maestro enters and mounts the podium. It's "foreplay" — in the best sense. And the first chair violin — the Concert Meister — supervises. She leads the musicians. The Maestro leads the Orchestra. They have a "score" — the agreed-upon selection(s) for the concert. They tune up. They have sections, junior leaders, a senior leader and individual parts to play — at just the right moment! And the audience pays for the privilege of watching a finely tuned organization play at their best.

Nice Metaphor for a sales organization.

Except that many have no "Score" — with everyone making up their own story on the fly... "Whatcha Got?" "Well, I have a new deal — and literature! Wanna hear about it?"

"Sure, but keep it short!"

Not exactly awe inspiring.

Why? Because what's in the literature almost never works as a spoken presentation.

So each guy in the field becomes his own individual writer and editor.

Then there's the internal organizational chaos between Marketing and Sales. The marketing team creates their best story — with all the detail, pictures, layouts and multi-page spreads. Beautiful really, and it comes from the printer in great boxes, delivered

to the doorsteps of everyone on the sales team, who then parcel it out a little at a time to the least hostile potential readers. If it gets a little traction, a box full will be delivered to the literature room at the dealer... Where it will become — an artifact.

At the same time, the Sales Manager and his team of Divisionals are



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nudging, coaxing, thumping and encouraging individual sales people to go out and talk up the new product — or at least some product. The default standard is the best speakers take a run at it, and the others emulate them — checking in over the phone and voicemail. Or they limp through the PowerPoint... But alas, what gets said in the field, and what's being officially promoted are different things. Too many differing agendas.

Then there's the Sales Desk, part sales people / part secretarial staff / part junior assistants reaching out into the field one call at a time — trying to keep their enthusiasm up as they encounter every manner of resistance, boredom, derision and evasion. But with no momentum or support from the rest of the organization, can you blame them if they begin to wilt around 2:00 pm?

Like an orchestra perhaps, but not a great one.

A Modest Proposal:

Orchestration: The Collaborative Story Development Process

Let's begin with Composition.

Who?

Suppose we get the people closest to the client in the room first? A few of our best sales people — maybe from different regions. Then an ace designer, a writer and a product expert. A senior desk person and a front line telemarketer. Now a senior manager who acts as the ultimate umpire. That's the Composition Team. We call it the "Story Development Senate." The point is to get everyone's point of view represented, to decide what goes in and what goes out. It's not democratic, but it is representative. We suggest that anyone who can kill the work after the fact should be in the room while it's being created — eliminate the nay saying up front.

How?

Now. How shall we work? Well, if everyone has a different approach to creating stories, it's going to be a long night. We suggest that if you already understand "Ready, Set, Go!" it can be an efficient way for a team to work through the thorny headache of team composition. But it does work, and the better, if people understand the process before composition begins. (The first Story Senate meeting is hard, but productive. The second one is faster and easier — remember; we're building a



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culture here...) The point: if we've taught the guys in the field to deliver "RSG!" presentations, shouldn't we give them stories built with the same process?

Then, Focus Group

Get some customers in to look over the work and give you feedback about how it looks, sounds and feels; and about whether it really works for them. (This is the time for ruthless objectivity. Yes, it is your baby, but better to kill it or change it now, rather than letting it out into the field too soon and having a bigger disappointment.)

Finally: Distribution

Launch It. Really launch it! Get the team, or smaller groups on deck to learn it together, practice on one another and work the kinks out before playing it for clients.

You'll be amazed at how quickly the story "wears in" for a good fit, as individuals tailor it to their style, their unique openings, their regional orientation and the realities of the day. But fail to take this pre-market step; and all that working-in has to happen in front of real clients — who won't take lightly to being used for practice...

Oh, and the Tsar

Shouldn't there be someone who manages the entire story process? The National Sales Manager has a lot else to do. They should be in the room as the story begins to take shape, but someone else should be the Story Development Boss. Often, there's a brave, aggressive (maybe dominant-obsessive) marketer who can ride herd on the senate, the wild suggestions from the field, surgically sculpting the story down to size for the phones, overseeing copy, layout, imaging and printing and the web, testing the whole offering out before launching, then scheduling and micro-managing the Roll-Out process. It's not quite as difficult as building an airplane, but this Story Tsar individual is worth every penny. And if ever the idea of a "Critical Path" chart was well taken; this is the time. When it works, it's because this person nailed every last detail. Finding that person — the Concert Meister ("Story Development Tsar?") can make a success of a sales organization.

Ok, places everyone! Lights up, Concert Meister, good to go!

And Maestro mounts the podium!

Baton Up: One, Two, Three and...

Everyone Go!



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Applications:

1. Individually

Ever gone right to the office in a new suit? And discovered the extra labels and sleeve tissue in a meeting with the boss — or a nudgy colleague? Right. So open “Off Broadway.” Take the outfit out to dinner with a friend, or a supportive family member.

Put some mileage on it so you know how it’ll play. Test it. Push it. Now you’re ready for the big time.

2. At Home

Ever bought new sheets, or a new paint color without a consultation? How’d that go? Some of us are blessed with un-critical, even less attentive partners when it comes to personal choices. (But in the office, such people are not usually the big players...) So give your family the benefit of consultation about anything they can complain about. Guide them through the process of collaboration — the ethics of team work and outcome based communication. The lessons accumulate. And soon, the family is a team in more than name... And when they’re playing for bigger stakes, they’ll know how to collaborate and prepare for the big launch.

3. At Work

Everyone has an opinion — so the saying goes. So build a process for involving everyone at the outset — eliminating the opportunity for backdated (or backhanded) criticism. Get them involved early and set a standard for how the process works so you don’t argue about composition rules. This narrows the objective and gets you the best “Score,” and leaves a little extra time to pretty it up and practice before the big opening.

Millions are spent assembling sales organizations! But how much on collaborative story development and Orchestration? We create big teams of great players, who have no shared approach to creating or delivering coordinated national stories. We often have all the component parts, but they’re not designed to work as one. So poorly prepared sales teams hit the field without a coherent plan for what to say, or how to support one another. “OK everyone; Play!” is not a strategy — it’s a Fail Formula.

