



CEO Europe
Management on demand

The Sales and Marketing files: Each month, CEO Europe shares its expertise and presents you an expert synopsis of a specific topic.

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5 Sources of MOMENTUM

How Market Leading Companies Manage to Make Winning a Habit ...

by Bob Apollo and Mike Fish

Momentum is the force that propels companies with potential towards market leadership. It may seem hard to define, but most of us would agree that it is relatively easy to see when companies have **momentum** ...



- ☑ They are widely recognised as thought leaders ...
- ☑ Most of their sales team is on or above quota ...
- ☑ Prospects seem willing to make "buy" decisions more quickly ...
- ☑ They find it easy to attract top talent ...
- ☑ They seem to make **winning a habit** ...

...but it is often harder to diagnose and deal with the root causes of inertia...

- Sales performance is unpredictable ... ☑
- Prospects show interest but little urgency ... ☑
- It seems hard to defend price points ... ☑
- Every deal feels like "hand-to-hand combat"... ☑
- Successes often appear more due to **luck** than to **process** ... ☑



In our experience **momentum** can best be created, and **inertia** defeated, by aligning sales and marketing around a common and continually improving understanding of the most urgent issues, needs and motivations of their prospects, by removing the roadblocks that are stopping their organisation from addressing them, and by embedding this learning into a **company-wide way of doing business**.

Most organisations we speak to are involved in complex B2B sales processes and describe a strikingly common "wish list" of things they would like to improve in their sales and marketing process. Issues like competitive differentiation, forecast accuracy, salesforce performance, and the desire to sell on value, rather than price, are all commonplace.

If these challenges could only be mastered, they would be well on their way to building a scalable business, making **winning a habit** - and generating unstoppable **momentum**.

But first, they need to identify what's holding them back - and find answers to the following questions:

- ▶ "If we were to increase our sales team, our marketing budget, or *any other significant resource*, are we sure that our revenues would rise by **at least** the same proportion?"
- ▶ "And if not, what and where are the **constraints** that are holding us back - and how are we going to clear them away?"

MOMENTUM WISH LIST

- ☑ Consistently achieving our revenue forecasts ...
- ☑ Elevating the performance of our average sales people ...
- ☑ Shortening sales cycles and increasing win rates ...
- ☑ Clearly differentiating our offering from the competition ...
- ☑ Mastering the transition from product to solution selling ...
- ☑ Defending our value, rather than discounting our price ...

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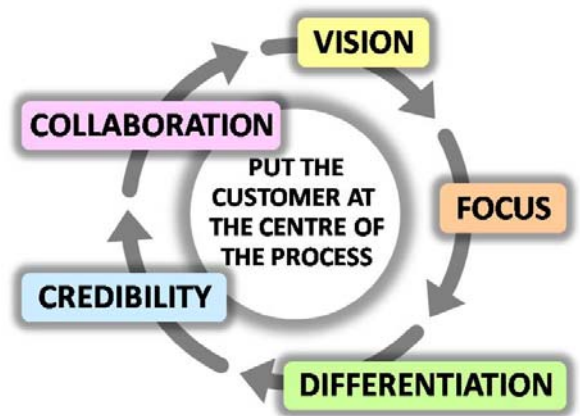


As we looked at obviously successful organisations, we identified five common factors - **5 Sources of MOMENTUM** - that had enabled these companies to **remove the roadblocks** and **make winning a habit** - and achieve it by putting the **customer** at the **centre of the process**...

Individually, each factor seemed to have an important contribution to make in enabling companies to realise their potential - but their real power could be felt when they were collectively leveraged towards the common goal of **finding more of the right sort of prospects - and closing them faster**.

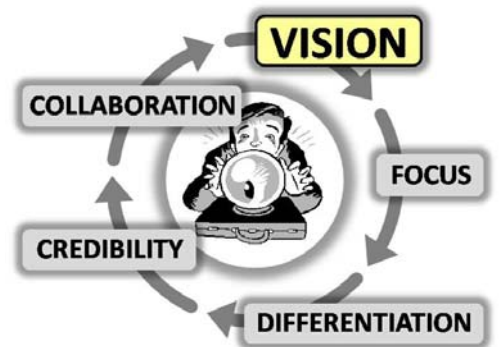
5 Sources of Momentum

Together, these **5 sources of MOMENTUM** provided the platform for aligning their sales and marketing functions around a continually improving understanding of the most urgent current needs and motivations of their prospects - and how best to address them.



① We found that companies with MOMENTUM were able to project an inspiring VISION of what their **customers want to achieve** - and how they can help them achieve it ...

- ▶ They emphasised what their **customers** needed to **achieve**, not what their **company** had **accomplished**
- ▶ They explained **where they are going**, and why - based on a clear understanding of **market trends**
- ▶ They earned market leadership by combining **thought leadership** with **flawless execution**
- ▶ **And they avoided the trap of focusing on the history of their company, rather than the destiny of their buyers**

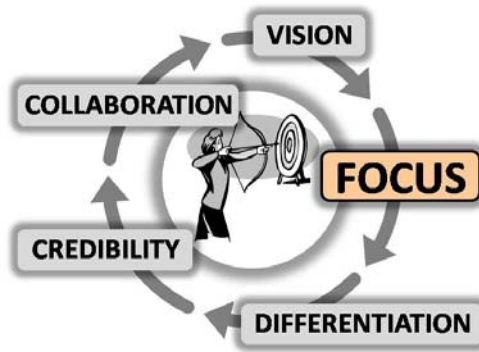


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② Companies with MOMENTUM were able to **FOCUS** not just on identifying prospective customers - but also on ensuring that they **identified with them** ...

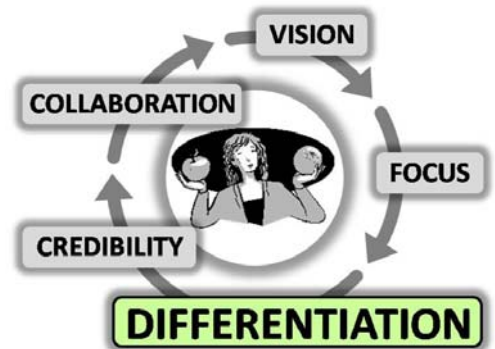


- ▶ They concentrated on resolving their **customer's issues** rather than on promoting their product's features
- ▶ They became **trusted advisors** by understanding their buyer's key **challenges, motivations** and **constraints**
- ▶ They made sure they could be **found** where their prospects were likely to be looking for solutions
- ▶ **And they were careful to avoid the trap of segmenting their markets on demographics alone without incorporating buyer motivations**

Vision and **focus** proved to be essential foundations for the next significant factor in the momentum building process - **differentiation** ...

③ Companies with MOMENTUM were able to **DIFFERENTIATE** their proposition in ways that made a **real difference** to their prospective buyers ...

- ▶ They ensured they first explained how they are **different before** trying to prove why they are **better**
- ▶ They knew their buyers **always** had a choice, and **never** claimed or believed they had **no competition**
- ▶ They distinguished in a systematic way between **truly urgent** and merely interesting **needs**
- ▶ **And they avoided the trap of claiming to be different in ways that made no difference to their buyers**

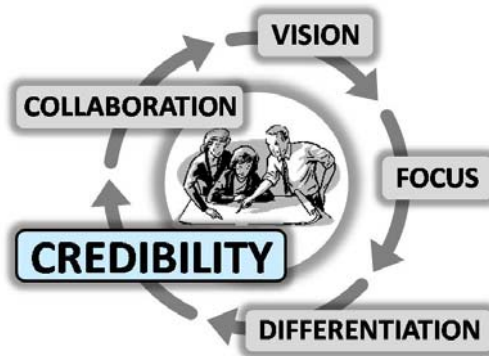


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4 Companies with MOMENTUM established **CREDIBILITY** by equipping sales people to conduct **convincing** conversations about **key business issues** that **really mattered** to their prospects ...



- ▶ They used **business language** and **industry terms** their buyers could relate to
- ▶ They created sales tools designed to support each stage of the **buying process** ... and **trigger** the next
- ▶ They established empathy and inspired trust through **anecdotes** and **examples**
- ▶ **And they avoided the trap of promoting product features, rather than their ability to address their buyer's issues**

5 Finally, companies with MOMENTUM demonstrated impressive levels of **COLLABORATION** that aligned their people, systems and partners around a common **"way of doing business"** ...

- ▶ They found ways of accelerating learning and sharing the **keys to success** of their top performers
- ▶ They codified **best practice** into repeatable company-wide systems and processes
- ▶ They involved their partners and customers in **continually improving** their go-to-market models
- ▶ **And they avoided the trap of relying on a handful of sales superstars rather than a consistent company-wide "way of doing business"**



Vision, Focus, Differentiation, Credibility and **Collaboration** came together in these organisations to power a **"MOMENTUM Flywheel"** that had the effect of aligning their whole company around a superior and continuously improving ability to deal with their customer's **challenges, motivations** and **constraints**. But how could this momentum be created and maintained in practice? ...

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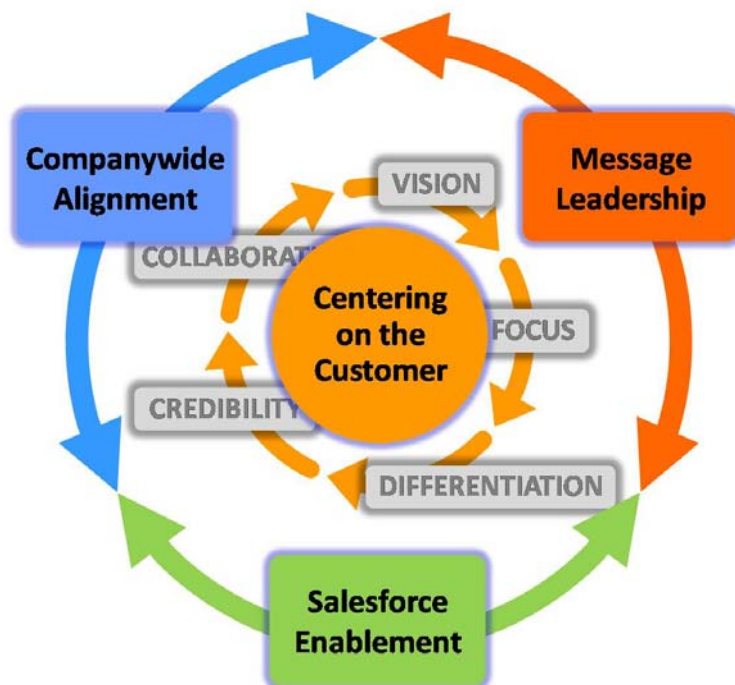


When we looked at industry best practice - at the methods that clearly successful companies had used to generate momentum - we found four tools that seemed to make a disproportionate difference. These companies consistently:

- ▶ Identified with the issues, problems and needs of their most promising prospects and understood the motivations that influenced and drove their buying decisions. We call this “**Centering on the Customer**”
- ▶ Positioned and promoted their capabilities in a way that related to their buyer’s most pressing priorities and distinctively differentiated them from their competition. We call this “**Message Leadership**”
- ▶ Equipped their sales people and partners to engage prospective buyers in convincing conversations about business issues that really mattered to them. We call this “**Salesforce Enablement**”
- ▶ Established common goals, language, systems and metrics that aligned their entire organisation around finding more of the right sort of prospects, and closing them faster. We call this “**Companywide Alignment**”

We realised that these elements amounted to a “**momentum toolkit**” that, if implemented in an integrated fashion, would give every high-potential company the opportunity to generate lasting market momentum.

THE MOMENTUM TOOLKIT



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We concluded that if these four elements could be systematically incorporated into a consistent sales and marketing methodology, they would equip the leadership of promising companies with a frame of reference, a plan for action, and a “**way of doing business**” which could enable them to realise their company’s full potential - faster. First, they needed to **center on the customer** ...



Centering on the Customer

Centering on the Customer requires a deep understanding of **who** your best prospects are and **how, why** and **when** they are likely to buy. The “**buyer’s journey**” seeks to understand the **voyage of discovery** that typical prospects are likely to follow in their **problem-solving** process.



Successful sellers identify the **events** that are likely to initiate a buying process, the **triggers** that cause their buyers to **advance** from one stage to the next, **and what it would take to win**. Understanding how and why their buyer’s **interests, priorities** and **motivations** are likely to change significantly through the course of the buying process is fundamental to designing a better “sales process”, to **accelerating** the buyer’s journey and winning more business, and to achieving **message leadership**...

Message Leadership

Market Leaders demonstrate great market insight and clear thought leadership - they understand who their highest-potential buyers are and what influences their buying journey, they prioritise and tune their messages so as to better **educate, inform, and motivate** their buyers at each stage of the process, and they **set the agenda** for their markets.



- ▶ Prospects “tune in” to different messages as they move through their **buying journey**.
- ▶ The buyer-seller relationship evolves from **mass communication** to **1:1** interaction
- ▶ Sellers must **align their messages** - and **how they deliver them** - with appropriate regard for the buyer’s changing interests.

Message Leadership offers a **vision-led framework** for establishing **thought leadership**, focusing on high-potential **groups of prospects with common needs** that can be satisfied by your solution, establishing clear **competitive differentiation**, and **aligning** messages and sales tools to address the buyer’s evolving priorities. It is a key foundation for **salesforce enablement**...

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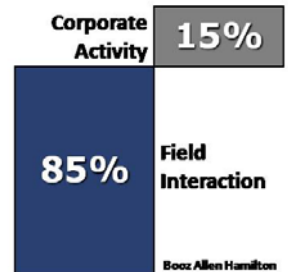


Salesforce Enablement

In complex, business-to-business sales environments, the vast majority of the prospect's perception of the vendor's brand is shaped not by classic corporate marketing activity, but by their 1:1 interaction with the employees of the company.

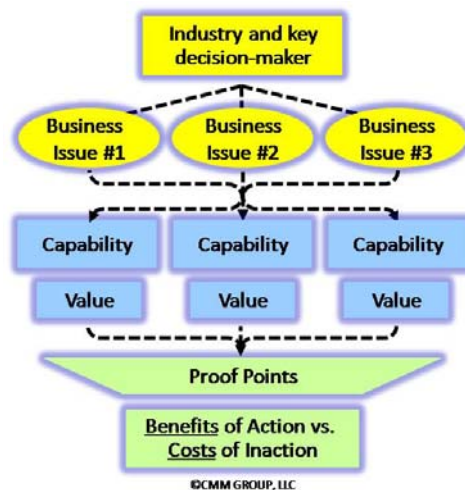
It should be no surprise, therefore, that the **sales-to-customer** conversation is the primary place where a vendor's **differentiation** and **credibility** are established in the mind of the buyer.

How Impressions are Formed



Despite this, marketing's historical track record of effectiveness at the point of sale demonstrates ample room for improvement. Just consider the following statistics:

- ▶ According to the *American Marketing Association*, up to 90% of the collateral created by corporate marketing is simply not used by most salespeople
- ▶ According to the *CMO Council*, the average salesperson wastes up to 40% of their potential selling time crafting their own messages and sales tools
- ▶ According to *Huthwaite*, without the appropriate reinforcement, at most 13% of sales training "sticks" - meaning the learning is still being used on the job three months later



Customer Message Management™ (CMM) takes a systematic approach to aligning marketing and sales activity around a common understanding of the needs of the customer - and enables sales people to conduct credible and convincing conversations about the business issues that really matter to buyers.

CMM equips sales people to acquire a deep understanding of the issues, challenges and motivations of their prospective customers, aligns these issues with the vendors' core competencies and capabilities, arms them with effective anecdotes, establishes powerful business value propositions and offers compelling proof points.

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The results can be impressive - and sometimes spectacular. In addition to **ramping new sales hires and partners faster**, according to CSO Insights, sales organisations adopting CMM have typically:

- ▶ Increased average quota performance by 25%
- ▶ Converted 3x more proposals to sales
- ▶ Reduced excessive discounting by a factor of 5



But salesforce enablement isn't just about the salesforce - it's about **companywide alignment...**



Companywide Alignment

Companies with MOMENTUM embed **Vision, Focus, Differentiation** and **Credibility** into their **Corporate DNA**, supported by **common goals, language, systems** and **metrics**. They manage to achieve impressive **forecast accuracy** and **prospect closure rates** by using **consistent pipeline definitions** that follow the **buying cycle**.

Closely align sales pipeline stages with the buyer's journey



- ▶ What is a “good prospect” and how can everyone help in the quest to find and win more of them?
- ▶ How quickly are prospects moving through the pipeline, and where and why are they getting stuck?
- ▶ Where are good prospects being lost from the system, and what can we do to prevent it?
- ▶ How can we recognise and qualify out bad prospects early, before a lot of valuable resource is wasted?

We have found the concepts of **flow** (the speed with which buyers move from stage to stage) and **leakage** (the % of buyers that fall out at each stage – and why?) to be particularly useful in diagnosing pipeline issues. By equipping managers to ask the right questions, **qualifying accurately earlier, recycling or eliminating** projects that are going nowhere, and focusing on deals with a **clear route to closure**, companies can **make winning a habit**.

But it's not only sales people who sell: aligning every employee and partner around the principles of **Centering on the Customer, Message Leadership** and **Salesforce Enablement** creates a company-wide clarity of purpose and a common understanding of “**the way we do business**”.

Generating Momentum

We recommend a 3-phase process. The **discovery** phase starts by mapping the “Buyer's Journey” for your most common sales situations and identifying the winning behaviours of your most successful performers, leading to a **workshop** with key executives, managers and subject matter experts.



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The diagnostic outputs from the workshop form a **roadmap** that identifies the key **opportunities** and constraints facing the business, and highlights how key components of the toolkit could be applied to removing the most pressing roadblocks that are standing in the way. As momentum builds, the same tools contribute to a **continuous improvement program** designed to **make winning a habit...**

Are you generating enough MOMENTUM?

Try this simple test - rank each of the following question pairs on a 1-10 scale, according to whether you believe you are currently closer to the left hand answer (1), the right hand answer (10), or somewhere in between.

The "about us" section on our website leads with our company's history	①②③④⑤⑥⑦⑧⑨⑩	The "about us" section on our website leads with our vision of the future of our markets
Our pipeline stages are based on the key steps our sales people go through in their sales process	①②③④⑤⑥⑦⑧⑨⑩	Our pipeline stages are based on the key steps our prospects go through in their buying process
If we asked people to define what a "qualified lead" was, no two answers would be the same	①②③④⑤⑥⑦⑧⑨⑩	If we asked people to define what a "qualified lead" was, every answer would be the same
Most of our sales collateral is about products, features, advantages or benefits	①②③④⑤⑥⑦⑧⑨⑩	Most of our sales collateral is about our ability to help our customers address their issues
The same deals ("the usual suspects") seem to get forecasted quarter after quarter	①②③④⑤⑥⑦⑧⑨⑩	Deals that seem to be stuck in the pipeline receive particularly close management attention

These questions have been drawn from a comprehensive list of diagnostic questions we typically ask during our discovery process. Most clients find the questions - and their answers - illuminating. If you scored less than the maximum 50, **you've** probably got the potential to be generating more momentum!

We know that the leaders of companies with as-yet unrealised potential usually have a clear sense of their **destination**, but know that there **must** be a way of getting there **faster!** Perhaps our experience could help your organisation develop the necessary **winning habits?**

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About the authors



Bob Apollo has worked in senior general management roles for a wide range of high-tech vendors, many of them leaders in their respective markets, including HP, SCO, XcelleNet, Sybase, Intellisync (now part of Nokia) and Dexterra to build UK, European and Global sales and marketing organisations.



Mike Fish has worked with a wide range of successful high-technology vendors latterly at Chairman or non-executive director level, helping them secure the funding they need for growth and ensuring that the investment is well directed.

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